

# Russia, Georgia, and Abkhazia

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Russia's[j] relations with Georgia and Abkhazia since the breakup of the Soviet Union and a reflection of Russia's consistent strategies and tactical foreign policy goals towards the post-Soviet space, the near abroad the former Soviet socialist Republics (SSRs)[ii] dating to the earliest years of the Boris Yeltsin presidency. The changes in Russia's actions towards Georgia and Abkhazia during Vladimir Putin's second presidential term are due to changes in Russia's capabilities, the international environment (especially in Europe and MENA), and the actions of the former SSRs themselves. What follows will be a review of Russian policy toward the former SSRs generally; Abkhazia-Georgia relations from the twilight of the Soviet Union to 2008; the Russo-Georgian War of August 2008 and the consequences of that brief but intense war, and concludes with observations on Russia, Georgia, and Abkhazia.

## **Russia and the Near Abroad**

Even when the Russian government was weakest in 1992-1993 and again in 1998-1999, Moscow has wanted the former SSRs to be seen by the West and by the former republics themselves as existing within a Russian sphere of influence. What that meant in practice is that the successive Russian governments have wanted the former SSRs to be *protectorates* of Russia and for their protectorate status to be recognized by the world, especially Europe and the USA. Although the Russian government itself had used the phrase "sphere of influence" to denote its interest in being the dominant state in the former SSRs, protectorate is a better term for what Russia actually has wanted and expected in its relations with the former SSRs.[iii]

Historically, a protectorate is an independent country whose foreign and defence policy are determined by a stronger country. Usually, the protectorate country grants a military base, that many times include a fuel depot or fuel storage facility, to the "protecting" country. Laws dealing with domestic issues and in, usually, purview of the protectorate's government.[iv]

Russia has wanted to determine or guide the defence and foreign policies of the former SSRs, and as part of these preferred relationships, has wanted states, especially The USA and Europe, and international organizations to grant Russia authority to act to maintain peace and stability in the former SSRs. Some have called this preference Russia's Monroe Doctrine (Stent, 2019: 35) but it is closest to the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine than to the Doctrine itself.[v]

The importance of the former SSRs has been stressed in a number of Russian government documents and by a range of Russian officials. Alexei Arbatov, then a member of the Russian State Duma, explained "Consistent policymaking should be envisioned as the maximum desirable goal, economic integration and close political cooperation with some of the principal republics. The minimal vital goal should be good neighbourly relations with them

and the prevention of an emergence of a coalition of republics hostile to Russia, supported by major powers.” (emphasis added) (Arbatov, 1994; 14). The first speaker of The Duma flatly asserted that the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is “the zone of Russia’s interests... where Russia must say: Gentlemen, keep out of here, it will be bad for you if you don’t.” (Drezner, 1997: 75).

A Russian Foreign Ministry document in December 1992 states that Russia needed to be the defender of stability in the former SSRs (Porter and Savietz, 1994: 88) (Toal, 2017: 83). The CIS Treaty on Collective Security appeared on 15 May 1992. Article One said “The participating states will not enter into military alliances or participate in any groupings of states, nor in actions directed against another participating state.” (Rivera, 2003; 92).

President Yeltsin on 28 February 1993, asked the international community to acknowledge that Russia has a right of intervention in the former SSRs. Specifically, Yeltsin said “Stopping all armed conflicts on the territory of the former USSR is Russia’s vital interest. The world community sees more and more clearly Russia’s special responsibility in this difficult undertaking.” (Toal, 2017: 83,84) Later that year, foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev declared that if Russia did not intervene in the former SSRs, then Russia would face “losing geographical positions that took centuries to build.” (Toal, 2017: 83,84)

President Dmitry Medvedev in September 2008 reiterated the interests of Russia in the former SSRs: “There are regions in which Russia has privileged interests. These regions are home to countries with which we share special historical relations.” For Medvedev, Russia’s “traditional sphere of interests” includes the countries of the near abroad.” (Allison, 2008: 1167). Former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev defended Russia’s war against Georgia in terms of Russia’s interest in The Caucasus, but his statement can be applied to all of the former SSRs (except possibly The Baltic States):

“By declaring The Caucasus, a region that is thousands of miles from The American continent, a sphere of its ‘national interest,’ The United States made a serious blunder... It is simply common sense to recognize that Russia is rooted there by common geography and centuries of history. Russia is not seeking territorial expansion, but it has legitimate interests in this region.” (Mankoff, 2014: 66; Gorbachev, 2008: A13)

Russian President Vladimir Putin’s opposition to additional former SSRs joining NATO is a reflection of Russian national security interests since the beginning of the Yeltsin presidency. Putin was very clear in the Spring of 2008: “We view the appearance of a powerful military bloc on our borders...as a direct threat to the security of our country. The claim that this process is not directed against Russia will not suffice. National security is not based on promises.” (Toal, 2017: 125)

Different Russian governments have been so insistent and consistent in their assertion of Russia’s special interest in the former SSRs because there has been a consensus view that Russia’s security border does not lie at the borders of Russia but instead lie on the external borders of the former Soviet Union. Yeltsin in 1995 described Russia as “the leading power in the formation of a new system of interstate political and economic relations over the territory of the post-Soviet expanse” (Drezner, 1997: 75). Earlier in January 1992, Vice President

Alexander Rutskoi wrote that “The historical consciousness of Russians will not permit anyone to mechanically bring the borders of Russia in line with [the borders of] the Russian Federation.” Later that year in April, Evgenii Ambartsumov, chair of the parliament's Committee on International Affairs stated that “Russia is something larger than the Russian Federation in its present borders. Therefore, one must see its geopolitical interests much more broadly than what is currently defined by the map. Precisely from this starting point do we intend to develop our formulation of mutual relations with the near abroad.” (Rivera, 2003: 87).

Gorbachev's comment that Russia's interest in the former SSRs is “rooted” in “centuries of history” points us to the obvious reason for Russia's concern about the near abroad. As Stent noted, “the USSR was larger than any previous Russian state” in 1945 while the dismantling of the Soviet Union “reduced Russia to the smallest size it has been since 1654.” (2019: 142-143). In less than three score and ten years, the gains of centuries disappeared. Not to put too fine a point on it, “There was no precedent in Russian history for accepting the loss of territory.” (Stent, 2019: 17).

Russia throughout its history expanded and contracted territorially. From the Imperial Russian rulers' point of view, Russia could be safe only if it conquered neighbouring territory, following what Stent has described as “defensive expansion.” Russia has faced invasions from the West repeatedly: Poland in the 1500-1600s; Sweden in the 1600s-early 1700s; Napoleon in 1812, Imperial Germany in 1914-1919, and Nazi Germany in 1941-1945. Only by securing greater and greater territory could Russia absorb the assaults and protect its heartland and launch counterassaults and new expansions. From Russia's perspective, having friendly neighbouring states is not a luxury, it is a national security necessity. (Kotkin. 2016: 4).

It's through this context of Russian history and the positions of the post-Soviet governments that Russia's interest in having friendly neighbours must be understood. After the Kuchma government of Ukraine signed a NATO partnership agreement in 1997, then Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov said that from the Russian point of view, “The geopolitical situation will deteriorate” if NATO were to “engulf that territory of the Warsaw Pact.” Primakov expressed the concern that “should NATO advance to new staging grounds, the Russian Federation's major cities would be within striking range of not only strategic missiles, but also tactical aircraft.” (Gotz, 2016: 308-309; Toal, 2017:125).

