

## **The August War: A Case for International Relations Theory and an Understanding of Modern Threats**

### *Introduction*

This article focuses on two aspects of the so-called five-day Russian-Georgian war. One is the Georgian attack on the center of the Ossetian separatists, the town of Tskhinvali, on August 7, 2008 — an event that, according to some observers, triggered the all-out military clash. The other is the nature of the threats faced by Georgia, and which led to conventional warfare. Arguments on the unavoidability of Georgia's large-scale military stand-off with Russia are partly based on some conceptions developed in international relations theory. This article attempts through threat analysis to explain and justify Georgian political strategy<sup>1</sup>, while also highlighting the difficulty of its support on the international scene. The hypothesis is twofold:

1. A legalistic assessment of this war is insufficient. International relations theory provides additional arguments to justify as well as to criticize Georgian military actions. But, by and large, it gives grounds to assess the August 7 attack as logical and hardly avoidable.
2. Taking into account the nature of the threats faced by Georgia, as well as the outcome of the war, the Tskhinvali attack appears politically well calculated. Despite the asymmetry of the Georgian forces vis-à-vis the Russians, the former's initiative allegedly saved the sovereignty of the country, its political regime and the project of Georgian modernization.

An analysis of the above aspects of the war is given in the context of three theoretical traditions. These overlap but are still distinct in an epistemological and ontological sense. These are liberalism, realism and the so-called sociological approach<sup>2</sup>. Concretely, some of the conceptual observations of realists, neo-realists, liberal-institutionalists and constructivists are adopted in order to answer the question: How much did the Georgian military-political choice correspond to the fundamental war-and-peace assumptions of the distinct schools of international relations?

A complex analysis of the threats the Georgian government confronted helps to argue for the relevance of one or another theoretical perspective on its August 7 decision. As the Russian-Georgian war proves, modern threats

are such a mixture of traditional and so-called postmodern elements that international law-based institutions are sometimes unable to tackle them. Hence extraordinary measures dictated by the uniqueness/desperation of the situation become unavoidable. This article argues that Georgian tactics and strategy were an example of extraordinariness in a confrontation which, according to Ronald Asmus, shook the world<sup>3</sup>.

Based on existing accounts of these events, on a theoretical matrix, and on an analysis of the nature of these threats, this article offers the following conclusions:

While a peace studies/conflict resolution approach, partly rooted in liberalist thinking, would challenge almost any military solution, mainstream liberals would find the Georgian decision much less questionable. In the liberalist view, international institutions, collective security arrangements and international norms should govern state behavior. However, if institutions fail, if these norms are not enforced by their promoters—be it Western democracies or the main international actors like NATO, the EU or the OSCE—liberalists would agree on the necessity for a threatened state to act on its own. According to the liberalist perspective, if anybody should be criticized for the August war, it is an aggressive Russia and some of those Western circles who talked liberally but did not act accordingly.

The realist tradition can criticize the Georgian attack on one particular account—if its skepticism and partial acceptance of the big states' zones of exclusive influence are taken for granted. In this case, Georgia looks like a spoiler of international stability. But through such lenses Georgia should be criticized not only and not as much for the attack, but for the desire to join the West instead of bandwagoning with Russia.

Another critical point realists might have is whether the Georgian decision to attack was based on a proper assessment of its own military means and those at its adversary's disposal. However, such aspects of war preparations are only partly relevant to this case. If the final aim on the Georgian side was simply to take and hold the town of Tskhinvali at any cost, then a military/technical ends-means calculation becomes of paramount importance. But this article argues that it was not. While having its own military rationale in the light of the deteriorating situation on the ground, the Tskhinvali attack was more a political signal than part of military/strategic science that Georgia could not afford to follow.

On the other hand, this very ends/means equation can be taken in a different, broader manner—applied not only to weighing the material strengths of both sides, but also to the ability to use the strength of the adversary against himself. One can call this method asymmetric warfare, or just recall

that war is a continuation of politics. Applying war readiness criteria in this manner, engagement without sufficient military/technical preparation might sometimes turn out to be more beneficial than expecting a better moment which might never come.

However, realism is more complex than either particular structuralist view of the international system, or its subfield of military/technical calculations. By and large, realists' understanding of the war and peace equilibrium rests on concepts of threat assessment, the security dilemma, and the balance between defense and offense opportunities. It also unequivocally accepts the survival of the nation state as being the ultimate rationale of international relations. According to these principles, Georgian actions during the Russian aggression appear mostly logical and justifiable.

Constructivism, or the sociological approach, departs from liberal/realist objectivity, focuses on perceptions and on norms constituting or guiding identities, including on the international scene, and accepts their inherent drive for control and survival. With its emphasis on so-called securitization—that is, the legitimization of security/military decisions through an inter-subjective communicational process—constructivism shows that wars do not happen just because politicians so desire. Given the internationally accepted account of the events of the Russia-Georgia war, constructivism would agree that Georgians had every right to perceive an immediate, imminent threat and to act against it militarily. But constructivism also shows that some of Georgia's critics, having their own cultural/ideological prejudices, would hardly change.

A justification of Georgia's military option through realist, constructivist and even liberalist lenses looks stronger when the complex nature of the threats faced by the country's political system is characterized. Ignoring or underestimating this complexity seems to be one reason for continued criticism of Georgia, whether on account of the war or of its democratic record. This article does not go into the realist/constructivist debate as to whether threats are objective or perceptual in their essence: Both schools believe in their convincing power. This article relies on widely accepted definitions of traditional as well as new threats, and tries to outline the postmodern flavor of the latter. It then argues that the Russian government was the direct producer or user of these threats in order to undermine Georgia's political security and to bring about regime change. This is why their emergence contributed to the Georgian military confrontation with Russia.

Traditional threats and political pressure coming from Russia are relatively well documented on the international level<sup>4</sup>. However, hypothetically, all these could have been endured beyond August 7, 2008, as some foreign

supporters of Georgia have suggested. Yet what forced Georgian military action was the combination of the above-mentioned threats with “postmodern”<sup>5</sup> ones. This combination did not leave the Georgian government with much space for further maneuvering. In parallel to Russia’s open military-political hostility, the Georgian government faced the risk of internal destabilization from various non-state circles, including organized crime, as well as the ignorance of international democracy assistants about the level and scope of this challenge. Both internal risks and external ignorance were exacerbated by “active measures” of provocation and disinformation characteristic of the Russian special services.

Analyzing the nature of the threats to Georgia, it becomes rather probable that, if the Georgian government had stayed only defensive in August 2008 the fall of the local Georgian administration and a new exodus of waves of refugees from the conflict zone would be unavoidable. Such a scenario would easily allow Russia to disguise its intervention, contribute covertly to the creation of the image that the Georgian government was inherently incapable of conflict resolution, and re-activate its “fifth column” in the Georgian capital. All this would negatively influence the investment climate throughout the whole country. The rest would have been tactics — either the government would fall due to mass discontent, or further destabilization attempts would have been made.

This article argues that Russia not only wanted to take Georgian separatist enclaves, it also wanted to dissuade the country from its pro-Western foreign policy. The Kremlin might have had even stronger incentives for Saakashvili’s ouster: Since 2003 Georgia had launched a modernization project, building a regime different from the post-Soviet Russian one. In the case of irreversible success, this would have created an example that the Kremlin did not like. Thus, days and weeks of skirmishing in and around the town of Tskhinvali can be seen as an element of a clash between two alternative systems in the former Soviet area. Manipulations with post-modern conditions played a decisive role in this clash.

Attacking Tskhinvali on August 7, Saakashvili got the following: Russia had to disclose its intentions, invading directly and occupying half of the country. Georgians had to flee from around Tskhinvali anyway. But, internationally, Russian actions looked so illegal that the West finally intervened and substantially reversed the process. On the other hand, Saakashvili mobilized mass support internally, since he was literally fighting “the enemy at the gate”. This did not allow revisionists inside Georgia to topple the government alone or in concert with the Russians<sup>6</sup>. Foreign investments were lost

for a while, but international donor assistance to war-affected Georgia provided a substitute.

One cannot prove with mathematical precision whether things would have necessarily developed tragically for Georgia if its army had not attacked Tskhinvali — the social sciences do not provide methods for this. It does not argue, either, that the Georgian government had forecast everything in detail, namely that the Russian response would have been so outrageous as to prompt an international response. But looking at the perspectives of international relations theory on the fight for sovereignty, and analyzing the nature of the threats directed, coordinated or simply used by Russia against Georgia, its military action can be regarded as hardly avoidable in the “fog of war”. With high probability, the Georgian attack could have rendered the Russians inadequate and thus the eventual losers on the information front; the attack could also have slowed down the realization of their plan to go further and dislodge the government.

Internationally, President Saakashvili gave rise to doubts on the proportionality of his action. But Russia was converted from an imperfect peacekeeper into an occupying power. In the long run, and in the systemic account, this might be a better ground for the international promotion of Georgia’s sovereignty than if Georgia had continued to be manipulated by the Russian peacekeeping game, which one Georgian politician described as “keeping the pieces” of its former empire.

### *Existing Assessments of Events*

The war of August 7-12, 2008 is largely associated with Russia’s intervention in neighboring Georgia. The international community was relatively quick to condemn Russian military actions. The French president, representing the EU, set out to negotiate a ceasefire, while the US president ordered the navy to move into the Black Sea and to approach the Georgian coastline. On August 19, after a ceasefire had been achieved but was barely being respected by Russia, NATO’s North Atlantic Council stated: “The Alliance is considering seriously the implications of Russia’s actions for the NATO-Russia relationship. . .we cannot continue with business as usual”<sup>7</sup>. On September 1, the European Council held an extraordinary meeting. Its conclusion was that “the European Council is gravely concerned by the open conflict which has broken out in Georgia, by the resulting violence and by the disproportionate reaction of Russia”<sup>8</sup>.

The European Parliament was more explicit, saying in its September 3 resolution that “there is no legitimate reason for Russia to invade Georgia, to occupy parts of it and to threaten to override the government of a democratic country”<sup>9</sup>. The European Parliament demanded respect for the cease-fire agreement, namely the withdrawal of Russian troops to their pre-war positions<sup>10</sup>. This meant that Russia was required to restore the status quo ante when, according to the 1992 and 1994 Russian-Georgian agreements, it was limited to a few peacekeeping battalions in the Georgian conflict zones created by the Ossetian and Abkhazian separatist movements.

This resolution outlined that the large-scale war was preceded by Russian illegal support to the Ossetian and Abkhazian separatists, as well as “provocations by the South Ossetian separatist forces involving... shellings which caused the deaths”. It also noted that the eventual Russian large-scale invasion was based on “a long-term military build-up”. But European parliamentarians were also questioning the wisdom of the Georgian “surprise artillery attack on Tskhinvali”<sup>11</sup>.

The Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly was more concrete in respect of the August 7 attack. Its resolution of October 2, 2008 also mentioned that “the outbreak of the war on 7 August 2008... was the result of a serious escalation of tension... which had started much earlier”. It condemned Russia on many accounts. But the fifth paragraph said “the initiation of shelling of Tskhinvali without warning by the Georgian military on 7 August 2008 marked a new level of escalation, namely that of open and fully fledged warfare”. Georgian actions at that particular moment were assessed as disproportionate, thus violating humanitarian law and the commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

These documents were adopted in parallel to the Russian-Georgian information war. Georgia insisted on the defensive nature of its August 7 operation, as it was made against Ossetian militiamen and mercenaries from Russia who were shooting, as well as the ongoing intervention of Russian regular troops with heavy equipment, heading through the Roki Tunnel to Tskhinvali via Georgia-controlled villages<sup>12</sup>. Russia claimed that there were no extra Russian troops, except peacekeepers, in the conflict zones when President Saakashvili attacked “sleeping Tskhinvali”, causing deaths among civilians and Russian peacekeepers. Thus Russia had to enforce the peace. Given these mutually exclusive accounts, and the interest of the international community in the issue, the EU sponsored an International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, led by the Swiss diplomat Heidi Tagliavini.

The international media were also taking part in this information war. The most respected media outlets were openly critical of Russia, but also sus-

picious of the Georgian attack<sup>13</sup>. The Georgian narrative strengthened when four journalists from the New York Times reported about new intelligence that "... at a minimum, the intercepted calls, which senior American officials have reviewed and described as credible if not conclusive, suggest there were Russian military movements earlier than had previously been acknowledged, whether routine or hostile, into Georgian territory as tensions accelerated toward war"<sup>14</sup>. The Russians belatedly responded that a military column might have really moved, but it was a reinforcement of the peacekeepers. The fact that such reinforcements were not coordinated with the host nation was a violation of the peacekeeping arrangement. But international criticism of Georgian military actions, albeit more nuanced, continued. A year after the start of the war, the Economist wrote: "The truth is somewhere in between", suggesting that, despite systematic Russian provocations, Saakashvili's order to advance on Tskhinvali "played into his enemy's hands"<sup>15</sup>.

These doubts remained in the final report of the Fact-Finding Mission, published in September 2009. This report is an extremely rich collection of evidence, logical questions and somewhat controversial legal conclusions. The controversy may stem from the dilution of legalism with some political considerations. However, this report could also be evidence that certain principles of international law are inadequate given the changing nature of the international security environment.