Ukraine announced in 2006 that NATO's annual Sea Breeze exercises as part of NATO's Partnership for Peace Program would be held in Crimea. Ukraine ignored the resulting Russian protests. Putin and other Russian officials repeatedly and publicly had clearly stated that Ukraine and Georgia being brought into NATO was a “red line” and it would be opposed by Russia. (Asmus, 2010: 127). President Putin could not be more direct: “We view the appearance of a powerful military bloc on our borders... as a direct threat to the security of our country. The claim that this process is not directed against Russia will not suffice. National Security is not based on promises.” (Gotz, 2016; 311)

As Darden has demonstrated clearly, the international environment from 1991 to 2008, if not until 2016, would appear very threatening to Russia. U.S. military spending increased from \$415 billion to \$610 billion from 2000 to 2005, while NATO expanded with the Czech Republic,

Hungary, and Poland in 1999, and with Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia in 2004. Further, as already mentioned, NATO announced in 2008 that Georgia and Ukraine “will become members.” If these actions were not enough, the U.S. government announced that foreign democratization was a new international security interest. To sum up: “If the perception of threat derives from a combination of capability and intent, one would have to be strongly committed to the idea of the benevolence of American power and influence to not find the United States threatening [to Russia] in the post-Cold War period. (Darden, 2017: 131).

Russia’s specific demands/interest have been consistent across both time and geographic place as it has attempted to turn the former SSRs into Russian protectorates. In the former SSRs, Russia has demanded control over strategic Soviet assets (and is willing to achieve this by long term base contracts), right to military bases and stationing their troops there, protection of Russians outside and control (ownership) of energy deposits and infrastructure (what Cooley calls “National Security Infrastructure”) (2000-2001: 113) (willing to reach agreement by debt-equity swaps). Continued control of military bases by Russia would permit it to continue intelligence gathering, realize cost savings since housing would not need to be built for the soldiers in Russia and would give Russia foreign policy leverage (Drezner, 1997: 75-79).

Russia was particularly interested in Georgia due to its geographical location, its energy infrastructure and resources and because Transcaucasia, like Ukraine, appears to be part of the geographic image that Russians have of Russia, their “affective geopolitical” understanding of their country. (Nation, 2015: 2-6; Toal, 2017: 44-49).

It is difficult to discuss Russian foreign policy in the early 1990s towards Georgia because of the disarray at the very top of the Russian government and the resulting lack of control of Soviet then Russian officials on the ground in Georgia. Also, it is not possible to explain Georgian-Russian relations without at least mentioning actions that people took in Abkhazia. Hopf flatly asserts that “There was no Russian state for most of 1992.” The foreign ministry was fighting a losing battle for control of foreign policy against the Supreme Soviet and the Presidential Administration while more of the Federal government bodies controlled the local Russian military forces. (Hopf, 2005: 226). Even when Russian state government bodies were cohering in 1993, Yeltsin was in a ferocious struggle with the national legislature and needed the support of the defence minister Pavel Grachev to win that struggle, and Grachev supported Abkhazia. (Hopf, 2005: 231).

The Abkhaz Supreme Soviet passed a resolution on the State Sovereignty of The Soviet Socialist Republic of Abkhazia which the Georgian legislature declared null and void (Mihalkanin, 2004: 147). Georgia held a national referendum to decide on Georgia independence on 31 March 1991. Although non-Georgians boycotted the election, 98 percent of the voters supported “the restoration of independence of Georgia” based on Georgia’s declaration of independence of 26 May 1918. At the urging of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Georgia’s ruler, the Georgian Supreme Soviet declared Georgia independent on 9 April 1991 by a unanimous vote (D’Encausse, 1993: 262; Anchabadze, 1998: 137; Barner-Barry and Hody, 1995: 215).

Georgia refused to join the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) formed at the time of the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991. The Russian government had multiple goals concerning Georgia based on their competing government bodies with the result that they contradicted each other. The Ministry of Defence and the Russian military wanted a military base, access to the Turkish border, and control of Soviet military facilities. The Duma and regional leaders supported Abkhazia. The Foreign Affairs Ministry wanted to reduce Georgia's importance in Transcaucasia. Yeltsin supported Georgia so that it would join the CIS and generally cooperate with Russia. The local Russian military forces in the region supported Abkhazia backed by their superiors in Moscow (Filippov, 2009: 1831; Hopf, 2005: 228-230).

Russia's competing interests and goals were played out in the glare of the Abkhazian-Georgian War of 1992-1993 as the new Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze attempted to win the war he had initiated and protect his government from the forces of Gamsakhurdia, the Zviadists, who had launched a major attack to win back control of the country.

In the face of losing his war against Abkhazia and the threat that the Zviadists posed to his government, Shevardnadze agreed to Georgia joining the C.I.S. and that body's Collective Security Treaty. Georgia also agreed to leasing Russia four military bases for 25 years. Russia promised to protect all the borders of Georgia and to help it defeat the Zviadists forces. Russia secured the rail line from Poti to Tbilisi and Russian naval forces secured Poti. Russia and Georgia signed a Treaty of Friendship, Neighbourliness and Cooperation on 4 February 1994 and in July of that year, Russia sent 3,000 peacekeepers to Abkhazia (Mihalkanin, 2004: 150; Hopf, 2005: 229; Porter and Saivetz, 1994: 85, Glennly, 1994: 47; Barner-Barry and Hody, 1995: 270).

Although the Yeltsin government wanted excellent relations with Georgia and other SSRs, his government consistently used "economic coercion to extract concessions" from them to maintain Russian influence (Drezner, 1997: 65). Hedenskog and Larssen identified at least fifty-five incidents since 1991 in which Russia used cutting of gas shipments, threats to cut off gas supplies, even bombing of pipelines on Russian soil, and substantially increased gas prices when Georgia refused to sell its pipeline networks to Russian companies (Cameron and Orenstien, 2012: 29-30). Russia also offered debt for equity swaps as a carrot.[vi]

Although Georgian-Russian relations were good, in part by Russian actions that impoverished Abkhazia, Shevardnadze chafed at Georgia's subordination to Russia. In 1999, the Georgian government began to express an openly pro-Western orientation. In February 1999, the Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Security formally requested that NATO "protect Georgia's Security and independence" (Feinberg, 1999: 18). Shevardnadze echoed the request in April 1999 and promised in October 1999 that Georgia "will knock vigorously at NATO's door" in 2005 (Fuller, 2001: 4,6).

Russia's concern about NATO crystallized in 1999. In addition to the statements of the Georgia government about NATO, NATO actions themselves exacerbated Russia's concerns. The Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland joined NATO and less than a week later, NATO bombed Belgrade in March 1999. Yeltsin angrily asked, "Wasn't it obvious that each missile directed against Yugoslavia was an indirect strike against Russia?" (Stent, 2019: 120-123).

Putin, Prime Minister in August 1999 and then President in 2000, was initially open to exploring a positive relationship between Russia and NATO, but Putin did protest against the substantial enlargement in 2004 when seven Eastern European states joined. However, his protests did not register with the U.S.A. despite Putin's unprecedented cooperation with the U.S.A. in its war on terrorism.

Putin increased pressure on Georgia, starting in 2000. Russia repeatedly cut off natural gas supplies to Georgia in the winter of 2000. In December of that year, Russia required Georgians to have visas to travel to Russia. Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov accused Georgia of not fighting terrorism sufficiently while Sergei Ivanov referred to Georgia as a "nest of terrorists" (Filippov, 2009: 1833).

In response, Georgia sent troops to the Pankisi Gorge in late August 2002 and announced the next month that it had 2,500 troops patrolling the Gorge. Moving the goalposts, Putin stated that Georgian territory had been used by terrorists who attacked the U.S.A. on 9/11 and Russia in 1999. Under pressure, Shevardnadze agreed to a number of concessions including the establishment of joint Georgian-Russian border patrols. Shevardnadze's domestic opponents condemned the concession (Filippov, 2009: 1833-1834).

The Russian position hardened in response to the terrorist attack on a school in Beslan in September 2004, which affected Russia as 9/11 affected the United States. The Russian government was convinced the terrorists had outside help and even as the school siege was unfolding, Russian officials suspected Georgian help. These suspicions were another burden on Georgian-Russian relations after Mikheil Saakashvili took the presidential oath in January 2004, after peacefully overthrowing Shevardnadze in The Peace Revolution of November 2003. Saakashvili wanted Georgia to join both the E.U. and NATO and ingratiate himself with U.S. President George W. Bush (Filippov, 2009: 1835; Toal, 2017: 146-147, 151).

Saakashvili's diplomatic and military statecraft faced a Russia increasingly opposed to his government. Saakashvili seems to have believed that he would be able to restore Georgian territorial integrity, while also leading his country into NATO and the E.U., in the face of serious Georgian dependency on Russia. Georgia received 88% of its natural gas from Russia in 2006. At the start of that year, Russia cut off gas shipments to Georgia (and Ukraine). Coordinated bomb explosions on Russian territory damaged two gas pipelines to Georgia in January 2006 while Russia cut electric lines to Georgia. Russia forced Georgia to accept gas price increases from \$63 per TCM in 2005 to \$110 TCM in 2006, and \$235 TCM in 2007 (Newnham, 2011: 137, 140-142).

Furthermore, in the spring of 2006, Russia banned the importation of Georgian wine and mineral water which were the two largest Georgian exports to Russia. Russia suspended all transportation and postal services to and from Georgia in October 2006. The Russian action was taken in retaliation for Georgia arresting four Russian officers on espionage charges, even though Georgia quickly released them. Russia increased the deportation of thousands of Georgians from Russia in 2006 and 2007, causing the guest-workers substantial hardship. The Russian actions were retaliation for Georgia sending troops to Iraq and continuing to express its desire to join NATO. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Ivanov stated publicly that Georgia

(and Ukraine) joining NATO “is unacceptable to Russia” (Lapidus, 2007: 152-154; Newnham, 2011: 142; Karagiannis, 2013: 79; Toal, 2017: 152-153).

### **Abkhazian-Georgian Relations**

From all the evidence, the Abkhazian people have been in “continuous occupation of the land over the last three millennia”. Christianity was introduced into Abkhazia during Justinian’s reign. Abkhazia was forged into a nation from wars against Arabs, Byzantium, and Persia from the sixth through the eighth centuries (Benet, 1974: 6-7; Bgzhba, 1998: 59-60). Leon II established the Kingdom of Abkhazia after decisively defeating an Arab army in the late eight century. The Kingdom of Abkhazia included what is today’s western Georgia and it lasted for roughly 200 years. Bagrat III (c. 960-1014) was the King of Abkhazia (as Bagrat II) and the King of Georgia (as Bagrat III) from 1008 until his death. For the 200 years of the Abkhazian Kingdom’s existence, the term “Abkhazia” referred ambiguously either to Abkhazia proper or to the whole of today’s western Georgia. Bagrat inherited from his Abkhazian mother, Gurandukht’, the Abkhazian Kingdom in 978. He was the first king to unite Abkhazia with all Kartvelian-speaking lands after inheriting most Georgian provinces from his father Gurgen in 1008. Mediaeval Georgia reached its zenith during the reign of Queen Tamar (1184-1213) (Bgzhba, 1998: 60; Hewitt, 2009: 184).

Georgia could not withstand the overwhelming force of the Mongol invasions and broke apart into many kingdoms and principalities. Abkhazia developed into a separate principality and became a protectorate of Russia in 1810, running its domestic affairs until the 1860s. Most Abkhazians left their homeland for the Ottoman Empire after the Abkhazia revolts of 1866 and 1877-1878, the latter allied to the Turks in the Russo-Turkish War. Due to Russian expulsions and Abkhazian fears of Russian retaliation, between 120,000 to 200,000 Abkhazians left Abkhazia for Turkey. The Abkhazians refer to those migrations as the Great Exile, *Makhadzhistvo* (Lak’oba, 1998: 78, 80; Hewitt, 2009: 185).

In some ways, the hostility between Abkhazia and Georgia (from the late 1970s until today) can be traced to the years of upheaval in Russia from 1917 to 1921. Abkhazia joined The Union of United Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus after the first Russian Revolution of 1917. In November of that year, an Abkhazian assembly established the Abkhazian People’s Council, This new council approved a declaration calling for the “self-determination of the Abkhazian people ” on 9 November 1917. The Union of United Mountain Peoples was reorganized into the North Caucasian Republic on 11 May 1918 with Abkhazia being one of its constituent territories. Georgia declared its independence on 26 May 1918 and signed a treaty with Abkhazia on 11 June (Lak’oba, 1998: 89, 186, 89-90; Hewitt, 2009: 185-186).

Yet, in late June 1918, Georgia invaded Abkhazia. Georgia’s military rule of Abkhazia ironically facilitated the establishment of Soviet rule on 4 March 1921 and the Abkhazian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) was proclaimed officially on 31 March 1921. Abkhazia, with full republic status, became a member of the Transcaucasian Federation. This federation was an original part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) formed on 30 December 1922. Abkhazia adopted a constitution in 1925. This constitution codified both Abkhazia’s treaty relationship with Georgia and its union republic status - Nest’or Lak’oba, an Abkhazian, led the Abkhazian government from 1922 to 1936. Lak’oba resisted introducing collectivization to Abkhazia in

1930 and 1931. Joseph Stalin agreed not to force collectivization if Lak'oba agreed to reduce Abkhazia's status to an autonomous republic within Georgia. The status change went into effect in February 1931 (Chervonnauya, 1994: 22-27; Lak'oba, 1998: 90-93; Ozgan, 1998: 188; Hewitt, 2009: 186).

Lavrenti Beria became head of the Georgian Communist Party in 1931 and the head of the whole of Transcaucasia in 1932 with Lak'oba's support. Beria presented Lak'oba with a plan to resettle Georgian peasants to Abkhazia. Lak'oba purportedly said "over my dead body." The next day on 16 December 1936, Lak'oba was murdered, some allege by Beria. Stalin, a Georgian, and Beria, a Mingrelian, led the terror with forced relocation and exile and executions in Abkhazia. Beria supervised the forced resettlement from 1937 to 1953 and purged the Abkhazian government. Beria's policies resulted in a further reduction in the ethnic Abkhazian proportion of the population in Abkhazia from 28 percent in 1926, 18 percent in 1939, and 13.3 percent in 1950 and 1955 (Lak'oba, 1998: 24, 94, 95; Hewitt, 1995: 186, Lak'oba, 1990: 17, 29; Slider, 1985: 52-53; Hewitt, 2009: 186).

Beria oversaw a frontal assault on Abkhazian culture which worsened after World War II. The new Beria-installed Abkhazian government introduced a new Abkhaz alphabet and script based on Georgian. According to Slider, "The period after World War II until Stalin's (and Beria's) death in 1953, was an especially harsh one for the Abkhaz, as Beria launched a campaign apparently designed to obliterate the Abkhaz as a cultural entity." The Abkhazian government forced all schools to close that used Abkhaz as the language of instruction and made the Georgian language mandatory in all Abkhaz schools. The government stopped all Abkhaz journals, Abkhaz language radio broadcasts and Abkhaz newspapers. The Soviet government gave the best land to the new Georgian settlers and increased access to higher education for them to the detriment of Abkhazians. The Soviet government was drawing up plans after World War II to relocate all Abkhazians to Kazakhstan or Siberia (Slider, 1985: 53-54; Lak'oba, 1998: 17,95; Chervonnauya, 1974: 29-31; Hewitt, 1995: 203-4).