On the one hand, the mission documented numerous violations by Russia of Georgia's sovereignty and the 1992-1994 peace accords. The authors concluded that the years-long linkage of Georgia's uncontrolled provinces with Russia, which was going on under the cover of the above-mentioned accords, "may have increased the Georgian frustration at the stalled peace process"<sup>16</sup>. The mission was also well informed on increased pressure from Russia on Georgia, which started from spring 2008 when the Russian authorities made explicit moves towards the establishment of official political, economic and military relationships with two Georgian separatist territories. All this was combined with never-ending skirmishes between Ossetian militia and Georgian law enforcers or peacekeepers legally positioned within the conflict zone. The mission refers to Russian sources indicating that separatists were assisted by Russia with training and ammunition, and seems confident that, prior to the Georgian attack on Tskhinvali, the conflict zone was penetrated by Russian mercenaries. The report also talks about the high probability that, earlier than officially reported, some Russian regular units not belonging to the peacekeepers, had entered the scene<sup>17</sup>.

The report also questioned one of the main arguments, which was especially listened to in the West<sup>18</sup>, as to why the Russian army had to intervene

militarily. It stated that the mission was not in a position to prove a Georgian attack on Russian peacekeepers. It appears the mission was impressed by a non-governmental Russian account of this war detail. Andrey Illarionov, a former advisor to Vladimir Putin, undertook his own research, showing that deaths among Russian peacekeepers could have occurred only after they themselves had engaged Georgian units<sup>19</sup>.

However, despite all the facts outlined in the report, the mission stated that it was not in a position to consider as sufficiently substantiated the Georgian claim concerning a large-scale Russian military incursion into South Ossetia before August 8, 2008<sup>20</sup>. Thus the mission refused to accept the Georgian attack on Tskhinvali as an act of legitimate self-defense, while noting that open hostilities were started by that attack<sup>21</sup>. Interpreting clauses of the UN Charter, as well as UN Resolution 1344 on the nature of armed attacks, and some definitions of the International Court of Justice, the report particularly concludes:

1. Attacks on Georgian villages in the conflict zone can be regarded as an attack on Georgia, thus invoking Article 51 of the UN Charter for self-defense, but “further conditions must be met in order to allow for the Georgian claim of self-defense.” In short, the mission could not establish who fired the first shot<sup>22</sup>.
2. Repulsing Ossetian attacks did not require an attack on Tskhinvali<sup>23</sup>.
3. The military operation against the Russian army could have been justified if it was involved in an “on-going or imminent attack”. Regular Russian units entering the Roki tunnel, or even preparations for such an operation, namely, the concentration of troops on the border “might have constituted an armed attack”. However, the mission states that, despite the existence of elements of threats and signs that Russian regular units had entered the conflict zone prior to August 8, it cannot ascertain such an imminent attack by Russia<sup>24</sup>.
4. Another reason for Georgian military action on August 7 could have been the blatant violation of peace accords by Russian peacekeepers. For such a claim the mission refers to Article 3 (e) of UN Resolution 1344 as a legal ground for measuring Russian peacekeepers’ aggressiveness<sup>25</sup>. But the mission concludes that, according to Article 51 of the UN Charter, such an act of aggression does not justify the application of the right of self-defense. Moreover, the mission also added that to justify the Georgian reaction, the violation of the peace accords by Russian peacekeepers should have had the form of an intervention or occupation, a substantial increase in



numbers, or the arming of one of the conflicting sides. Despite acquaintance with Russian sources indicating Russian military support for the separatists<sup>26</sup>, the mission refused to confirm either of the above justifications.

5. If Ossetian attacks were closely coordinated with the Russians, it “would likely trigger Georgian self-defense” against its northern neighbor. But to prove such a connection, the fact of Russian “effective control” of the Ossetian perpetrators would have to be established. The mission refers to the ICJ definition, according to which “effective control’ should be proved in regards of every action and every individual in action and relevant state instructions should exist... mere influence, rather than control of the persons acting does not suffice”. The mission acknowledges that even prior to the escalation “Russian officials had de facto control over the South Ossetia security institutions and security forces”. Russian citizens, and former Russian military or security officers played a prominent role in the Ossetian security sector. Yet the mission declared that, formally, they were all subordinated to de facto president of the separatist region and thus it is impossible to define the degree of “effective control” of them by Russia<sup>27</sup>.

Thus the Fact-Finding Mission’s report contributed to the debates on the start of war but fell short of providing an unequivocal judgment. International debates continued, mainly by political analysts and journalists. Examples of two opposite views on Georgian actions are Ronald Asmus’s analysis and Tom de Waal’s response to it. Asmus does not exclude that Saakashvili made a mistake when ordering the attack on Tskhinvali. But to him “why he did it is not a mystery”<sup>28</sup>. Tom de Waal criticizes Asmus in the article “Missiles over Tskhinvali”<sup>29</sup>, for an “idealized account.”

According to Asmus, the Ossetians used weapons of illegal caliber in the conflict zone prior to the full-scale war, while Russian peacekeepers remained either supportive of the Ossetians or inactive in halting the skirmishes. He emphasizes that the Ossetian secretary of the Security Council was a Russian general, the prime minister, interior minister and the minister of defense were all Russian citizens, and the de-facto president of the separatist enclave, Eduard Kokoiti, who was openly threatening to “clean out” Georgian villages<sup>30</sup>, had a direct telephone “hot-line” with the Kremlin. Asmus also stresses that additional Russian troops were concentrating and entering the Roki tunnel.

Asmus does not argue with the EU-sponsored mission on whether all this is enough to establish the fact of “effective control” of the Ossetians by

the Russians. He also does not quantify how many Russian soldiers and how much equipment crossing the Georgian border illegally would have justified Georgia's right to self-defense according to the UN Charter. Instead, he shows what kind of political and strategic challenge it all could have created for the Georgian government: "on the path of those Russian forces lay the Georgian villages in the Didi Liakhvi valley as well as the Tbilisi-supported alternative South Ossetian government in the village of Kurta.— Kurta also was the heart and soul of Georgia's own strategy to win over the hearts and minds of South Ossetians through "soft power"<sup>31</sup>.

Given the arguments and despite the fact that "the fog of war was already setting in"— thus making the scale of the Russo-Ossetian advance on Georgian-controlled villages unclear— Asmus considers the Georgian operation largely defensive<sup>32</sup>. To argue for Georgian confidence in an imminent threat, he recalls "past Russian calls for regime change" throughout the country. He also mentions that desperate Georgian attempts to communicate with the Russians in these last moments before the all-out war went unanswered.

In de Waal's view, "Asmus gives a version of events of the war of 2008 that completely exempts the Georgian leadership of blame". De Waal still questions the existence of a substantial Russian military movement prior to the Tskhinvali attack and even the fact of the Ossetians' shelling of a Georgian villages on the seventh of August. In his version: "on August 7, 2008, after weeks of low-intensity skirmishes in the breakaway province of South Ossetia, President Saakashvili made a decision to attack and recapture its capital Tskhinvali. The Russians had been building up their presence among their increasingly partisan peacekeepers for weeks and were very likely preparing an operation of their own, perhaps to depose the alternative pro-Georgian leader resident in the territory. Saakashvili was certainly acting under equal parts threat and provocation on the ground - but it was he who struck first... In this small, multiethnic patch of land, ethnic Georgian and Ossetian villages adjoined one another in a complex jigsaw puzzle. The severing of a road here or a new roadblock there threatened encirclement or expulsion for one community or the other. Saakashvili took a gamble"<sup>33</sup>.

However, despite his disagreement with the previous author and his apparent dislike of Saakashvili, de Waal's account does not differ from that of Asmus in all respects. De Waal also acknowledges that "it was Russia which was allowed to secure the situation inside both Abkhazia and South Ossetia with peacekeeping troops who were basically enforcing a Pax Russica." He even says that "[Saakashvili] was, strange to say, less to blame than his Western friends". But besides his stronger disagreement with Saakashvili's attempts to challenge Russia, de Waal disagrees with Asmus on one more issue:

For him, Americans wrongly encouraged Georgians' bid for NATO membership, instead of helping Russo-Georgian relations being based on the USSR-Finnish pattern.

One more worthwhile account of the war is Andrey Illarionov's. This is based on thorough research of Russian actions prior to and during the five day war. In his interview with Ekho Moskvi Moscow radio on September 8, 2009, Illarionov described the severe violations of peace arrangements by Russia over the years. As to the August escalation, for Illarionov this was triggered by Russian peacekeepers, who apparently allowed the Ossetians to use peacekeeping installations for launching fire.

As mentioned above, the reason that different conclusions are based on more or less the same account of the facts can be either in shortcomings of international law, which does not allow sensing the nuances and the context, or in the different political/theoretical premises of the analysts quoted. For instance, without referring to theories, Asmus still shows a certain logic of liberal institutionalism and constructivism, while in the description of the strategic meaning of certain valleys and villages for Georgia, he even sounds like a realist strategist. As for de Waal's arguments, consciously or not, they oscillate between peace studies logic, which is partly rooted in the liberalist tradition, and neo-realism. The latter reveals itself in his suggestion about Georgia's Finlandization.

The members of the EU-sponsored fact-finding mission admitted that legal experts differ in their opinion as to what the response to a so-called imminent threat should be. Disagreement among lawyers also takes place on external intervention in civil war-like conflicts<sup>34</sup>. The political theory-related preferences of the mission members cannot be excluded either. The mission was not political or diplomatic. However, one of their findings, namely the criticism of the EU for its reluctance to engage in regional security issues<sup>35</sup>, sounds political.

### *The Applicability of International Relations Theory to the August 7 Attack*

The authors quoted above established that violent events were taking place on Georgian soil for weeks, if not months and years; Russian peacekeeping was counterproductive, to put it mildly. Hence, whether ongoing, imminent, hypothetical or of any other nature, the Georgian leadership could have had a sincere feeling of the threat to Georgian positions in the conflict zones and, eventually, to nationwide political security. It is also well docu-

mented that the West was not ready to take up the challenge of international peacekeeping prior to the war. Georgia had to act on its own. But the question remains: When and how?

Saakashvili's order to Georgian troops at 23.35 reads: Halt the Russian advance on Georgian territory; suppress the fire targeted at Georgian villages in the region; provide security for the population<sup>36</sup>. Are the facts that today 20% of Georgia remains occupied by Russian troops without any internationally recognized mandate, and that there are no more Georgian villages in the former conflict zone unintended consequences of Saakashvili's order? Did his order aggravate regional security or would things have got worse for him, for Georgian sovereignty and for the whole region, if Georgian soldiers had not attacked Tskhinvali, thus altering the modalities of the highly probable pre-planned Russian invasion?

One can agree or disagree with Heidi Tagliavini, Ronald Asmus, Tom de Waal or others quoted in this paper. It is impossible to devise a test for "what would have happened if". But applying international relations theory to this case may complement the controversial legal analysis. Asking what the liberalist, realist and constructivist approaches would have to say on Saakashvili's decision, as well as on others' judgments of him, sheds extra light on whether Saakashvili could have made any other decision when time was short, information incomplete, fears paramount and "the fog of war was already setting in"<sup>37</sup>. The prominent realist theoretician John Mearsheimer points out that the world can be used as a laboratory to decide which theories best explain international politics<sup>38</sup>. One could add that for an understanding of this "laboratory", including its diverse and contradicting legal and cultural norms, we need a theoretical perspective.

**The Liberalist Tradition.** Theories born within a liberalist paradigm are closely linked to modern international law, at least through advocating that international regimes and norms are able to change the behavior of egoistic states. The liberalist tradition can be regarded as a basis for collective and cooperative security ideas, and democratic peace theory. In a certain sense, peace studies and conflict resolution approaches, which have diverse roots, including Marxism and critical theory, can also be partially linked with a liberalist worldview: This linkage is based upon the shared believe in general rationality and the progress-oriented nature of mankind, as well as the special accentuation of human rights.

While many liberalists accept the continuous dominance of states and the anarchic nature of the international system, they see a strong autonomous role for actors other than the state in international politics. Some go further to regard the idea of the nation as obsolete, eroded by globalization. More

pragmatic neoliberal-institutionalists count on international institutions/regimes, and, eventually on the so-called “security community” of states, which can mitigate nationalist bias. Approaches based on such a tradition remain dominant in international political discourse, if not in politics itself. Advocating a shift from hard to soft power, meaning moral authority and an ability to work cooperatively<sup>39</sup>, governments adhering to such a tradition have a distaste for the use of force for national purposes. This is understandable, as much as the notion of human security with its emphasis on people/the individual as the centerpiece of security policy is also linked with the liberalist tradition<sup>40</sup>.

From a certain angle, the liberalist tradition can question Saakashvili’s decision of August 7. Such a worldview can be regarded as intellectual grounds for the many legalistic points presented in the report of the fact-finding mission. In its particular form of human security approach the liberalist outlook may be especially critical of Saakashvili’s decision: Taking people as a main referent object of security policy, an attack on the town, notwithstanding the threat to Georgian positions or sovereignty, becomes harder to justify. The peace studies/conflict resolution perspective would have advocated negotiations, compromises, peacefully avoiding a conflict regardless of the security situation on the ground.

Tom de Waal’s belief that “...Saakashvili’s impetuous efforts to recover the two territories rebounded on him disastrously”<sup>41</sup> can also be regarded as stemming from the same, “conflict resolution” version of the liberalist tradition. Essentially, the ultra-liberal spirit of discounting the state/national interests of Georgia, regarding its nationalism as the main reason for the conflict and the eventual attack on August 7, is represented in a joint paper by Alexander Cooley and Lincoln Mitchell. These see the Georgian attack as a “classic attempt to use nationalism to deflect attention from its domestic failings”. Calling for restraint in US governmental assistance in Georgia’s defense build-up<sup>42</sup>, the authors show an indifferent attitude towards nations’ right of self-defense and territorial integrity.

However, this does not mean that the liberalist perspective could never understand or even justify a desperate military option, including the Georgian attack. Advocacy for peace at any cost and negotiations in every situation is a relatively marginal attitude within this intellectual tradition. One of the advocates of Georgian conduct in August 2008, Ronald Asmus can also be regarded as a devoted practicing liberal. For years he has been working on developing a cooperative European security order, which he believes “failed in August 2008”<sup>43</sup>.

Some realist scholars note that an unconditional belief in international institutions can deceive nations, putting them in danger. According to John

Mearsheimer, “misplaced reliance on institutional solutions is likely to lead to more failures in the future”<sup>44</sup>. But many prominent academicians from various liberalist camps do acknowledge that institutionalism can only be conditional. For Robert Keohane and Lisa Martin, who are unquestionably liberals, institutions cannot prevent war regardless of the structure in which they operate<sup>45</sup>.

Charles Kupchan and Clifford Kupchan speak on collective security with the same reservation. For these representatives of liberalist tradition “the key question is not whether collective security is flawless, but it deters and blocks aggressors more effectively than balancing under anarchy”<sup>46</sup>. However, “states that place illusory faith in collective security will find themselves worse off than had they acted as if in a self-help, anarchic setting”<sup>47</sup>. Given such opinions, Saakashvili’s disputed decision could also have been grounded in the liberalist tradition.

But the problem with the institutionalist theory, as well as with the collective security or conflict-resolution approaches, is that not all of their practicing followers, including officials, maintain such a cautious, sober attitude. As Robert Kagan puts it in “Of Paradise and Power”, admittedly in a somewhat exaggerated style, Europe today lives in a “postmodern system” that does not rest on balance of power but on “the rejection of force” and on “self-enforced rules of behavior”<sup>48</sup>. According to Kagan, many European politicians “often emphasize process over results, believing that ultimately process can become substance”<sup>49</sup>. They “routinely apply Europe’s experience to the rest of the world, and sometimes with the evangelical zeal of converts”<sup>50</sup>.

When Kagan points out that Europeans pretend they understand the world and can give others the wisdom of conflict resolution<sup>51</sup>, it is not the thoughts of theoreticians like Keohane or the Kupchans that come to the mind. It is more those international observers who say that the Russian military incursion was not on a scale that required an armed response. Ronald Asmus makes a case for the inadequacy of some Western conflict-resolution advice regarding Georgian-Ossetian/Georgian-Abkhaz or an eventual Russo-Georgian reconciliation. He convincingly argues that the separatists saw the source of their power and identity in an alliance with Russians and in confrontation with Georgia<sup>52</sup>. If so, what was the sense in the endless confidence-building exercises suggested by many Western diplomats and NGOs without tangible pressure on Russia to give up its dominant position on the ground?

The final judgment of the Georgian attack through liberalist lenses may depend not so much on preferring one version of liberalism over another. The key to this question is whether the international community, which prizes the rule of law, cooperation, and supra-national institutions, and which ac-

cepted the critical remarks on the Georgian attack, itself acted accordingly. The Kupchans warned in the nineties that “if NATO expands into Central Europe as a defensive military alliance and then stops... that would help define for Russia what its new sphere of influence is”<sup>53</sup>. European politicians, whom Asmus does not regard as Russia’s “appeasers”, refused to give Georgia a NATO Membership Action Plan at the Bucharest summit in April 2008. Assessing this decision, Asmus admits that “instead of deterring the Russians, this compromise might have emboldened them”<sup>54</sup>.

For Keohane a “...multilateral institution that ignored genocide... would not be normatively legitimate”<sup>55</sup>. Proving genocide in the Russo-Georgian war which the Western community ignored or overlooked is difficult. But Russian military aggression against Georgia was long hanging in the air, if not ongoing. At a minimum, it was threatening occupation and ethnic cleansing. Citing different examples of liberalist thinking, one can conclude that liberalism would have been a logical and legitimate ground to criticize Georgian military action if the international community, designed on the lines of the liberal-institutionalists’ vision, had acted decisively to stop Russia prior to August 8. As is known, even from the fact-finding mission’s account, this did not happen. Georgia was left alone to struggle for its sovereignty with whatever means were at her disposal. The liberalist tradition does not deny abandoned, desperate countries the right to act in accordance with their own judgment. It gives an argument to conclude that, by and large, mainstream liberals would back the Georgian decision on August 7 in principle, if not in its details.

The insights of liberal-institutionalism can also be used to question the logic of the fact-finding mission’s conclusions on the Georgian attack: If Georgia had objective reason to feel abandoned by the international security architecture, as the mission indirectly accepts, how can advocates of that architecture claim that the aggression faced by the country was not large enough to justify self-defense? One can agree with the American analyst David Smith that “reading the EU-commissioned report, Russia (and others) may perceive that the west will tolerate aggression so long as it can rationalize that an attack is not “large-scale”<sup>56</sup>.

**The Realist School.** Realism is usually understood as a belief in an infinite international balance of power; the egoistic and nationalistic nature of states; their similarity notwithstanding their internal regimes; the dependence of their behavior on a quest for power and/or systemic variables; and the interchangeability of the status quo, revisionism or even appeasement policies, depending on threats and capabilities. According to the realists, states will not subordinate themselves to international institutions, which

are just vehicles for the dominance of stronger national powers. Given this, one might ask whether some representatives of Western liberal-democratic states act regarding the Russo-Georgian confrontation along realist lines, also known as *Realpolitik*? The scholarly observation that, while liberalists believe in institutional harmony and realists do not, “in fact security related policies of governments are normally a combination of the two”<sup>57</sup>, might further strengthen this doubt.

Given its basic premises, and knowing the facts as established by international experts, it is essentially clear that consistent followers of a realist outlook would not judge Saakashvili’s decision on August 7 on apolitically moral, legal or institutional grounds. Hence, one needs to see if realists or neo-realists would agree with the Georgian option on the pragmatic or even skeptical grounds they are associated with.

One set of presumptions within the realist worldview would not favor Georgia’s assertiveness to distance itself from Russia, which led to more open forms of conflict. If Asmus’s conclusion about the underlying reason for the war being Georgia’s desire to move towards the West and Russia’s attempt to stop it is accepted as objective, then some realists might be more critical of Georgia, not Russia. De Waal’s criticism of US encouragement of the Georgian bid for NATO membership instead of helping it establish a Finnish-Soviet pattern of relations with Russia has the flavor of a realist argument. Neorealist Kenneth Waltz argued decades ago for the advantages of US-Soviet bipolarity. He wrote in the seventies that “the control of East European affairs by one great power is tolerated by the other precisely because their competing interventions would pose undue dangers”<sup>58</sup>.

At the beginning of the nineties another representative of realism, John Mearsheimer, was arguing that the West should have been interested in the survival of the USSR and its partial military presence in some European states in order to maintain bipolarity and allow the US to stay in Europe for the sake of stability<sup>59</sup>. Thus, through the lenses of Waltz or Mearsheimer, Georgia could have contributed to destabilization, putting its American ally in an awkward situation.

However, if these or other realist scholars were to be asked specifically about the Georgian midnight attack, they would hardly condemn Saakashvili’s order. They would definitely attempt to explain Russia’s aggressiveness, as well as the realist rationale in the behavior of European nations/institutions before, during or after the war. But applying some realist principles, they would also agree that the Georgian government had reason to act as it did:

Mearsheimer argues that “when security is scarce, states become more concerned about relative gains than absolute gains. They ask “who will gain



more?”<sup>60</sup> This logic shows that realists would consider Western advice to Saakashvili to forget the conflict zones and to concentrate on other political or economic issues as inherently impossible to accept. Hence, in realist terms, he should have focused on undermining Russian dominance in the conflict zones, whether this would have raised the risk of open Russian aggression or not. Using de Waal’s expression, he should have taken a gamble. That is what he did.

Tom de Waal describes the surroundings of Tskhinvali as a “small, multiethnic patch of land, [where] ethnic Georgian and Ossetian villages adjoined one another in a complex jigsaw puzzle. The severing of a road here or a new roadblock there threatened encirclement or expulsion for one community or the other”<sup>61</sup>. Adding in Russian steps to violate Georgian sovereignty, the escalation of violence in the conflict zones, and the popularity of the struggle for territorial integrity among Georgians, this “patch of land” of a few hundred square miles and a few tens of thousands of inhabitants can be seen as a strategic one. In such a situation, the realists would measure the proportionality of actions not only in terms of international law, but also according to local “geopolitics”—that is, the level of the military-political importance of particular territorial segments.

The realist-like observations that certain terrain (mountains, exclusively ethnic territory) are more suitable to take or defend and “...fearful of the future, weaker groups may resort to preemptive violence”<sup>62</sup> have direct relevance to the situation in August 2008. Recalling Asmus’s point that this patch of contested land was not just its geographic location, but it was the residence of heart and soul of the Georgian conflict resolution strategy, namely a pro-Georgian autonomous administration, fighting for it looks paramount when seen through realist lenses.

The same realist outlook holds that if strategies and technologies for offense dominate over defensive ones, incentives to preempt increase<sup>63</sup>. Progress in technology and mobility is especially increasing the attractiveness of attack. An attacker might hope that a move will give him an informational advantage and a quick success. Also, “the fear that the opponent might launch such an attack first could be a persuasive argument for preemption”<sup>64</sup>. Notwithstanding the debate mentioned above as to whether or not the Russian advance prior to the Georgian attack was an offense of sufficient level to trigger an immediate response, realist logic sets a guide to act against adversaries not only defensively in the traditional or legal sense, but also preemptively.

It is also worth noting that militarily, given the terrain of the conflict zone<sup>65</sup> and the pre-war training of Georgian troops whom Western partners had prepared particularly for peacekeeping and counter-insurgency, Georgia

was not ready for conventional defense. In this situation, given operative evidence on the movement of additional units from the north, preemptive action could have been the only military option to gain time and attract international attention.

On one point, Georgia's preemption against Russia can be countered by a strategic/military studies argument that the strength of the adversary and the ability to act against him should be almost mathematically calculated. However, states do not act only according to material calculations. International relations theory and history provide that the military are subordinate to politics. It also makes one think, as outlined in the next chapter, that the nature of the threats, the role of information warfare and the struggle for the hearts and minds of Georgian society could not and would not allow considering the defense/offense balance only in numerical terms. But the ends/means equation cannot easily refute the rationale of the Georgian attack even on its merits. Despite the incomparable weakness of the Georgian army vis-à-vis the Russian one, its military initiative on August 7 still falls even under purely military-strategic or tactical logic, especially if one includes political calculations.

This surprise attack was strong enough to overrun Ossetian and Russian forces already engaged with Georgians on the ground and to stop the movement of military reinforcements spotted by Georgian intelligence on that day. Hence, it should have been for the adversary to start thinking whether to engage in an all-out explicit war with its political costs, or to try a less aggressive, refreshing re-start in relations with Georgia. At the same time, a large scale military clash lasting just a single day could have given the international community a strong signal to engage and halt the confrontation. If lucky, Georgia could have had a better field positions for the moment of international intervention, if not, it was still possible that a belated internationalization of the conflict would have finally taken place and become the main guarantee against Russian subversive activities. And finally, the Georgian operation was opening a corridor and giving time for the almost encircled Georgian villages and the pro-governmental administration to withdraw relatively safely if necessity dictated.

Returning to the general question of the justifiability of the Georgian decision, it is worth mentioning that some realists do not insist that the necessity for an attack or counter-attack should and can be objectively proven. "If states think the offense is strong, they will act as if it were. Thus offense-defense theory has two parallel variants, real and perceptual"<sup>66</sup>. According to Stephen Van Evera, notwithstanding material reality, "the perception of offense dominance is fairly widespread"<sup>67</sup>.

One more observation of Evera's is especially relevant to the justification of the Georgian armed attack on Tskhinvali. Unlike legal experts, he is much more flexible in assessing what constitutes an attack on a state, arguing that "subversion is a form of offense, and it affects international relations in the same way as do offensive military capabilities"<sup>68</sup>. No legal or liberally-minded analyst would argue that Georgia had not been facing subversive activities for years. The linkages of these with Russia did not go unnoticed even by the fact-finding mission operating under EU auspices.