The most overt anti-Abkhazian policies ended with the deaths of Stalin and Beria in 1953. Abkhaz schools reopened using a new alphabet for the Abkhaz language and Abkhaz language journals, newspapers and radio broadcasts began again, but the Stalin-Beria oppression created a fundamental mindset towards the Georgians in the Abkhazians. In 1957, 1964, 1967,1978, and 1989, Abkhazians organized many meetings demanding Abkhazia be detached from the Georgia SSR. Although the Soviet government did not agree to these requests, the USSR did respond - the number of Abkhazian schools increased from 39 in 1966 to 91 in 1978; the number of Abkhazians in office as district- and city- secretaries increased from 4 percent in 1949 to 37 percent in 1978 and as party department heads, from 29 percent in 1949 to 45 percent in 1978 (Ozgan, 1998: 187; Lak'oba, 1998: 96-97; Slides, 1978: 53-54).

The Abkhazians still had grievances. The only official language in Georgia was Georgian, but according to the 1979 Soviet census, only 1.4 percent of the Abkhazians spoke it. University entrance exams were in Georgian. Finally, the government budget for Abkhazia was 40 percent lower on a *per capita* basis than Georgia's while capital investment for Georgians increased 39.2 percent, whereas in Abkhazia the increase was only 21 percent. There were only 34 Abkhazian graduate students in all of the USSR in 1975 (Slider, 1985: 54, 57, 57; Lak'oba, 1998:96).



As a result of the demonstrations and mass-meetings in 1978, the Sukhum(i) Pedagogical Institute was transformed into the Abkhazian State University, which resulted in a substantial increase in the size of the student body. Further, two new Abkhaz art and education journals began publishing while Abkhaz television started to broadcast in the Abkhaz language in November 1978. Finally, new capital investment brought new roads, airports, hospitals, and schools. As a result, there “was Georgian disquiet, an Abkhazian demand for even greater reforms and a deterioration in relations with Abkhaz and Georgian nationals within Abkhazia” (Slider, 1985: 60-64; Hewitt, 1995: 205; Lak’oba, 1998: 98; Mihalkanin, 2004: 146).

As a result of Abkhazian advances, in 1978 Georgia restarted a policy of resettling Georgians in Abkhazia in order to decrease the Abkhazian percentage of the population in Abkhazia. This was achieved by granting students in the Georgian language sector of the Abkhazian State University, who had come from outside Abkhazia, residency rights in Abkhazia after graduation. The Abkhazians knew what was happening, so “the daily lot of members of both adversarial communities were humiliation and violence.” As the 1980s wore on, “muffled hostility” mutated into “overt hatred” (D’Encausse, 1993: 76).

A group of Abkhazian intellectuals requested that Abkhazia should become part of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) on 17 July 1988. Several thousand Georgians protested against the proposal and the treatment of Georgians in Abkhazia on 18 February 1989 in Tbilisi. The National Forum of Abkhazia - Ajdgylara in the Abkhaz language - organized an Abkhazian national assembly in Lykhny on 18 March 1989. This assembly adopted a resolution (the Lykhny Declaration), which asked the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), the Supreme Soviet, and the Council of Ministers of the USSR to make Abkhazia a Union Republic again (D’Encausse, 1993: 77-78; Chervonnaya, 1994: 57; Nahaylo and Swoboda, 1990: 319; Ozgan, 1998: 188; Anchabadze, 1998: 132; Hewitt, 1995: 205).

In protest of the Abkhazian request, thousands of Georgians protested in Gal(i), Sukhum(i), Leselidze and many other towns in late March and early April culminating in a multi-day rally by tens of thousands of Georgians in Tbilisi, the capital of the Georgian SSR. On 9 April 1989, Soviet Interior troops attacked the rally in Lenin Square in front of Government House, with shells and poison gas, killing at least twenty and injuring hundreds. Secretary General Mikhail Gorbachev tried to distance himself from the Politburo decision and he had both the head of the party and government officials in Georgia removed from office. Yet the April Tragedy “radicalized political life in the republic” and changed a civil rights movement into one demanding Georgian independence (Chervonnaya, 1994: 60; *New York Times*, 1989: 1; Russel, 1991: 2). As Fuller observed, the Abkhazians’ demand that Abkhazia should be granted the Union-republican status, which it had until 1931, fueled the Georgian demonstrators and “Georgia’s nascent chauvinism towards the non-Georgian population of the republic” (Fuller, 1989: 18).

The Georgian Supreme Soviet claimed Georgia’s sovereignty and its right to secede on 18 November 1989. The Abkhazian Supreme Soviet approved a declaration on the Soviet Socialist Republic of Abkhazia’s State Sovereignty on 25 August 1990. Georgia promptly declared that act null and void. Zviad Gamsakhurdia’s Free Georgia Round Table coalition won an overwhelming majority of the seats in the Georgian Supreme Soviet with the slogan

'Georgia for the Georgians' in the October of 1990 legislative elections (Nahaylo and Swoboda, 1990: 340; Shane, 1989; Barner-Barry and Hody, 1995: 230, 214-215; Anchabadze, 1998: 135-137; D'Encausse, 1993: 241, 262).

Vladislav Ardzinba was elected chair of the Supreme Soviet of Abkhazia on 4 December 1990. Gorbachev called a referendum on the reformation of the USSR which was held on 17 March 1991. Though Georgia boycotted the election, of the 318,317 registered voters in Abkhazia, 52.3 percent participated and of these 164,231 (98.6 %) voted in favour (Volkhonskij, et al, 2008: 118). It follows from these figures that an absolute majority of those eligible to vote elected to stay part of a reformed Union. Given the ethnic mix and balance of Abkhazia's population, this means that Gorbachev's proposal must have commanded support from all of the region's communities (including Kartvelian (aka Georgian/Mingrelian/Svan) voters. To no one's surprise, when Georgia held a referendum on Georgian independence on 31 March 1991, non-Georgians boycotted it. Reportedly, 90 percent of the registered voters cast ballots, and 98 percent of them voted for "the restoration of the independence of Georgia". As previously noted in this essay, Gamsakhurdia convinced the Georgian Supreme Soviet to pass a declaration of independence on 9 April 1991 (Anchabadze, 1998: 136-137; Hewitt, 1995: 213; D'Encausse, 1993: 262; Barner-Barry and Hody, 1995: 215).

Gorbachev publicized a treaty to replace the Union Treaty of 1992 on 18 June in an attempt to shore up the USSR. His plan backfired. Temur Koridze, Georgia's Minister of Education threatened Abkhazia that "rivers of blood would flow" if Abkhazia signed the treaty. Further, top members of the CPSU staged an anti-Gorbachev coup on 19 August 1991. The heads of the governments of the Union Republics were the strongest defenders of Gorbachev's government. When the USSR ceased to exist in December 1991, Abkhazia was no longer a part of the USSR because of Georgia's unilateral declaration of independence. Georgia rejected all parts of the Soviet Constitution of 1936 except the part that made Abkhazia a part of Georgia (Hewitt, 1995: 215).

Gamsakhurdia became increasingly autocratic and xenophobic, arresting political opponents, imposing media censorship, and "blaming Moscow for any manifestation of dissent". His government rejected non-Georgians participation in Georgian politics and government. Paramilitary groups arose in Georgia in the 1980s. The most important such force was the *Mkhedrioni* (Horsemen), led by Jaba Ioseliani, a convicted bank robber. After months of armed clashes between anti- and pro-Gamsakhurdia groups, the extremist *Mkhedrioni* and others overthrew Gamsakhurdia and he left Georgia on 6 January 1992 (Fuller, 1993: 2, 43; Woff, 1993: 30; Theisen, 1998: 144; Hewitt, 1998: 216; Anchabadze, 1998: 138).