In the light of pre-August 7 events as described by Illarionov, Asmus and the EU fact-finding mission, realists would confirm that Saakashvili's decision was consistent with their understanding of the war and peace equation. For them, these accounts can hardly mean anything but blatant violation of sovereignty and a clear threat to an independent state through subversion or direct intervention, which is a ground for a military response. Unlike some liberal thinkers, realists might not question the West's caution prior to the war or afterwards. But, on the other hand, realists would definitely brush aside any peace studies/conflict-resolution arguments or international bureaucratic advice that Georgia could have further counted on collective institutions, attempted additional reconciliatory steps and the like. According to Mearsheimer, "states temporarily led astray by the false promise of institutionalist rhetoric eventually come to their senses and start worrying about the balance of power"<sup>69</sup>.

**Constructivism, i.e. The Sociological Approach.** With its emphasis on the contextual, subjective nature of truth, constructivism in international relations can be associated with postmodern/post-structural critical theory<sup>70</sup>. But, as Alexander Wendt points out, constructivists accept arguments about the role of structures and remain modernists "who fully endorse the scientific project of falsifying theories against evidence"<sup>71</sup>. Unlike many critical theorists, Wendt agrees that a state is a unit of analysis.

However, constructivists believe that international structures are not only embedded in the material resources and rational choices of politicians, but (a) they might change the identity and the interests of statesmen; and (b) the very existence of structures depends on the shared understanding of their human creators and consumers. Thus the realist "security dilemma" becomes embedded in mistrust and competition between the actors, while the liberal concept of a "security community" rests on common values. In constructivist terms, these social structures are inter-subjective mental constructs which derive from social experience and further shape it<sup>72</sup>.

Such a belief is the source of the constructivists' interest in the role of ideas—norms, values, identity—among international actors. According

to Peter Katzenstein, state-level actors follow norms, which constitute their identity, are enrooted in collective expectations, and might have a strong causal effect<sup>73</sup>. In the constructivist account, the nation-state is like an actor on the stage. His behavior is defined by the role he is given... But it is not only the worldwide cultural concept of the nation state which shapes an actor's identity and behavior. Domestic cultural definitions of the state and its role also influence state identity and action<sup>74</sup>.

An interesting example explaining strategic behavior using the concept of state identity is given by Michael Barnett in *Identity and Alliances in the Middle East*<sup>75</sup>. On the one hand, he defines the liberalist theory of democratic peace as a culturally constructed constitutive norm according to which, if civilized states decide to fight, they endanger the group identity of such states<sup>76</sup>. On the other hand, he uses the example of Israel to show that any individual state identity is not just based on universal international expectations, but constitutes a collection of contradicting values and narratives. In the Israeli case, these are liberal-democracy, religiousness, nationalism, and the Holocaust<sup>77</sup>. One of his conclusions is that to understand state identity one has to analyze not only its relations with other states, but also its interaction with its own society<sup>78</sup>.

Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde give another constructivist insight into the security-related policies and attitudes of international actors. For them, security policy is a “panic” one, employed to check perceived existential threats. Identifying the referent objects to be protected at any cost, the authors agree that “in the political sector, existential threats are traditionally defined in terms of the constituting principle — sovereignty... Sovereignty can be existentially threatened by anything that questions recognition, legitimacy, or governing authority.” On the other hand, they acknowledge that, in the modern world, international regimes and international society are additional referent objects of the political sector of security. Thus these also “can be existentially threatened by situations that undermine the rules, norms, and institutions that constitute those regimes”<sup>79</sup>.

Buzan and his colleagues pay special attention to the act of “securitization” of the issue, meaning the legitimization of special measures, including military, if the referent object is believed to be threatened. “For the analyst to grasp this act... is to understand the processes of constructing a shared understanding of what is to be considered, and collectively responded to, as a threat”<sup>80</sup>. The so-called facilitating conditions—the ability to convince an audience in the existence of signs of a threat—are especially important in this process<sup>81</sup>.

Who does the securitization—and on what premises—are the keys to arguing in a constructivist manner, whether it is Saakashvili, whose order of August 7 was legitimate and thus justified, or the critics from the international community who have grounds in contemporary universal norms and values to speak about his mistake.

On the one hand, constructivists stress that international “epistemic communities” and organizations carry the world institutional and discursive order. States’ jurisdiction and agenda experiences influence of the transnational context. Many nations are dominated by anti-military values, thus making their security policies less assertive<sup>82</sup>. If this is the only or dominant picture of where the world is heading, the Georgian option to take up the challenge and fight would seem inadequate. However, talking about “welfare” versus “warfare” states and considering the former a relatively new phenomenon, constructivists (a) indicate new forms of world disorder, mentioning that religion and societal ideologies might eventually acquire stronger control over global society than international law or industrialism; and (b) they acknowledge the clash between new and old norms, saying that the very existence of a norm does not mean necessary obedience to it<sup>83</sup>. As Carl Kay-sen points out, “the cultural transformation is far from complete. Wars still mobilize national sentiments”<sup>84</sup>. “Disarmers and pacifists in opposition have changed their views when they have led or joined governments. Those who have maintained these views have remained outsiders”<sup>85</sup>.

Sociologically, identity’s primary aim is control, the maintenance of footing, and its objectives are by-products of previous stories, networks and cultural influences<sup>86</sup>. Consequently, identities with story-lines deeply rooted in a belief in an emerging post-national world have an argument against the Georgian attack. These could be members of so-called epistemic communities with post-national/postmodern discourse, or they may represent some international or national bureaucracies from “welfare” states. That is the reason why Saakashvili’s choice does not find unequivocal approval even among some friends who treasure freedom, condemn Russian imperialism, but who do not understand the logic of national interests and strategic calculations.

Following the particular constructivist account mentioned above that not only sovereignty, but also international regimes, rules and norms can be the referent objects of political security<sup>87</sup>, these circles might argue that Georgian policy went against the latter. They may feel and claim that the Georgian attack targeted not simply Ossetian or Russian armed adversaries, but indirectly went against the emerging anti-military culture of the post-national European civilization, thus threatening the supra-national identity of peace-loving democracies. Such logic may lead to the extreme demand of sanction-

ing Georgia, as the above-cited Alexander Cooley and Lincoln Mitchell attempt. However, whether one takes a broader constructivist or liberalist outlook, these critics seem controversial. Unless they reject the right of the independence and the foreign policy choice of nations based on international law, their arguments remain incomplete. But if they attempt to do this, dominant international relations perspectives would not back such an attitude. Neither is the legalistic view so radical, as the fact-finding mission report shows.

At the same time, constructivism sees supra-national cultural tendencies as just one, not necessarily dominant, vision of current international relations. For Buzan, Wendt, Katzenstein and others, national identity and state sovereignty remain particularly important units of analysis. Looking from Georgia's position through constructivist lenses, whether one applies Buzan's argument about securitization and the importance of political security, or White's understanding of how and why identities fight for control, the attack on Tskhinvali is explainable and justifiable:

1. According to many international sources the reason for the attack was deeply rooted in the belief that Georgia's survival as an independent entity, not to mention its territorial integrity, were at stake. And this was not just Saakashvili's personal conviction.
2. Tskhinvali represented the main stronghold of separatists in the centre of the country. Given the undeniable fact of reinforcements coming from Russia in support of the separatists, the protection of the Georgian controlled villages located between Tskhinvali and the Russian border was hardly imaginable by the Georgians unless through a military advance on that town.
3. Arguing that the scale of the objective threat to Georgian villages, to the Georgian government or to the entire country was not high might be relevant for legal experts but not so much from the sociological perspective: Each identity defines threats according to its own judgment. This judgment is inter-subjective, meaning the existence of Buzan's "facilitating condition"—the necessity to convince and to be convinced within the fellow members of a collective identity based on shared experiences and norms. Speaking from a constructivist point of view, even a small but illegal incursion of Russian units, when low intensity fighting was already going on and Putin was openly backing the separatists who were threatening to clean up Georgian villages, was enough for a Georgian military reaction.

However, "facilitating condition" does not work on the part of the episodic communities and international bureaucracies mentioned above, which

have different identity, adhere to norms other than the national, and have a different reading of international rules. As a result of this, arguments and facts might not be able to change their conviction.

Summing up the three theoretical perspectives, constructivists would be the first to accept Saakashvili's explanation that neither would he have survived if he took no action, nor would Georgia have maintained its sovereignty<sup>88</sup>. By and large, most of the above-mentioned liberalist and realist assumptions also back the logic of the Georgian attack. But realists and liberalists who believe in the existence of an extra-perceptual objective reality, as well as some friendly critics of Saakashvili's decision, would continue searching for proof that the threat was really as deadly as Saakashvili and his followers believed. They would look for additional arguments in support of the asymmetric move of the tiny Georgian army against the limitless military potential of Russia. The following chapter attempts to bring extra arguments as to why presidential, governmental or national survival was at stake, thus requiring extraordinary counter-measures.

### *The Complex of Threats Faced by Georgia*

Whether one looks for the causes of the August war as a realist, liberalist or constructivist, a focus solely on the number of troops and the intensity of fire in the conflict zone prior to the Georgian attack does not appear sufficient. No less important is an analysis of the intentions and non-military methods in a long-standing Russian-Georgian confrontation—the broader security context in which the complex of threats to Georgia was embedded. Such an analysis reveals that military pressure on Georgian positions on the ground had just been the tip of the iceberg. At stake was not only Georgian territorial integrity, but its modernization project as well. This context shaped the modalities of reciprocal animosity in general, and the Georgian military attack in particular. The August war was just a “continuation of politics by other means”, to use the classic civil-military concept.

The international community was aware that Putin wanted to depose the Georgian president<sup>89</sup>. But one might still think that this was only because of the Tskhinvali attack, which infuriated the Russians. The EU-sponsored fact-finding mission reveals what sort of political and military provocations preceded the Georgian attack. But the report falls short of assessing the rationale behind such provocations. Ronald Asmus talks about the geopolitical nature of this war, saying that Russia wanted to stop Georgia's drive towards NATO. However, Asmus does not elaborate substantially on the reasons for

the Kremlin's resentment towards the young Georgian elite, and the complex methods or circumstances it could rely on to challenge the Georgian political system.

Andrey Illarionov's largely legal account of continuous Russian military aggression is a useful part of the puzzle. According to this, Georgia had a *casus belli* much earlier than midnight on August 7. But the military/legal logic of his judgment is only one part of the story, still leading towards a discussion of the proportionality of Georgian countermeasures. As to the critical attitude of Lincoln Mitchell, Alexander Cooley or Tom De Waal, despite their deviation from mainstream theoretical assumptions, it can paradoxically help answer the core questions of this paper: Why did Georgia have to attack Tskhinvali, and why even some of Georgia's international supporters find this difficult to justify?

According to Asmus, Saakashvili said that without attacking the adversary the sovereignty of Georgia would not have survived. De Waal and Mitchell do not believe this. The reason for their mistrust is a de-contextualized trust in participation and confidence-building measures; a general distaste of national interests, and Georgia's mixed democratic record. For them, the Georgian government was too nationalistic and reluctant to adhere to good governance practices. Such an attitude, also present in international institutions before the war, contributed to the negligence of the complex threats faced by Georgia, leaving Saakashvili at the mercy of Russian "peacekeeping". This negligence, an inability to understand Georgia's peculiar security dilemmas, is an important component of any explanation of Saakashvili's decision to "shake the world" on August 7.

Post-revolutionary Georgian security sector transformation did face security-versus-democracy dilemmas<sup>90</sup>. Such a phenomenon is well known in security sector reform analysis. But such analysis also reveals that a scholastic approach to establishing democratic control over the security sector in war-torn or conflict-driven societies can be dangerously destabilizing. Relevant research emphasizes that civil society organizations, which are believed to play a crucial part in participatory democracy and in promoting democratic transparency, are not immune from biased sectarian interests<sup>91</sup>. According to some security analysts, "many of those organizations are themselves open to criticisms: for example, for their lack of representation, accountability and questionable implementation of measures that support human security"<sup>92</sup>. Their watchdog activity, while necessary for any democratic polity to tolerate and even encourage, could unintentionally benefit anti-state forces, be they militant fundamentalists, terrorists or the like<sup>93</sup>.



Since the Cold War, security is no longer an exclusive domain of interstate relations: It is being entered by ethnic/religious camps, terrorists and mafias<sup>94</sup>. Logically, the bigger such threats are, the more dangerous they become not only for states, but also for democracy and human rights nationally or internationally. In such conditions a one-sided democratic challenge to states by an influential part of the international epistemic community can be regarded as a postmodern political paradox: Non-state actors become dominant threats for national or international well-being; only states are capable of dealing with them efficiently; but postmodern, post-national critics resist these very states, not offering any other protection from these new threats.

However, such observations have remained largely neglected by local and international opponents of the Georgian government. They have had an impact on some Western decision-makers, themselves under the influence of a postmodern suspicion of traditional national security reasoning. As James Sherr describes it, after the Cold War NATO and EU realism “was also hobbled by Post-modern assumptions which, to this day, exert a powerful influence on mindsets, discourse, and tools of policy. Among these are: The systematic devaluation of nation and state—the building blocks of the modern world—and an overestimation of transnational forces”<sup>95</sup>. Advocacy of limiting a state’s ability to confront anti-systemic forces is also evident among experts in international law. As outlined in the EU-sponsored fact-finding mission report, some lawyers tend to equate state authorities with secessionist movements. According to such a view, if a state splits into two parts, the situation can be seen as interstate war, and each side is entitled to invite a third party in its support<sup>96</sup>.