The ruling junta, in a brilliant political move, asked Eduard Shevardnadze to lead the new State Council. As the former Soviet foreign minister, Shevardnadze had instant international credibility. Less than a week later, the United Kingdom, the E.U. and the U.S. recognized the new Georgian government and established diplomatic relations with it. Georgia also was made a member of the IMF, the World Bank, and the UN, all before the October elections in Georgia that would legalize Shevardnadze's government (Hewitt, 2009: 188-189).

To strengthen the independence that the Abkhazians proclaimed on 25 August 1990, they reinstated the 1925 Abkhazian Constitution on 23 July 1992. Georgia invaded Abkhazia on the

morning of 14 August 1992, weeks after Georgia was admitted into the UN. Georgia quickly gained control of the Sukhum(i) airport and entered the Abkhazian capital city the same day. Georgia's amphibious landing near Gagra was successful and they took that city by August. Only Gudauta and its surrounding communities remained under Abkhaz control (Human Rights Watch, 1995: 17-19; Amchabadze, 1998: 140; Hewitt, 1998: 222, Hewitt, 2009: 189).

The Abkhazian Defence Minister, Tengiz Kitovani declared the situation to be dire, and the Abkhazian government drafted all Abkhazian males between the ages of 18 and 40. The Russian Supreme Soviet passed a resolution condemning Georgia for starting the war on 25 August 1992. Abkhazians regained Gagra on 2 and 3 October 1992 which freed them from a two front war and secured the ports and border to their north-west, thereby ensuring supplies and volunteers to sustain the war effort. Abkhazia was on the offensive for the rest of the war (Human Rights Watch, 1995: 17-20; Anchabadze, 1998: 140-141, Hewitt, 1998: 222; Hewitt, 1995: 219).

Yeltsin stated official Russian policy on 27 August 1992 when he affirmed that Russia would uphold Georgia territorial integrity and promised that Russia would not allow armed volunteers from entering Abkhazia from Russia. The Russian military did transfer weapons to Georgia yet failed to stop the stream of men and material from Russia to Abkhazia. It is estimated that in fall 1992, between four to seven thousand volunteers from the Confederation of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus (CMPC) entered Abkhazia to fight Georgia. Further, the Russian army base in Gudauta gave the Abkhazian forces air cover, heavy artillery, and missile launchers. Georgia alleges that Russian Su-27 fighters waged a terror campaign against Georgian civilians to push them out of Abkhazia. There is evidence the Russian military bombed Georgian army positions, gave ammunition to Abkhazian forces and sent Russian soldiers to fight alongside the Abkhazians (Hopf, 2005: 229, 230, 231; Cooley, 2000-2001: 122; Rivera, 2003: 95).

In late October 1992, Georgian forces plundered, vandalized, and torched the Abkhazian University, Museum, State Archive, Resource Institute for Language, Institute of Physics and the Institute of Experiential Pathology. The wanton destruction of the artifacts of Abkhazian culture reflected the Georgian disdain and contempt for what they see as pretensions of Abkhazians to independent statehood. Illogically, the Georgians view the Abkhazians as indistinguishable from themselves and yet also as "guests" who are allowed to exist on the sufferance of Georgia. This attempted annihilation of Abkhazian culture and history is more disturbing given the genocidal comments of two important Georgians (Hewitt, 1995: 2019; Anchabadze, 1998: 141).

Gia Q'arq'arashvili publicly said that he would accept the deaths of 100,000 Georgians in order to kill all 97,000 Abkhazians in order to preserve the territorial integrity of Georgia. Giorgi Khaindrava, then Minister for Minorities, wrote that if ten to fifteen thousand young Abkhazians were killed, it would annihilate the gene pool. He wrote "we are perfectly capable of doing this." The Abkhazians realize the threat from the Georgians to their culture. The Director of the Abkhazian State Library has said "It is absolutely natural that people are killed in a war... However, what our people could not understand was why the Georgians destroyed our libraries and monuments. That was the moment when real hatred broke out" (Hewitt, 2009: 195, footnote 14; Harzl, 2001: 71-72).

The Abkhazians made three unsuccessful offensives to retake Sukhum(i), the capital of Abkhazia, on 5 January, 16 March with support of seventy Russian tanks, and 1 July 1993. It was at this time that a Russian tilt in favour of Abkhazia became explicit, especially after Georgia shot down a Russian helicopter in Abkhazia in December 1992. It was February 1993 when Yeltsin publicly asked the UN to “grant Russia special powers as a guarantor of peace and stability in the region of the former union”. Under Russian pressure, Georgia signed a ceasefire agreement with Abkhazia that obliged Georgia to remove all its heavy artillery from Sukhum(i). Georgia, by failing to withdraw its heavy weaponry violated the ceasefire and the Abkhazians duly attacked the city and captured it and the airport on 27 September 1993. The attack was led by volunteers from the Northern Caucasus and Russian troops did nothing to stop the attack (Crow, 1993; Goltz, 1993: 107-108; Porter and Savietz, 1994: 85; Hopf, 2005: 229).

Georgian troops retreated in confusion, along with their president, so that Abkhazians were able by 30 September to secure their border to the River Ingur, the *de facto* Abkhaz-Georgian border. The war was effectively over by 1 December 1993. Shevardnadze agreed to Georgia becoming a member of the CIS in October and the Georgian parliament agreed to the stationing of Russian troops in Poti in November (Hewitt, 1995: 220; Schmemmann, 1993; Hewitt, 1998: 223).

The stalemate between Abkhazia and Georgia was inevitable given the irreconcilable sentiments of the two sides. The Georgian Minister of State Vazha Lortkipanidze said: “The Abkhaz conflict is a military and political conflict started in order to preserve the Soviet Union, and it is the Russian government who is responsible for it”. Abkhazian Foreign Minister said “we have no intention of giving up our independence. Under the alternative scenario, there exists a real threat of annihilation for the Abkhazian race.” Abkhazia lost 4 percent of its population because of the war. Overall, 20,000 lives were lost, and 250,000 Georgians were displaced from their homes in Abkhazia. The Georgian view about Abkhazia is described by Harzl as “extraordinarily strange.” The Georgians view all ethnic minorities as “Russian Trojan horses.” The late Georgian historian Marika Lordkipanidze flatly asserts that “The existence of Abkhazian autonomy in any form within the boundaries in which it took shape under Soviet rule is absolutely unjustified” (quotation in Harzl, 2011: 72), while Mikhail Saakashvili explains the Abkhazian desire for independence this way: “When one day Russian generals woke up and discovered that their dachas were suddenly part of a foreign country and realized that they lost property, they started to bomb Georgia” (Fuller, 1998: 44; Shamba, 1997; Harzl, 2011: 72-73).

As stated earlier, Georgian weakness led to increased Georgian- Russian cooperation. Georgia signed a collective security agreement with Russia on 25 October. As a result, Russian troops protected the railroad from Poti to Tbilisi and Russia secured Poti. As part of the agreement, Georgia leased four military bases to Russia, the one in Abkhazia was for 25 years; Georgia gave Russia the authority to protect the international land- and maritime- borders of Georgia while Russia would train and equip the armed forces of Georgia (Porter and Saivetz, 1994: 85; Glenny, 1994: 47; Barner-Barry and Hody, 1995: 270; Feinberg, 1999: 17; Fuller, 1993: 203).

Abkhazia and Georgia began negotiations on 1 December 1993. In the resulting Declaration of Understanding, the parties agreed to a cease-fire, prisoner exchange, and to continue the

negotiations. In an attendant joint communiqué, the two parties agreed that CIS peacekeeping forces (CISPKF) would monitor the cease-fire. In practice, these peacekeeping forces were troops of the Russian armed forces (Human Rights Watch, 1995: 39).

The parties signed the Moscow Agreement on 4 April 1994 by which the parties committed themselves to the cease-fire and to the “non-use of force or threat of the use of force” and they “reaffirmed their request for a peacekeeping force” that included Russian troops. As part of the agreement, Abkhazia would have “state symbols such as an anthem, emblem, and flag” and its own constitution. Further, Georgia made even greater concessions when it agreed to “powers for joint action” that included “foreign policy; border guards and customs; energy; communication and transport; and protection of human and civil rights” (Hewitt, 1998: 266-267; Chirikba, 1996: 209, 212, 215).

The parties also signed on 4 April a Quadripartite Agreement on Voluntary Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons (Annex II) signed by Abkhazia, Georgia, Russia, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The agreement has not facilitated the return of displaced persons because the right of return was not applicable to persons who had committed “war crimes and crimes against humanity,” nor to people “who have previously taken part in hostilities” or who “are currently serving in armed formations” preparing to fight in Abkhazia (Hewitt, 1998: 267-271; Chirikba, 1996: 215). As part of its new status, Abkhazia approved a new constitution on 26 November 1995 (Hewitt, 1998: 202; Ozgan, 1998: 197).

Surviving his severe domestic political crisis, Yeltsin began to assert more control over Russian foreign policy in the Caucasus. Russia closed its border with Abkhazia on 19 September 1994. On 19 December it closed the Abkhazian border along the River Psou. Abkhazia’s major port, Sukhum(i), was closed to Abkhazian shipping on 30 August 1995. Russia then ordered Sukhum(i) closed to all shipping on 5 January 1996. Earlier Abkhazian passports were declared invalid outside of the CIS. Russia also interrupted electricity to Abkhazia and closed Sukhum(i) Airport. All CIS states, except Belarus, agreed to negative sanctions against Abkhazia (Hopf, 2005: 229-230, 231).

The Russian region of Krasnodar ignored the Russian sanctions against Abkhazia imposed in 1993-1994. Further, Tatarstan and Bashkortostan signed Treaties of Friendship and Cooperation with Abkhazia in August 1994 (Hopf, 2005: 232).

Georgia, feeling emboldened by the Russian actions, repeatedly threatened violence when discussing Abkhazia in violation of the Moscow Agreement – in August 1994, February 1995, September 1996, and July 1996. Under pressure, Georgia agreed to establish a Coordinating Council where negotiations would take place in November 1997 (Chirikba, 1996; Hewitt, 1998: 209, 212, 215; Fuller, 1999: 18).

In complete defiance of multiple agreements entered into, Georgians formed two paramilitary groups, the White Legion and the Forest Brothers, who “systematically targeted” CIS peacekeepers and Abkhaz forces in the Gal(i) region of Abkhazia in 1997 and 1998. The guerrillas launched a six-day war, 19 to 25 May 1998, by attacking an Abkhaz guard-post that killed 17 Abkhazian police officers. In retaliation, 1,500 Abkhazian militiamen launched a successful counter-offensive against the guerrillas. An estimated 30,000 to 40,000 Georgians

fled the region during this short war. By the Gudauta ceasefire- agreement of 24 May 1998, Abkhazian and Georgian forces had to withdraw their forces from the Gal(i) District and Georgia had to prevent any future guerrilla activities in Gal(i) (Feinberg, 1999: 34; Fuller, 1998: 13). The two sides reached agreement on two documents. The first tried to make the ceasefires of 1994 and 1998 permanent and the second tried to resolve issues of Georgian displaced persons (Fuller, 2001: 5).

The Georgian government felt stronger, and so it articulated a more pro-Western position starting in 1999. The Georgian Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Security made a formal request to NATO to protect Georgian “security and independence” in February 1999. In April of that year, Shevardnadze stated that Georgia wanted to join NATO and emphasized that preference the next month when he said Georgia “will knock vigorously on NATO’s door in 2005”. Georgia also ratified the Statute of the Council of Europe on 27 April 1999, the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) on 20 May 1999, and the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture (ECPT) on 20 June 2000. As of May 2003, Georgia ratified 192 Council of Europe treaties (Feinberg, 1999: 18; Fuller, 2001: 6; Bowring, 2003: 253-254).

Under its Constitution of 1994, Abkhazia held a referendum on Abkhazian independence on 3 October 1999. On election day, 87.6 percent of the registered voters took part and 97.7 percent of the voters approved the constitution, thereby approving Abkhazian independence. President Ardzinba and the People’s Assembly proclaimed Abkhazian independence on 12 October 1999. President Ardzinba also ran for and won re-election to a second five-year term in October 1999 (Chirikba, 1999; Fuller, 1999: 48).

The Russian government, weathering an economic crisis in 1998 and 1999, started to exhibit the disorganization that characterized it in 1992 and 1993. In September 1999, Russia reopened its border with Abkhazia and in general eased its isolation. Georgia and Abkhazia signed a protocol on 11 July 2000 whereby each side promised to reduce the number of armed forces along the *de facto* border; to create joint organizations to fight crime and smuggling; continue renunciation of the use of force; and to work on repatriation of Georgian displaced persons to Abkhazia (Fuller, 1999: 48; Fuller, 2001).

Georgia violated the new protocol when Georgian and Chechen guerillas attacked a village in eastern Abkhazia on 4 October 2001 and then pushed their offensive deeper into Abkhazia. The guerillas shot down a UN helicopter on 8 October killing all nine people on board. When the paramilitaries neared Sukhum(i), Abkhazia responded by bombing the guerillas in the Kodori gorge. In response to this unprovoked military assault, Abkhazian Prime Minister Anri Dzhergenia announced that Abkhazia would seek “associate status” with the Russian Federation (Diamond, 2001).

Abkhazia rejected a UN draft agreement concerning Abkhazia as a part of Georgia on 5 February 2002. Georgia accused Abkhazia of being a “haven for international terrorists”. For Russia, these actions signified that Georgia was preparing a new military offensive against Abkhazia. In retaliation, Russia, in June 2002, provided 150,000 Abkhazians with Russian passports. The Abkhazian government viewed the passports as insurance against a new Georgian invasion of their country (MacKinnon, 2002).

Abkhazian P.M. Dzhergenia and South Ossetian President Eduard Kokoiti reached an agreement on a mutual defence treaty to protect their countries from Georgian "aggression". Further, Russia opened a rail line between itself and Abkhazia in late 2002. When a Georgian official denounced the new line, the Russian Foreign Ministry was nonplussed over Georgia's "insistence on draconian measures to isolate Abkhazia" (Devdariani, 2002; Blagou, 2003).

### **The Georgian-Russian War of 2008**

The war of 2008 was not inevitable no matter how much the new Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, elected in 2004, rubbed Putin the wrong way. The Russian leader was willing to work with Georgia but events in Russia, Georgian actions, and U.S. actions convinced Putin that what some might see as isolated events with their own specific origins actually were connected as part of a plan to undermine Russian national security and even the Russian government itself.

The seizure of a school in Beslan in September 2004 by Chechen terrorists had the same effect on Russia as 9/11 had on the USA. Hundreds of children were killed, and Putin blamed the West. This terrorist attack resulted in a hardening of Russian domestic politics and foreign relations both. The terrorist attack along with the Colour Revolutions, especially the Orange Revolution, and the incipient revolutionary activity within Russia, led Putin to construct his authoritarian model, dubbed "sovereign democracy", for Russia and adopt a more revanchist foreign policy.