Such widespread mistrust of the nation state paradigm was one of the important ingredients of the complex nature of the threats faced by Georgia. Its epistemological premise, that a state’s democratic performance can be conducted and assessed separately from its internal/external security challenges and interests, had a risky potential for the belated modernization of the country. Such an attitude contributed to an underestimation of developments leading up to the August war. It did not let Georgia cope with the Russian threat earlier and in a different manner<sup>97</sup>. In James Sherr’s words, “Well before the outbreak of the Russia-Georgia conflict of August 2008, it had become increasingly obvious that the West’s entire post-Cold War and largely post-modern schema of security had done nothing to avert, and perhaps much to abet, the revival of a classically modern, Realpolitik culture of security in Russia”<sup>98</sup>. Together with other causes, including the purely military ones outlined in previous chapters, this could have left Georgia with no other option but to attack Tskhinvali: The Georgian government had grounds

to believe that focusing only on democratic transparency and participation, while being under the constant suspicion of post-national players and not receiving any international hard security assistance, was enabling the separatists and their Russian supporters to dismantle the country.

Besides separatism and its reliance on unintentional encouragement from the international epistemic community, a further new threat was also a factor leading to the August war, namely, organized crime. Fighting it became especially complicated under the scrutiny of NGOs, and the postmodern media capacity to create a virtual reality and manipulate public opinion. This fight contributed to limiting participatory democracy in Georgia and raising critical voices internationally. According to James Sherr cited above, the “demarcation lines prerequisite to political order—internal vs. foreign, military vs. civil, economic vs. political, state vs. criminal—were eroding across Eurasia”<sup>99</sup>. It required a special effort from states and international institutions. Yet again, Georgia’s anti-criminal campaign used to meet a lack of understanding from the same postmodern part of the international community. Any cleavage between Georgian government and representatives of international institutions was becoming fertile ground for Russia to exploit.

But there are further reasons to link the phenomenon of the influential Georgian criminal world to the Georgian-Russian confrontation: Given the international scope of organized crime, the postmodern erosion of the difference between internal and external politics, and the unquestioned fact of separatists’ cooperation with Russia, it is small wonder that there would also exist a connection between Georgian criminals and the same external source of Georgia’s troubles. The fact that, in the nineties, a disproportionately large numbers of Moscow’s mafia bosses were Georgians<sup>100</sup>, speaks for itself in this respect.

The problem of the Georgian mafia for national security when Saakashvili’s team came to power through a popular peaceful uprising in November 2003 was in its interference in every sector of the economy, as well as its intervention into politics. Saakashvili’s predecessor, Shevardnadze, admitted that “thieves in law”<sup>101</sup> had eaten the country<sup>102</sup>. In fact, Georgia under Shevardnadze was becoming a failed or so-called mafia-dominated state.

Saakashvili openly attacked the mafia. Besides its structures, the government targeted some cultural characteristics of Georgian society, namely traditional rhetoric and story sets or styles implicitly linked to criminal mentality<sup>103</sup>. This was part of Saakashvili’s modernization agenda, which implied strengthening or even building state institutions from scratch, challenging ethnic and clan affiliations, and promoting a sense of modern citizenship through new rhetoric and reform of the education system. Logically, all this

would be impossible to achieve without sidelining criminal networks and fighting widespread corruption.

In December 2005, belonging to the mafia world became a criminal offence even without being charged with a specific crime. A reformed Interior Ministry and Prosecutor's Office were conducting operation after operation. The declared zero tolerance of criminals drastically increased the prison population. Taking control of prisons, where the mafia traditionally had shared control with the corrupt authorities, caused riots and deaths. Influential criminals were killed, imprisoned or left the country. Some shady businessmen and politicians with mafia affiliations also went abroad. It all did bring results—the state was instituted in Georgia, and started to deliver public services. In March 2007 Saakashvili declared to Parliament that the backbone of the system of crime bosses had been broken.

However, the story did not end there. The Georgian mafia appeared not very experienced in resisting a revolutionary government, but it did try to survive and wait for a moment to strike back. This moment came in November 2007. Further research is needed to determine what the exact role of the Georgian mafia was in organizing the mass discontent, demonstrations and clashes with the police that occurred in Tbilisi at that time. But the combined attack on the government did shake the fundamentals of the modernization project. If the project had failed, mafia bosses hiding abroad or jailed would definitely have acquired a second chance to return to the scene.

Of course, the November protests had grounds broader than mafia interests. Saakashvili's modernization reforms were painful, leaving thousands of families without a regular income. One outspoken segment of his opponents comprised members of the former science, art and culture nomenklatura. Traditionally this used to enjoy extra care from communist and post-communist leaderships and was respected by mafiosi, but had been neglected by the new government. The fight against organized crime and corruption contributed to the centralization of power, something not liked by the political opposition. Nor did it occur without cases of police brutality resulting in innocent deaths. Despite the fact that for the first time in recent years guilty policemen had been imprisoned, the opposition and the families of victims questioned the thoroughness of the investigations and the severity of the punishments. Some of these, together with representatives of frustrated academic and artistic circles, resorted to ethnic nationalism. Others adopted the language of a post-modern epistemic community. On the one hand, Saakashvili's government was being portrayed as alien to the Georgian primordial soul. On the other hand, he was being challenged through the human

rights discourse. The same people could also have participated in both discourses from time to time.

The scale of the protests, as well as the responses to them, including rhetoric, police operations, and the resignation of Saakashvili with eventual snap presidential elections held in January 2008, indicated that just half a year prior to the war with Russia, the political or regime security in Georgia was under clear threat<sup>104</sup>. A postmodern flavor was added to this by the most popular and powerful private TV channel “Imedi”, which took a clearly anti-governmental stance. Social scientists observe that “what really changes political opinion is events, argument, press photographs and TV”<sup>105</sup>. As mentioned above, the discontent of many dwellers in the capital city had grounds in reality. However, the forms of its expression and channeling depended substantially on subjective images broadcast electronically. Imedi was a mass mobilizer through controversial but appealing accusations that the government was simultaneously betraying ethnic/clan and human rights principles.

On November 7, in the midst of clashes in the streets being broadcast on Imedi TV in a non-stop manner, police raided the channel and took it off the air. The reason was the fear that the TV station had been fuelling religious extremism. Given Imedi’s past record, a distaste for the pro-Western government by some religious circles and the opinion expressed by an Imedi anchor that people did not seem safe even when seeking shelter in a church, such fear was not unjustified. But a result was that Freedom House downgraded Georgia’s score for media freedom<sup>106</sup>.

In confronting protesters with riot police and in shutting down their TV outlet the government believed that it was fighting not only a joint plot by indigenous extremists and criminals, but also the Russian “fifth column” as well. If proved, such a belief could serve at least as an explanation of its actions, which were dubious from the human rights point of view<sup>107</sup>. While the political opposition, journalists and some NGOs who took part in anti-governmental protests strongly deny any relation to organized crime or to Russian special services, the truth appeared more complicated:

Imedi TV was owned by a shady Russian oligarch of Georgian origin, Badri Patarkatsishvili, who had made a fortune in Russia during a period of almost total lawlessness. In those years, according to official sources, about 80% of businesses were making payments to the mafia and 4,000 companies were under its direct control<sup>108</sup>. In autumn 2007 he openly joined the opposition. On the eve of the snap presidential election, a confidential conversation of his with a high-ranking police officer was taped and broadcast on TV. Patarkatsishvili was asking for his assistance in rigging the election and in

“neutralizing” the Minister of the Interior. He did not deny that such a conversation had occurred.

The leadership of the protesters demanded the release of many prisoners, notwithstanding their charges. The prison population was especially excited by the protests, in which thousands of their family members participated. Hundreds of youngsters with a still alive criminal mentality were actively taking part in clashes with the police. Many outspoken leaders of the rallies were directly challenging Saakashvili’s every reform, including his anti-criminal campaign. The report on a Georgian mafia case in Austria indicating financial support to a part of the Georgian opposition in 2009 is also noteworthy, albeit retrospectively, for tracing organized crime in anti-governmental actions<sup>109</sup>.

It is small wonder then that the outburst of xenophobic and clannish/criminal sentiments and traces of the mafia behind the mass rallies could produce a siege mentality in governmental circles. The fact that some journalists and NGOs were complementing backward-looking protests with democratic ingredients added postmodern complications to this attempt at regime change. The November experience would assure the government that, in case of the uninterrupted development of the Russian scenario in the conflict zones, another strike in the capital could be more dangerous, if not deadly. Such perceptions may give rise to the security politics of preemption. The police operation against the protesters in Tbilisi on November 7, as well as the military one on August 7 bear the elements of such preemption against threats which were both seen as too dangerous to wait until their logical end. Hence, the connection of November 7 to August of 7 is indirect, at least stylistic, but not groundless.

This connection would appear much more substantial when and if Russia’s hand in destabilization attempts in Tbilisi is convincingly reckoned. In a way, revealing an alliance between the Georgian mafia and the Russian secret services looks to be the key for an understanding of Georgia’s dangerous security environment and the reasoning behind its August 7 military attack: Having the mafia in the rear, while the Russian/Ossetian advance on Georgian positions seemed imminent, the Georgian government would have struck one side or the other so as to ruin its adversaries’ plans and avoid/delay the possibility of their concerted effort.

Exposure of joint mafia-Russian subversive activity against Georgia could occur in various ways: Investigating the case; collecting general information on Russian state-mafia cooperation for foreign policy purposes; and analyzing the nature of the internal regime of Putin’s Russia. Recent allegations by a senior Spanish investigator are indicative in all these respects. Ac-

ording to him, Moscow's strategy is to use "organized crime groups to do whatever the government of Russia cannot acceptably do as a government". While not saying anything about Russian subversive plans regarding Georgia, he mentions the two most influential Georgian "thieves in law" cooperating with the Russian secret services. "Oniani now enjoyed the protection of both the FSB and Russia's interior ministry even in prison"—says the Spanish investigator<sup>110</sup>.

Putin's regime could not tolerate the Georgian modernization experiment on the systemic account, and this was one of the main reasons for the years-long animosity. In addition to geopolitics, the Kremlin should have had even stronger incentives against Saakashvili's government: Georgian emancipation from its post-Soviet feudal mentality and institutions started in 2003. The process was radical, and conducted in a centralized manner. Some opponents suggested that the Georgian model repeated certain features of Putin's Russia. But a sociological approach reveals qualitative difference between two.

For instance, Harrison White considers "control regimes", including political ones, in connection with decision-making styles, institutions, rhetoric and narratives. He pays special attention to how identities manage to mobilize support<sup>111</sup>, and outlines that adherence to written laws allows individuals to live in more complex societies, where personal connections are not enough for social trust and stable expectations<sup>112</sup>. White divides regimes into corporatist, clientelistic and professional ones. For him, corporatist and professional regimes are based on rights, values, and a division and management of responsibilities. Clientelistic regimes are associated with hierarchical and personalistic patronage ties<sup>113</sup>. According to White, "clientelism has issues of respect, of the following of certain codes of conduct, of rules of reciprocity, as we know, for example, from the Mafia"<sup>114</sup>. On the other hand, corporatism for White is associated with the suppression of personal/clan loyalty by adherence to more abstract ideas, values and less personalized institutions<sup>115</sup>. The author does acknowledge that some features of one regime can be present in another. But to apply White's model to Russia and Georgia, notwithstanding the issue of democracy in this respect, one can speak about strong clientelism in the former and, if not a professional, at least a corporatist regime in the latter.

The Wikileaks cables have contributed substantially to the characterization of the Russian regime. Based on these, an article published in the Guardian newspaper identifies Russia as a corrupt, autocratic kleptocracy centered on the leadership of Vladimir Putin in which officials, oligarchs and organized crime are bound together to create a "virtual mafia state"... Law enforcement agencies such as the police, spy agencies and the Prosecutor's

Office operate a de facto protection racket for criminal networks<sup>116</sup>. The same conclusions can be found in the writings of many authors, Daniel Kimmage being one of them<sup>117</sup>.

Kimmage observes the emergence of a new Russian paradigm that can be associated with White's style, rhetoric and narrative. This includes the propaganda of the Stalinist and Tsarist past simultaneously. Kimmage describes this in the form of a rhetorical question: "Is there a touch of the postmodern in all this free play of decontextualised symbols? Or is it just conceptual chaos?"<sup>118</sup> The style of the Russian regime also involves the mentality and value system of the criminal underworld, famous in Soviet times as a particular "understanding"—the prevalence of an unwritten code of conduct over written laws. This is what Saakashvili attempted to eradicate in Georgian socio-political culture<sup>119</sup>. Clientelism in a modern (or post-modern) sense cannot exist without such codes as alternatives to official legislation.