At a news conference, General Leonid Ivashov stated that there were terrorist groups in the Pankisi Gorge where the terrorists holding the school children had trained. Russian government officials refused to exclude the possibility that Georgia was involved with Beslan, and that Russia would launch pre-emptive strikes outside of Russian territory. Putin used the terrorist threat to push for greater centralization of authority in the presidency and greater restrictions on civil society (Filippov, 2009: 1835-1836).

A range of Russian political groups took encouragement from the Ukrainian Orange Revolution (November 2004 - January 2005) to demand change in the Russian government. These demands were a shock to the Russian government which was still recovering from the "political earthquake" that the fall of the Kuchma government and its replacement by a pro-western government in Ukraine represented. Mass protests broke out in Russia while the *Rodina* Party defected from the parliamentary bloc supporting Putin and tried to lead the protests. Putin's government responded by cutting the Duma's internet connections; hacked the *Rodina* party's website; created a pro-Putin national youth organization; imposed new legal restrictions on NGOs; and changed election law; further court decisions kept parties off the ballot; the mass media refused to cover opposition groups and parties; there were violent attacks on non-Putin parties and organizations; and new laws limiting election monitoring, all in the name of "sovereign democracy" (Horvath, 2011: 6-12, 15-20; Funkel and Brundy, 2012: 15-26; Kryshstanovskaya & White, 2009: 285-293; Wilson, 2010: 22-25).

Relations between Russia and Georgia deteriorated from 2004 on. Putin tried to work with Saakashvili even when the Georgian president made it plain that he wanted his country to join both NATO and the EU. Saakashvili made a great effort to ingratiate himself with US

President George W. Bush while referring to Putin as “Lilli-Putin”. What appears to have tipped Russia against Georgia for good was when the Georgian government arrested Russian diplomats assumed to be spies and then expelled them from the country in 2006 (Stent, 2019: 161).

Russia used a range of policies to pressure Georgia to change its foreign policy preferences. Russia increased the cost of natural gas to Georgia from \$110 TCM in 2006 to \$235 TCM in 2007 (Newnham, 2011: 140-142). In the Spring of 2006, Russia barred the importation of Georgia wine and mineral water (Georgia’s two largest exports to Russia). Russia suspended all transportation and postal services to and from Georgia in October 2006. Russia increased the deportation of thousands of Georgians from Russia in 2006 and 2007, causing the guest-workers substantial hardship. The Russian actions were also retaliation for Georgia sending troops to Iraq and continuing to express desire to join NATO. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stated publicly that Georgia (and Ukraine) joining NATO “is unacceptable to Russia” (Lapidus, 2007: 152-154; Newnham, 2011: 142; Karagiannis, 2013: 79; Toal, 2017: 152-153).

While Russia did remove its troops from some bases in Georgia in November 2007, it violated Georgia airspace and permitted Abkhazian and South Ossetian skirmishes against Georgian forces in 2007 and early 2008. In 2007, Russian helicopters shelled Georgian administrative buildings in the Kodori Gorge and in August of that year, Russian aircraft attacked a Georgian radar station near South Ossetia. In late April 2008, a Russian plane shot down an unarmed and unmanned vehicle over Abkhazia. The USA and Georgia took part in joint military exercises in July 2008 while Russia conducted its own military exercises in the region at the same time. The US troops left the area while Russian troops stayed (Cornell, 2008: 310; Toal, 2017: 156; Karagiannis, 2013: 79).

Specifically, the Russian 58th Army had just completed military exercises yet many of its units stayed near South Ossetia and Abkhazia. It is estimated that 12,000 Russian soldiers were deployed at the northern end of the Roki Tunnel (a major transportation artery on the border between South Ossetia and North Ossetia in Russia) by the evening of 5 August. By early August 2008, Russia had sent military aircraft to a South Ossetian air base. At least part of a Russian armed regiment entered South Ossetian territory on 7 August 2008 (Asmus, 2010: 21-23; Allison, 2008: 1148-1149). Furthermore, Russia deployed a Black Sea naval task-force near Georgia and airlifted the 76th Air Assault Division to Tskhinvali, the capital of South Ossetia. Finally, a battalion of Russian railroad troops repaired 54 kilometers of a major Abkhazian railroad in June and July 2008. Russia was able to move Russian troops through Abkhazia and into western Georgia thanks to that strategic rail-line (Allison, 2008: 1151).

Events accelerated in the spring and summer of 2008. With Western encouragement, Kosovo declared its independence on 17 February 2008. The USA and twenty-two of the then EU states immediately recognized Kosovo. Putin denounced the “Kosovo precedent” saying “This is a harmful and dangerous precedent. You can’t observe one set of rules for Kosovo and another for Abkhazia and South Ossetia.” At a meeting with Saakashvili on 22 February 2008, Putin warned him that “we have to answer the West on Kosovo. And we are very sorry, but you are going to be part of that answer” according to the Georgian record of the meeting (Asmus, 2010: 105, 106; Toal, 2017: 154-155; Stent, 2019: 124).



To add insult to injury, from Russia's point of view, NATO members at the Bucharest summit approved a communique on 3 April 2008 that stated, "we agree today that Georgia and Ukraine will become members of NATO." Although Putin fulfilled his promise to Bush that he would be moderate in his speech to NATO the next day, the Bucharest Declaration completely ignored Putin's warning to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates that Georgia being a part of NATO was a "red line" for Russia (Stent, 2019: 129-131; Toal, 2017: 7; Asmus, 2010: 134-135, 127).

If one is to judge a diplomatic initiative by its consequences, then the Bucharest Summit was a disaster. It did nothing to reassure Georgia and Ukraine and it alienated Russia. NATO did not extend a MAP to Ukraine and Georgia, exposing NATO divisions at Bucharest, but a virtual promise was made to offer one at NATO's next meeting in December 2008. Saakashvili was angry at the results of the NATO Summit since the statement of future NATO membership lacked a commitment to assistance of Georgia before NATO membership was a reality. For Russia, the Bucharest conference showed that Georgia and Ukraine becoming NATO member states was very real, and so it led to Russia increasing its efforts to dominate the Transcaucasus (Stent, 2019: 130-131; Asmus, 2010: 138-139; Toal, 2017: 7-8).

Russia rescinded a CIS weapons embargo on Abkhazia and South Ossetia and began to arm them in March 2008. The Duma passed a resolution on 21 March recommending that Russia should recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia and protect Russian citizens there (Toal, 2017: 155). Putin signed a decree on 16 April 2008, ordering Russian government departments to open direct trade and transportation to Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Cornell, 2008: 310).

Abkhazia claimed that Georgia was increasing its troops near the Kodori Gorge on 18 April but a United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) found no evidence of that. Russia made a similar claim about Georgian forces and said it was adding 400 more paratroopers to support its peacekeepers in Abkhazia. In May, Russia announced that its troop-strength in Abkhazia was 2,500 while Georgian intelligence said the soldiers numbered close to 4,000. In the same month, the Russian air force publicly asked for military helicopter pilots with experience flying in mountains regions (Asmus, 2010: 148).

The USA and the EU were increasingly concerned about the probability of war in the Caucasus and began different diplomatic initiatives but neither the US nor the EU warned Russia of the negative consequences for Russian military action against Georgia. Germany also attempted to reach a diplomatic agreement, but the German effort was hampered due to Germany and Georgia distrusting each other and Germany negotiating the proposals with Russia before presenting them to Georgia (Asmus, 2010: 152-156).