Some Western thinkers also trace "postmodernism" in Saakashvili's Georgia, albeit not in the sense of stylistic/rhetorical ingredients as in Russia. In "Caucasian Postmodernists"<sup>120</sup>, Alain Gerard Slama compares the Georgian leadership with the Russian one and with some other post-Soviet states. He talks about Georgian differences in terms of its young Georgian leadership, relying on a new generation, on women and on national minorities to depart from a xenophobic and corrupt past. He sees Saakashvili's Georgia as a paradox of simultaneously patriotic and pro-Western experience, which so far survives despite internal and external opposition and looks like an attempt at a "postmodern synthesis".

Observers argue whether the Georgian democratic glass is half full or half empty. But in the sociological/structural terms of Harrison White, one can talk about a peculiar Georgian control regime that fights with mafia-style patron-client chains, while promoting a selfless modernization agenda. By and large, the fight against organized crime, corruption and clientelism was the main reason for the protest rallies, despite what some opposition figures used to say openly or genuinely believe. The social portrait of many protesters and their rhetoric spoke for themselves<sup>121</sup>.

Given the differences between the Russian and Georgian control regimes, their rivalry on geopolitical, sovereignty, energy or any other account was destined to reach an extremely hostile level. This is reflected in the social background of Putin and Saakashvili and their attitudes towards each other. One was educated in the West, and hated communists and the USSR on liberal, as well as national grounds. The other came from KGB circles, and called the demolition of the USSR the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of twentieth century. But their hostility was greater than a personal dislike. The

Georgian control regime was challenging the Russian one in the whole post-Soviet space. As the French analyst Alain Gerard Slama said, Georgia was an interesting model for those who do not refuse to fight for freedom<sup>122</sup>. If so, Putin would have done everything to make Georgia a failure.

The Russian methodology used against the Georgian regime oscillated between traditional, nineteenth-century-style pressures on Georgian sovereignty, including by military means, and a postmodern version of the KGB's "active measures", "reflective control" and information warfare<sup>123</sup>. Being a Russian expression which has entered international jargon, 'disinformation' tactics were especially important. The usage of semi-neutral language, a mixture of facts and interpretations, provision of part of the truth while claiming that it is a complete one are some of its features<sup>124</sup>.

Examples of traditional military pressure have been outlined in previous chapters. These were combined with such crossings of red lines as Russia's unilateral withdrawal from the CIS sanctions regime adopted against Georgian secessionist territories back in 1996. A few weeks later, on April 3, Putin informed the separatists that he would help them practically<sup>125</sup>. These steps can be regarded as a direct challenge to Georgia's political security. All this was backed by manipulation with peacekeeping principles against Georgian sovereignty. During the war this acquired a clear form of the disinformation of the international community: as mentioned above, after August 7 the main Russian argument against Georgia was the controversial deaths of a few Russian peacekeepers.

The following episode is especially interesting in terms of Russia's approach to the creation of a virtual reality: In the midst of the fighting in Tskhinvali, a Russian Deputy Foreign Minister called his Georgian counterpart concerning casualties among the Russian peacekeeping contingent some three hours earlier than the first casualty occurred, according to the Russian Ministry of Defense. To Asmus this constituted "an additional piece of evidence that suggests that the war—including its rationale—may have been replanned"<sup>126</sup>.

In its informational offensive, Russia relied on shell internet companies who would create an image of broad societal anger against the Georgian government. In this way it tried to mask the involvement of Russian intelligence in this activity<sup>127</sup>. But more harmful were the attempts to spread disinformation through more or less reliable media on the international level. Such information, presented in a way "that many will either find plausible or, at the very least, impossible to check... quickly gets picked up by other sources that use it in good faith, which in turn adds credibility to the disinformation"<sup>128</sup>.



During the culmination of the interstate confrontation, the above link between Russian officials and the Georgian mafia would have especially worried the Georgian government. Neither could part of the political opposition to Saakashvili be excluded from possible secret cooperation with the Russians<sup>129</sup>. In addition, the Georgian government did have an argument to suspect Russian meddling in the Georgian media, thus creating a subversive virtual reality directly on Georgian soil. Linkage of the above-mentioned Imedi TV with Moscow's political circles can be based on two assumptions: It was run by owners/experts with an apparent Moscow track record; and its technique of the creation of a virtual reality was quite similar to the Russian media of the nineties.

Imedi TV's former owner was a friend and colleague of the Russian king-makers of nineties, Berezovski and Gusinski. They were jointly creating a Russian media empire that helped the political elite hold onto power through the sophisticated disinformation of the public. They employed high-ranking experts from the former Soviet security service, the KGB<sup>130</sup>. In its fight against the government in 2005-2007, Imedi TV also had Russian consultants in media/political technologies<sup>131</sup>. The fact that neither Patarkatsishvili, nor especially his friends, Berezovski and Gusinski, were in Putin's team at that time, would not change much in Georgian suspicion of Russia's hand: Russian political technologies were rich with cases of the same person being an open opponent and a hidden ally of the ruling class. In any case, helping Putin to restore Russia's influence in Georgia could have brought benefits.

While the story of Imedi ended a few months prior to the Russian-Georgian war when its shady owner suddenly passed away, the government could not resist permanent concern over Russia's connections with the local media, the political opposition or civil society organizations. At times, this could have looked like paranoia resulting from a siege mentality, or just an argument against its internal political opponents, but such concern was not a mystery. Russia was globally "pursuing classical nineteenth-century aims with twenty-first century tools: intelligence and covert penetration, commerce and joint ventures 'lobbying structures' and litigation, energy and downstream investment and, in the former USSR, Russian diasporas and other 'civilizational' forms of soft power"<sup>132</sup> This "soft power", in combination with covert penetration, was nothing but the encouragement of anti-Western attitudes based on xenophobia and the clannish/criminal mentality still to be found in abundance in the region. Informational back-up in such a policy was no less important than the availability of criminal networks ready to seek revenge on Saakashvili.

Paul Goble mentions insightfully that the “Russia-Georgia war of August 2008 was and remains first and foremost an information war, in which the victories and defeats in that sphere were in many ways more important and fateful than those which took place on the ground”<sup>133</sup>. Goble is essentially referring only to the events of August, and the struggle to promote one’s version of the war internationally. But until the outbreak of open warfare, it was not Russian propaganda in the West, promoted by PR companies like the Russia Today TV channel, nor the New York based Institute for Democracy and Cooperation<sup>134</sup>, which could have harmed Georgia most of all. Instead, it was the covert penetration of the Georgian political and societal fabric and discourse that would have delivered the final blow to its government when the appropriate moment came.

Georgian officials got the feeling of the forthcoming final blow in the spring-summer of 2008. The security situation deteriorated extremely in the Tskhinvali region and in Abkhazia as well. As indicated by Ronald Asmus, Saakashvili believed passiveness would have been the most appropriate condition for Russia to dictate its terms and activate all “soft power” measures in the Georgian capital. Undermining Saakashvili’s positions in the conflict zones without fierce resistance or without open and large-scale intervention would allow Russia to direct the nationalist emotions of many ordinary Georgians against its government. So the attack on Tskhinvali can be seen as a sort of asymmetric, aikido-style maneuver to gain the initiative and to redirect the tools of the adversary against himself.

As the initial success of the attack shows, Russia should have either accommodated its results, thus bringing the confrontation to an end, or launch a full-scale invasion and lose any legitimacy as a peacekeeper that it might still have had for some ordinary Georgians or internationally. In the latter case, Russia’s ability for subversive actions against the Georgian government would have been seriously undermined. The Georgian government would have acquired stronger moral and legal grounds to suppress any attempts to cooperate with an openly invading Russia. The mass of Georgians would apparently have united in the face of such developments. And so it happened.

Attacking Tskhinvali, and thus throwing the dice, was a risky tactic. On the one hand, the Georgian government was criticized internationally for being provocative and/or disproportionate. The Russian army almost marched into the capital, stopped only a few dozen kilometers from the government building. But the fact that it was stopped, as well as the still hypothetical but rather probable worst-case scenario if Saakashvili had done nothing, show that the political regime in Georgia had managed to survive, which is the first and foremost task for any government.

Provocation in modern international relations is hardly justifiable either legally or politically when it aims to change the status quo by force or to weaken popular attention to indigenous internal problems by the creation of a foreign “enemy”. History knows such examples, the war initiated by Argentina for the Falkland Islands being one of these. However, the Georgian government acted against the ongoing aggression of “peacekeeping” Russia, which was disguised in—or due to—postmodern conditions<sup>135</sup>. The Georgian advance on Tskhinvali unmasked Russian intentions and gained few days for international interference. The results of the war showed that the international community is still better suited to act against open, large-scale aggression than against it in a low-scale postmodern disguise. With high probability, Saakashvili’s downfall through a low-scale intrusion and masterminded popular protests would have allowed Russia to finish with a rival corporatist regime, which had tried to modernize and emancipate the country. Of course, one cannot measure whether Russia’s covert operations were guaranteed to succeed if Saakashvili waited further for help from the international community. But war is an option against what seems imminent, not what really is.

### *Conclusion*

The midnight military attack by the Georgian army on Tskhinvali was one of the essential events in the contemporary history of the country, highlighting the essence and difficulty of its modernization attempts. This event was an inseparable part of the long-standing Russian-Georgian confrontation, which had deep and multilayered reasons. Given the complex of internal and external threats to Georgian sovereignty and integrity, and looking through the lenses of international relations theory, this attack can be assessed as self-defense.

Moreover, this attack did not seem to have an alternative in the political sense, while the purely military-technical modalities of its conduct do deserve separate and more critical scrutiny. Pre-history and context show that not attacking bore more risks for the political security of Georgia than an open military confrontation with Russia. Hence, a purely legal analysis of the Russian-Georgian war, as presented by the EU-sponsored fact-finding mission report, is insufficient. This attempted to analyze and assess the different stages of the confrontation separately, distributing accusations between the sides stage by stage. Such an approach makes it impossible to see the whole picture and cannot be regarded as academic.

But this report and many other international accounts of the war, particularly those of Georgia's actions, reveal the problematic nature of contemporary international security politics and discourse. International threats multiply and change form. Some states are under intense pressure from non-state actors like organized crime and ethnic extremism, others try to capitalize on this against neighbors. Some analysts observe that assertive, authoritarian states such as Russia "have worked diligently to spread their influence through an extensive web of media concerns, public relations consultants, diplomatic initiatives, and nontransparent aid packages... authoritarian regimes are eroding the international rules and standards built up by the democratic world over the past several decades, threatening to export the instability and abuses that their systems engender"<sup>136</sup>.

The security environment is complex also in another respect. Part of the so-called international epistemic and bureaucratic community constrains the struggle of young, transitional countries for their national interests, while not offering much in exchange. Postmodern, post-national thinking may, paradoxically, overlook alliances of non-state actors and over-assertive authoritarians, and concentrate its critical attitude on smaller modernizing players. At least one is evident: International security regimes find it extremely difficult to uphold international law unequivocally and check disguised regional hegemonic ambitions against weaker neighbors. This does not leave much room for maneuver for countries like Georgia, as the August war case shows.

What lessons can be drawn from this case? Peace researches worldwide should agree that nationalism is not present only in the protection of territorial integrity and sovereignty. Sometimes, more dangerous forms of it can be seen in players challenging these principles. With due attention to the protection of human rights and the freedom of the media, their international advocates should also think more how to check the abuse of these rights by anti-modernist forces. Otherwise, the democratic and peace-loving record of modernizers will remain uneven, because they have to take care of national security on their own. The founding father of liberal institutionalism, Robert Keohane, recently identified his research interest as understanding what particular design will help multilateral institutions to be effective<sup>137</sup>. The Georgian example will definitely help a move towards this goal from a negative perspective.

Allan Collins points out that, while security studies and international relations are dominated by Western thought, "perhaps... we will witness the emergence of specifically African or Asian approaches to the study of security that will force us to rethink core assumptions"<sup>138</sup>. Georgia belongs to neither

of these two, nor is its case contrary to Western thought in general. But maybe it can also help to rethink certain Western approaches.

James Sherr points out that the war contributed to shaping and speeding up the EU Eastern Partnership Initiative. This is a largely technical program, but is also based on the political rationale that the West needs more engagement in this part of the world. He concludes that "...if the EU does not shy away from this potential, the Eastern Partnership will be the clearest indication that the Georgia conflict has served as a rite of passage in the EU's perception of itself."<sup>139</sup> If this happens, Robert Keohane can be assisted in his quest and the genuine post-modern soft power approach can be reconciled with the necessity of transitional states to accomplish their belated modernization tasks.

---

### **Notes:**

1. I do not intend to cover extensively the military part of Georgian strategy or tactics. This goes beyond political science and international relations theory. From a certain point of view, expressed by Dr. Merybeth Ulrich during our discussion at the IPCA Research Committee conference in Ankara on June 17, 2011, this might be a weakness of this research. However, I argue that the rationalistic military/technical ends-means equation, namely the level of readiness of the Georgian army for all possible complications on the ground, is a dependent variable, while the political motivation for the military option is an independent one. On the other hand, the contemporary security rationale is broader than a purely military one. International and/or socio-political factors may outweigh deficiencies in military preparedness, dictating an attack as the best possible scenario. So I approach the military action by a weak Georgia against a strong Russia as a necessary and rational step that had the potential for success, given the overall security and international context.
2. For this approach in international relations see, for example, Ronald L. Jepherson, Alexander Wendt, Peter J. Katzenstein, *Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security*. In: *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, Peter J. Katzenstein, Editor, Columbia University Press, NY, 1996, pp 38-48.

3. Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia and the Future of the West*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
4. See for instance: International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, Report, September 2009, Volume I, [http://www.cellg.ch/pdf/IFFMIG\\_volume\\_I.pdf](http://www.cellg.ch/pdf/IFFMIG_volume_I.pdf).
5. This term has various meanings in the social sciences. It is generally associated with the spread of academic/political skepticism towards master narratives, including nationalism. In this paper, however, the most relevant aspects of the diverse phenomenon of postmodernism or the postmodern condition are the following: an intrinsic mistrust of the Westphalian model of the state among some peace researchers and human rights activists; an increased role for non-state actors in international security, which contributes to blurring the difference between victim and offender; and the increased ability of media outlets to create a virtual reality. As a researcher of postmodernism says, “for many postmodernists, we live in a society of image primary concerned with the production and consumption of mere “simulacra.” *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction*, by Christopher Butler, Oxford University Press, 2002, p 112.
6. International analysts will recall in this regard the rallies and human chains comprising tens of thousands of citizens protesting the Russian invasion and allying themselves with the government against the advance of Russian troops. Moreover, unlike in the nineties when Georgia was in the chaos of civil and ethnic clashes and an upheaval of criminality, in August 2008 Georgian troops did not disintegrate and turn against civilians and the police: the civil administration and the banking system were still carrying out their duties. In a way, Russian aggression might have contributed to a strengthening of the civic/national self-confidence of the modern Georgian nation.
7. Statement, Meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the level of Foreign Ministers, NATO Headquarters, Brussels, on 19 August 2008.
8. Extraordinary European Council, Brussels, 1 September, 2008 Presidency Conclusions. [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/102545.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/102545.pdf).
9. European Parliament Resolution of 3 September 2008 on the situation in Georgia. [http://www.rrc.ge/law/rezolucEU\\_2008\\_03\\_09\\_E.htm?lawid=16666&lng\\_3=en](http://www.rrc.ge/law/rezolucEU_2008_03_09_E.htm?lawid=16666&lng_3=en)
10. European Parliament Resolution of 3 September 2008 on the situation in Georgia. [http://www.rrc.ge/law/rezolucEU\\_2008\\_03\\_09\\_E.htm?lawid=16666&lng\\_3=en](http://www.rrc.ge/law/rezolucEU_2008_03_09_E.htm?lawid=16666&lng_3=en)

11. European Parliament Resolution of 3 September 2008 on the situation in Georgia. [http://www.rrc.ge/law/rezolucEU\\_2008\\_03\\_09\\_E.htm?lawid=16666&lng=3=en](http://www.rrc.ge/law/rezolucEU_2008_03_09_E.htm?lawid=16666&lng=3=en).
12. The Roki Tunnel is the only connection of the former South Ossetian Autonomy to Russia through the Caucasus range and constitutes a legal checkpoint on the international border between Russian Federation and Georgia. In order to enter Tskhinvali from there, until August 2008, one had to pass through a few villages under Georgian control.
13. See for instance: FT.Com Tbilisi admits misjudging Russia, by Jan Cienki, August 21, 2008 19:21.
14. The New York Times, September 16, 2008 Georgia Offers Fresh Evidence on War's Start, by Dan Bilefsky, C.J. Chivers, Thom Shanker and Michael Schwartz.
15. *The Fog Of War, Unraveling the Ossetia Conflict, one Year Later*, The Economist, Aug 13, 2009.
16. International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, Report, September 2009, Volume I, [http://www.cellg.ch/pdf/IIFFMIG\\_volume\\_I.pdf](http://www.cellg.ch/pdf/IIFFMIG_volume_I.pdf) p 29.
17. Ibid p 20.
18. According to Ronald Asmus, this claim (the attack and killing of Russian peacekeepers) had a key impact in Western capitals in reinforcing the sense that Saakashvili had made a foolish move and that Russia had a legitimate right to respond. Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp 42-43.
19. Ekho Moskvi, "Narod Protiv" program. Interview with Andrey Illarionov 8.09.2009.
20. International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, Report, September 2009, Volume I, [http://www.cellg.ch/pdf/IIFFMIG\\_volume\\_I.pdf](http://www.cellg.ch/pdf/IIFFMIG_volume_I.pdf) p 20.
21. Ibid p 2. The second, more detailed volume of the report makes the following clarification: President Saakashvili's order on August 7, 2008 at 23:35 and the ensuing military attack on Tskhinvali turned a low-intensity military conflict into a full-scale armed conflict. Therefore this action justifiably serves as the starting point for a legal analysis of the conflict. Nevertheless, it has to be seen as but one element in an on-going chain of events (International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, Report, September 2009, Volume 2, [http://www.cellg.ch/pdf/IIFFMIG\\_volume\\_II.pdf](http://www.cellg.ch/pdf/IIFFMIG_volume_II.pdf) p 230.
22. International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, Report, September 2009, Volume 2, [http://www.cellg.ch/pdf/IIFFMIG\\_volume\\_II.pdf](http://www.cellg.ch/pdf/IIFFMIG_volume_II.pdf) pp 243-246.

23. International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, Report, September 2009, Volume 2, [http://www.cellg.ch/pdf/IIFFMIG\\_volume\\_II.pdf](http://www.cellg.ch/pdf/IIFFMIG_volume_II.pdf) pp 248-251 As the main proof that the Tskhinvali operation was not defensive, the mission cites a televised interview with one of the officers from the battlefield. With the sounds of a bombardment as background, the officer, who used to command the Georgian part of the pre-war peace-keeping contingent, said that the restoration of constitutional order was under way.
24. Ibid, pp 253-256.
25. According to this article “The use of the armed forces of one state which are within the territory of another state with the agreement of the receiving state, in contravention of the conditions provided for in the agreement” can also constitute an act of aggression.
26. International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, Report, September 2009, Volume I, [http://www.cellg.ch/pdf/IIFFMIG\\_volume\\_I.pdf](http://www.cellg.ch/pdf/IIFFMIG_volume_I.pdf) p 20.
27. Ibid, pp 258-261.
28. *A Little War, that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West*, By Ronald D. Asmus, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp 38-39.
29. Thomas de Waal, *Missiles Over Tskhinvali*, National Interest (online), 20 April, 2010.
30. *A Little War, that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West*, By Ronald D. Asmus, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp 26-28. Asmus indicates the following informational source: press release, Ministry of Press and Mass Media of the Republic of South Ossetia and the RES Information Agency, August 7, 2008 <http://cominf.org/node/1166477896>.
31. Ibid pp 23-24. Asmus here refers to the autonomous administration of Dimitri Sanakoev, an Ossetian himself, which was established in the conflict zone in 2006, with the aim of being included in the formal negotiations format on conflict resolution, thus balancing the pro-Russian separatists.
32. Ibid 31, pp 39-40.
33. Thomas de Waal, *Missiles Over Tskhinvali*, National Interest (online), 20 April, 2010.
34. International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, Report, September 2009, Volume 2, [http://www.cellg.ch/pdf/IIFFMIG\\_volume\\_II.pdf](http://www.cellg.ch/pdf/IIFFMIG_volume_II.pdf) p. 255; pp. 276-280.
35. International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, Report, September 2009, Volume I, [http://www.cellg.ch/pdf/IIFFMIG\\_volume\\_I.pdf](http://www.cellg.ch/pdf/IIFFMIG_volume_I.pdf) p p11, p 31.



36. Temporary Commission of the Georgian Parliament on the issue of Russian military aggression and other actions aimed at undermining the territorial integrity of Georgia [http://intranet.parliament.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=GEO&sec\\_id=1329&info\\_id=22127](http://intranet.parliament.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=1329&info_id=22127) .
37. *A Little War that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West*, By Ronald D. Asmus, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 38.
38. *Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War*, By John J. Mearsheimer, In: *Theories of War and Peace (An International Security Reader)*, Edited by Michael E. Brown, Owen R. Cote, Jr, Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller, The MIT Press, 1998.
39. Patrick Morgan, *Security in International Politics: Traditional Approaches*, In: Allan Collins, editor, *Contemporary Security Studies*, Oxford University Press, 2007, pp 25-31.
40. Pauline Kerr, *Human Security*, In: In: Allan Collins, editor, *Contemporary Security Studies*, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 92.
41. Thomas de Waal, *Missiles Over Tskhinvali*, National Interest (online), 20 April, 2010.
42. Alexander Cooley and Lincoln Mitchell, No Way to Treat Our Friends: Recasting Resent US-Georgian Relations, *The Washington Quarterly*, January 2009, Center for Strategic Studies and International Relations, p. 38.
43. *A Little War that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West*, By Ronald D. Asmus, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp 7-8.
44. *The False Promise of International Institutions*, by John J. Mearsheimer, In: *Theories of War and Peace (An International Security Reader)*, Edited by Michael E. Brown, Owen R. Cote, Jr, Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller, The MIT Press, 1998, p. 383.
45. *The Promise of Institutional Theory*, by Robert O. Keohane and Lisa L. Martin, In: *Theories of War and Peace (An International Security Reader)*, Edited by Michael E. Brown, Owen R. Cote, Jr, Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller, The MIT Press, 1998, p 387.
46. *The Promise of Collective Security*, by Charles A. Kupchan and Clifford A. Kupchan In: *Theories of War and Peace (An International Security Reader)*, Edited by Michael E. Brown, Owen R. Cote, Jr, Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller, The MIT Press, 1998, pp 401-402.
47. Ibid 405
48. Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in The World Order*, Alfred A. Knopf, NY 2003, p. 57.
49. Ibid p. 5.
50. Ibid p. 60.
51. Ibid p 62.

52. Ibid p. 78.
53. *The Promise of Collective Security*, by Charles A. Kupchan and Clifford A. Kupchan In: *Theories of War and Peace (An International Security Reader)*, Edited by Michael E. Brown, Owen R. Cote, Jr, Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller, The MIT Press, 1998, p 404.
54. *A Little War that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West*, By Ronald D. Asmus, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p 60.
55. [www.garnet-eu.org/fileadmin/documents/working\\_papers/0906.pdf](http://www.garnet-eu.org/fileadmin/documents/working_papers/0906.pdf) The Contingent Legitimacy of Multilateralism, Robert O. Keohane, Garnet Working Paper: No 09/06 September 2006, p. 14.
56. David J. Smith, *An Invasion by Any Other Name*, "24 Saati" newspaper, October 7, 2009.
57. Patrick Morgan, *Security in International Politics: Traditional Approaches*, In: Allan Collins, *Contemporary Security Studies*, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 32.
58. Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Theory of International Relations*, McGraw Hill, 1979, p.208.
59. By John J. Mearsheimer, *Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War*, In: *Theories of War and Peace (An International Security Reader)*, Edited by Michael E. Brown, Owen R. Cote, Jr, Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller, The MIT Press, 1998, pp 50-51.
60. By John J. Mearsheimer, *Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War*, In: *Theories of War and Peace (An International Security Reader)*, Edited by Michael E. Brown, Owen R. Cote, Jr, Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller, The MIT Press, 1998, p 42.
61. Thomas de Waal, *Missiles Over Tskhinvali*, National Interest (online), 20 April, 2010.
62. David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, *Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict*, In: *Theories of War and Peace (An International Security Reader)*, Edited by Michael E. Brown, Owen R. Cote, Jr, Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller, The MIT Press, 1998, pp. 303-304.
63. Ibid p.303.
64. John Orme, *The Utility of Force in the World of Scarcity*, In: *Theories of War and Peace (An International Security Reader)*, Edited by Michael E. Brown, Owen R. Cote, Jr, Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller, The MIT Press, 1998, p. 550; pp. 554-555.
65. Georgians mostly controlled the lower parts of the former Ossetian autonomy. Some of their villages were squeezed between Ossetian positions. Ossetians and Russians had control of the tunnel and the mountainous

- road from Russia, through Georgian villages, towards Tskhinvali. As soon as Ossetians got additional reinforcements, Georgian positions might have become defenseless.
66. Stephen Van Evera, *Offense, Defense, and Causes of War*, In: *Theories of War and Peace (An International Security Reader)*, Edited by Michael E. Brown, Owen R. Cote, Jr, Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller, The MIT Press, 1998, p. 56.
  67. Stephen Van Evera, *Offense, Defence, and Causes of War*, In: *Theories of War and Peace (An International Security Reader)*, Edited by Michael E. Brown, Owen R. Cote, Jr, Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller, The MIT Press, 1998, p.91.
  68. Ibid p.70.
  69. John Mearsheimer, *Realist Reply*, In: *Theories of War and Peace (An International Security Reader)*, Edited by Michael E. Brown, Owen R. Cote, Jr, Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller, The MIT Press, 1998, p 438.
  70. I do not devote a special section to critical theory for three reasons: firstly, together with liberalism and Marxism, although from a different epistemological angle, it constitutes the foundation for some of the peace research/ conflict resolution approaches; secondly, it questions whether a state should be the main referent object for security analysis, while our research concentrates on state action/perception; thirdly, it is not the dominant theoretical underpinning of statesmen's logic and action on an international level.
  71. Alexander Wendt, *Constructing International Politics*, In: *Theories of War and Peace (An International Security Reader)*, Edited by Michael E. Brown, Owen R. Cote, Jr, Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller, The MIT Press, 1998, p 420.
  72. Ibid p 417-418.
  73. P.J. Katzenstein, *Introduction: Alternative perspectives on National Security*, In: Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security, Norms and Identity in World Politics*, Columbia University Press, NY, 1996, pp 2-7.
  74. Dana P. Eyre and Mark C. Suchman, *Status, Norms and Proliferation of Conventional Weapons: An Institutional Approach*, In: Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security, Norms and Identity in World Politics*, Columbia University Press, NY, 1996, p 88; p 89; p98.
  75. Michael N. Barnett, *Identity and Alliances in the Middle East*, In: Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security, Norms and Identity in World Politics*, Columbia University Press, NY, 1996.
  76. Ibid pp 409-410

77. Michael N. Barnett, *Identity and Alliances in the Middle East*, In: Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security, Norms and Identity in World Politics*, Columbia University Press, NY, 1996, pp 434-437.
78. Ibid p 447.
79. Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998, p 22.
80. Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998, p 26.
81. Ibid pp 32-33.
82. Ronald L. Jepperson, Alexander Wendt, Peter J. Katzenstein, *Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security*, In: Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security, Norms and Identity in World Politics*, Columbia University Press, NY, 1996, p 48; p 55.
83. Ibid pp 48-49; p 56.
84. Carl Kaysen, *Is War Obsolete?* In: *Theories of War and Peace (An International Security Reader)*, Edited by Michael E. Brown, Owen R. Cote, Jr, Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller, The MIT Press, 1998 p. 458.
85. Ibid 461.
86. Harrison C. White, *Identity and Control, How Social Formations Emerge*, Second Editions, Princeton University Press, 2008, p 1, pp14-15, p337.
87. Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998, p 22.
88. Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p 50.
89. High-ranking French and American officials have admitted that during the ceasefire mediation process, the Russians were openly telling them about this.
90. David Darchiashvili, *Security Sector Reform in Georgia 2004-2007*, Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development, Tbilisi, 2008
91. *Security Sector Reform and Post-Conflict Peace Building*, Edited by Albrecht Schnabel and Hans-Georg Ehrhart, UN University Press 2005.
92. Pauline Kerr, *Human Security*, In: Allan Collins, *Contemporary security Studies*, Oxford University Press, 2007, p 96; p 102.
93. See for instance NGO Monitor's claims on the one-sided assessments of Human Rights Watch representatives concerning the clashes in Palestine. Examining Human Rights Watch in 2008: Double Standards and Post-Colonial Ideology, NGO Monitor, January 13, 2009 [www.ngo-monitor.org](http://www.ngo-monitor.org).
94. 94 Ronald L. Jepperson, Alexander Wendt, Peter J. Katzenstein, *Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security*, In: Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The*

- Culture of National Security, Norms and Identity in World Politics*, Columbia University Press, NY, 1996, p 49, pp 72-74.
95. James Sherr *The Implications of the Russia-Georgia War for European Security*, In: Svante E. Cornell & Frederick Starr, eds., *The Guns of August 2008, Russia's War in Georgia*, Studies of Central Asia and Caucasus, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, London, England, 2009, p.201.
  96. International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, Report, September 2009, Volume 2, [http://www.cellg.ch/pdf/IIFFMIG\\_volume\\_II.pdf](http://www.cellg.ch/pdf/IIFFMIG_volume_II.pdf), p 278.
  97. For instance, if Western democracy assistants worked on Georgian democratic transformation in parallel with checking Russian meddling into its internal affairs or in the conflict zones, democratic development could have been more straightforward and the war avoided.
  98. James Sherr *The Implications of the Russia-Georgia War for European Security*, In: Svante E. Cornell & Frederick Starr, eds., *The Guns of August 2008, Russia's War in Georgia*, Studies of Central Asia and Caucasus, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, London, England, 2009, p 196.
  99. Ibid, p 198
  100. See for instance, Gavin Slade, *Georgia's Mafia: The Politics of Survival*. <http://www.opendemocracy.net/gavin-slade/georgia%E2%80%99s-mafia-politics-of-survival>
  101. A special "title" for Soviet/post-Soviet mafia bosses.
  102. Gavin Slade, *Georgia's Mafia: The politics of survival*, Summary. <http://www.opendemocracy.net/gavin-slade/georgia%E2%80%99s-mafia-politics-of-survival>
  103. For instance, TV shows supportive of the government started ridiculing the mafia world with its habits, including its style of talking and gestures. Its peculiar code of honor, as well as clannish/nepotistic relations, which were deeply rooted in Georgian society and constituted fertile ground for criminality, were especially targeted in a new, pro-governmental rhetoric and style. For the role of such social categories as rhetoric, story sets or styles in establishing particular control regimes or power systems see Harrison C. White, *Identity and Control: How Social Formations Emerge*, Second Edition, Princeton University Press, 2008.
  104. Some scholars equate political security objectives with the protection of the political regime, which is an inherent feature of any polity. See: *What is Security Studies*, By Alan Collins, In: Allan Collins, editor, *Contemporary Security Studies*, Oxford University Press, 2007.
  105. Christopher Butler, *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2002, p 103.

106. For more details of these events, see David Darchiashvili, *Prospects for Liberal State in the South Caucasus, (Interplay of Principles and Security Considerations)*, In: *Non-Traditional Security Threats and Regional Cooperation in the Southern Caucasus*, Edited by Mustafa Aydin, NATO Science for Peace and Security Series, Sub-series E: Human and Societal Dynamics, vol 77, IOS Press, 2011, pp 67-70.
107. Some security analysts suggest that in violent ethnic conflicts states and the international community can consider jamming the inflammatory appeals of media outlets. (See David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, *Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict*, In: *Theories of War and Peace (An International Security Reader)*, Edited by Michael E. Brown, Owen R. Cote, Jr, Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller, The MIT Press, 1998, p325). But case of Imedi was too sophisticated to easily convince the international community of the necessity of drastic measures.
108. Mark Galeotti, *Cross-Border Crime in the Former Soviet Union*, Boundary and Territory Briefing, Volume 1, # 5, IBRU, University of Durham, UK, 1995, p 2.
109. Gavin Slade, *Georgia's Mafia: The politics of survival*, Summary. The author concludes that mafia bosses may be exiled or in jail, but they still exist. And it is clear that if Georgia's destiny can be reversed once, it can be reversed again.
110. Luke Hardling, "Wikileaks Cables: Russian Government "using mafia for its dirty work" [www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/dec/01/wikileaks-cable-spain-russian-mafia](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/dec/01/wikileaks-cable-spain-russian-mafia)
111. Harrison C. White, *Identity and Control, How Social Formations Emerge*, Second Editions, Princeton University Press, 2008, pp 165-224.
112. Ibid pp 239-240.
113. Ibid pp 245-295.
114. Ibid p 255.
115. Ibid pp 320-357.
116. [www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/dec/01/wikileaks-cables-russia-mafia-kleptocracy](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/dec/01/wikileaks-cables-russia-mafia-kleptocracy)
117. He says that since Yeltsin's time, Soviet bureaucracy has been substituted by a selective capitalist kleptocracy, decorative democracy and by attempts to build an illiberal ideology. Daniel Kimmage, *Russia, Selective Capitalism and Kleptocracy*, Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, June 2009, pp 59-60 [http://www.underminingdemocracy.org/files/UnderminingDemocracy\\_Full.pdf](http://www.underminingdemocracy.org/files/UnderminingDemocracy_Full.pdf).
118. Ibid p 63.

119. In a post-war encounter with some Russian politicians, I was told an interesting version of the cause of the war: Saakashvili could not convince Putin by talking with him in the language of international law. He should have approached him “po ponjat’jam” (a Russian expression for the criminal criteria of establishing the truth, literally translated as ‘understanding’ or ‘common sense’).
120. <http://www.lefigaro.fr/mon-figaro/2010/11/23/10001-20101123ART-FIG00644-la-chronique-d-alain-gerard-slama.php>.
121. Nicu Popescu from the European Council of Foreign Relations describes Georgia under Saakashvili’s government as the most reformist post-Soviet state, leaving the Baltic countries aside. While pointing out that in terms of media pluralism and the influence of the opposition parties, Georgian democratic achievements were less clear-cut, Popescu emphasizes the efficient fight against corruption, improved tax collection and foreign investment inflow. He also notes that part of the opposition has questionable dealings with foreign intelligence and exiled oligarchs. Nicu Popescu, *Democracy versus Reformism in the Eastern Neighbourhood*, European Council of Foreign Relations, January 11, 2011.
122. <http://www.lefigaro.fr/mon-figaro/2010/11/23/10001-20101123ART-FIG00644-la-chronique-d-alain-gerard-slama.php>
123. These methods are diverse. Experts on Russian subversive tactics, as well as on Russian-Georgian rivalry, point out the techniques of deception, disinformation, the usage of agents provocateurs, the creation of a virtual reality which would enable them to mislead, to seed internal divisions and eventually to entrap/control the opponent. See: *Provocation, Deception, Entrapment: The Russo-Georgian Five Day War*, CW Blandy, March 2009, Advanced Research and Assessment Group, Caucasus Series, 09/01, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom; Andrew Wilson, *Virtual Politics, Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World*, Yale University Press, 2005; James Sherr *The Implications of the Russia-Georgia War for European Security*; and Paul A. Goble, *Defining Victory and Defeat: The Information War Between Russians and Georgians*, In: Svante E. Cornell & Frederick Starr, eds., *The Guns of August 2008, Russia’s War in Georgia*, Studies of Central Asia and Caucasus, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, London, England, 2009.
124. See: [www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=disinformation](http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=disinformation).
125. Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p 146.
126. Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p 45.

127. Ibid p 166-167. On the role of cyber warfare in Russian information strategy, and the employment of criminals in its conduct, see: Khatuna Mshvidobadze, *Is Russia on the Wrong Side of the Net?* 22, 2 March 2011, JDW, [jdw.janes.com](http://jdw.janes.com).
128. Paul A. Goble, *Defining Victory and Defeat: The Information War Between Russians and Georgians*, In: Svante E. Cornel & Frederick Starr, eds., *The Guns of August 2008, Russia's War in Georgia*, Studies of Central Asia and Caucasus, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, London, England, 2009, p 190. According to the author, in its informational successes Russian propaganda relied on the presence of many international journalists in Moscow. Ibid, p 186.
129. Saakashvili's opponents started openly visiting Moscow after the war. A former speaker of the parliament, Nino Burjanadze, was especially welcomed by Putin. In May 2011, planning new anti-governmental actions, Burjanadze and her son talked about the necessity to fight with Saakashvili even with arms. In her son's opinion, if Georgian troops moved against them, they would have to face Russian special units. Nino Burjanadze did not deny this conversation, which was taped and broadcast on TV. She just claimed that the recording was taken out of context. While being legally insufficient to prove the preparation of an armed coup with Russian help, this recording does provide ground for governmental concerns regarding the existence of a Russian fifth column in the country. Using the retrospective method, such facts can shed additional light on the internal security situation in August 2008.
130. Andrew Wilson, *Virtual Politics, Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World*, Yale University Press, 2005, pp 8-32.
131. Interview with Oleg Panfilov, Director of the Center for Journalism in Extreme Situations, December 2009.
132. James Sherr *The Implications of the Russia-Georgia War for European Security*, In: Svante E. Cornel & Frederick Starr, eds., *The Guns of August 2008, Russia's War in Georgia*, Studies of Central Asia and Caucasus, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, London, England, 2009, p 224.
133. Paul A. Goble, *Defining Victory and Defeat: The Information War Between Russians and Georgians*, In: Svante E. Cornel & Frederick Starr, eds., *The Guns of August 2008, Russia's War in Georgia*, Studies of Central Asia and Caucasus, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, London, England, 2009, p 182.
134. Daniel Kimmage, *Russia, Selective Capitalism and Kleptocracy*, Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, June 2009, p 59-60 [http://www.underminingdemocracy.org/files/UnderminingDemocracy\\_Full.pdf](http://www.underminingdemocracy.org/files/UnderminingDemocracy_Full.pdf).



135. The author expresses his gratitude to Dr. David Mares, former president of IPSA RC, who pointed out the usefulness of such a comparison.
136. *Undermining Democracy, 21st Century Authoritarians*, Freedom House, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, June 2009, p 11. [http://www.underminingdemocracy.org/files/UnderminingDemocracy\\_Full.pdf](http://www.underminingdemocracy.org/files/UnderminingDemocracy_Full.pdf).
137. Theory Talks, Theory Talk No9: *Robert Keohane on Institutions and the Need for Innovation in the Field* [www.theory-talks.org/2008/05/theory-talk-9.html](http://www.theory-talks.org/2008/05/theory-talk-9.html)
138. Allan Collins, *What is Security Studies*, In: *Contemporary security Studies*, Allan Collins, editor, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 4.
139. James Sherr *The Implications of the Russia-Georgia War for European Security*, In: Svante E. Cornell & Frederick Starr, eds., *The Guns of August 2008, Russia's War in Georgia*, Studies of Central Asia and Caucasus, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, London, England, 2009, p 212.