A major problem for diplomacy was that the NATO members were divided on a range of issues. The USA trusted Georgia more than Europeans did. The Europeans did not want the EU to have the largest presence in the Caucasus while the USA refused to play a dominate role there as well. Furthermore, Russia undermined the regulations (Asmus, 2010: 157-158). Saakashvili also tried negotiating directly with Medvedev in June presenting the new Russian president with some specific proposals, but by early July, these initiatives proved to be futile (Asmus, 2010: 159-161).

From April to August 2008, Saakashvili repeatedly said that if Russia recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia and/or Russian troops were built up there leading to *de facto* annexation of these regions, then Georgia would have to use military force or risk being turned out of office. Europe and the USA repeatedly warned Georgia not to go to war against Russia because it would fight alone if it did so (Asmus, 2010: 146-147; Stent, 2019: 161).

Violence increased in South Ossetia in July and August. Leaders of the Georgians and South Ossetians were targeted while South Ossetian military shelled Georgian villages and peacekeepers. "Volunteers" arrived in South Ossetia and were quickly integrated into its interior military forces. Georgia protested Russia allowing "mercenaries" and their weapons into South Ossetia. Russia criticized Georgia for moving troops and armour so near to the South Ossetian border (Allison, 2008: 1147; Asmus, 2010: 165; Toal, 2017: 157-158).

South Ossetia and Georgian forces shelled each other's positions on 7 August and a Georgian military vehicle was hit, killing two Georgian soldiers. President Saakashvili ordered a Georgian military offensive against South Ossetia late the same day with the goal of quickly capturing Tskhinvali (Allison, 2008: 1148; Toal, 2017: 158, 161; Asmus, 2010: 19).

The rapidity of Russia's military counter offensive against Georgia betrays a substantial amount of planning and training, not only for Russian troops moving through South Ossetia into Georgia, but also for Russian troop deployments by land and sea into Abkhazia and then into western Georgia (Allison, 2008: 1149-1151; Asmus, 2010: 165-168; Toal, 2017: 164, 171-173).

Russian forces were able to drive Georgian forces from South Ossetia by the early afternoon of 10 August. Russian military aircraft began bombing sites in Georgia on 8 August, when they attacked the Russian military base in Gori. Russia increased its air operations against Georgia in August, bombing Georgian airports and military bases and the port of Poti. Russia began its invasion of Georgia on 10 August from both Abkhazia and South Ossetia. By 12 August, it occupied western Georgia, occupying Zugdidi, Poti, and Senaki. Russian tanks were only two hours from Tbilisi, the Georgian capital. On the same day, Georgia concentrated its forces at Mtskheta, in anticipation of making a final stand there to protect the capital (Allison, 2008: 1149, 1151; Asmus, 2010: 180-183; Toal, 2017: 170-173).

President Bush was in Beijing for the Olympics when the war broke out and did not return to Washington D.C. until 13 August. By that time, Bush had decided that the USA would not support Georgia militarily, nor would it take the lead diplomatically to try to end the war. Unsurprisingly, that decision was agreed to in a principal's meeting Bush created to discuss the issues. The attendees included the Secretaries of State and Defense and the National Security Advisor, among others (Asmus, 2010: 189-191; Stent, 2019: 132).

The unenviable task of ending the war fell to French President Nicolas Sarkozy due to France holding the rotating chair of the European Union (EU) presidency. Sarkozy wanted the war to end as soon as possible because he was convinced that Putin wanted to crush Georgia leading to regime-change at least, or Russian annexation of Georgia at worst. Sarkozy contacted the Russian government and promised he would travel to Moscow to negotiate a cease-fire agreement if Russia implemented a cease-fire unilaterally and halted the advance of its troops

towards Tbilisi. Russia agreed. Sarkozy arrived in Moscow on 12 August. Russia had declared a cease-fire and had stopped its advance on Tbilisi, although some Russian ground-forces were advancing in other parts of Georgia (Asmus, 2010: 191-194, 197-198; Toal, 2017: 173).

On behalf of the EU, Sarkozy negotiated a cease-fire with Medvedev the same day. The agreement included a non-use of force pledge, all hostilities would cease, humanitarian assistance would not be hindered, Georgian armed forces were required to withdraw to “their permanent positions”, Russian armed forces “must withdraw to the line where they were standing prior to the beginning of hostilities”, and there would be an international meeting on the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Asmus, 2010: 201; Toal, 2017: 173). Saakashvili and Medvedev signed the agreement.

Russia used the clause in the cease-fire of 12 August that allowed Russian peacekeepers to take “additional security measures” to establish at least eight military stations in uncontested Georgian territory, expand the Abkhazian buffer zone to the edge of Semaki, and at times, Russian peacekeepers patrolled Poti. The vagueness of some of the cease-fire language and the cost to the Georgian economy from the Russian army check-points often near ports and highways lead to a second set of negotiations between Medvedev and Sarkozy, joined by two EU officials, on 8 September 2008 (Toal, 2017: 174-175; Asmus, 2010: 201-212).

The new EU-Russian agreement reduced some of the advantages Russia received from the 12 August agreement. Russia promised to remove all of its check points on Georgian soil in a week, removed its armed forces from the Abkhazian-Georgian and South Ossetian-Georgian buffer-zones in a month, allow a large EU observer-mission to monitor the cease-fire, and begin international negotiations on Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Toal, 2017: 174; Asmus, 2010: 212-214).

The Georgian government reports that 413 persons died during the August War with the wounded numbering over two thousand. It is estimated that twenty thousand Georgians were displaced from their residences, most from South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The South Ossetian government reports 365 persons died during the war with the wounded numbering more than two hundred. The Russian government reports 67 persons dead with 283 wounded, all soldiers (Toal, 2017: 195-196).

In between the two agreements, Russia unexpectedly acted and extended diplomatic negotiation to both Abkhazia and South Ossetia, recognizing their independence on 26 August 2008.

Medvedev defended Russia’s recognition of the two *de facto* states by saying it was necessary to save the two countries from Georgian genocide and pointed to earlier examples of Georgian ethnic cleansing and cited what the Russian government refers to as the Kosovo precedent. Medvedev stated, “We have taken the same course of action as other countries took with regard to Kosovo” (Stent, 2019:162-163) As of today only Russia, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Nauru also have recognized them.

Asmus has made a good point that everyone was a loser from the Russian-Georgian War of 2008. Georgia obviously lost the war that it should not have started. “Saakashvili began a war

his allies had warned him not to start, a war that they would not support, and a war he could not win... The armed forces of Georgia sent into battle were neither trained nor equipped to confront the Russian army." Furthermore, of Georgia's live brigades, one was a training brigade, and one was in Iraq. Georgia would have all three brigades engaged in South Ossetia if it pulled a brigade away from the border with Abkhazia. A few weeks before the war, the Georgian army released roughly half of its soldiers while sending a number of its tanks to the capital to be modernized. The Georgians launched the war with a new plan that had never been tested with troops that lacked the required training. As a result of the war, Georgia's loss of Abkhazia and South Ossetia was consolidated, while tens of thousands of Georgians either left or were driven from their homes in those regions (Asmus, 2010: 172-174, 219).

Abkhazia and South Ossetia are recognized by only a handful of countries and are heavily subsidized and protected by Russia. Many important positions in their government are held by Russians. Their economies are shadows of what they had been in 1990 and very constrained (Asmus, 2010: 218-219).

Russia won the war but lost the peace. Georgia is deeply embittered toward it. Western capital left Russia as a result of the August War and the Russian economy was further damaged by the financial meltdown of the autumn of 2008. The EU's Tagliavini Report disagreed with Russia's claim of genocide and rejects its assertion that Russia's military invasion was a humanitarian intervention. Russia, in some ways, became an international outcast, no longer trusted the way it had been before (Asmus, 2010: 220-221).

The West also was a loser from the war. The USA and the EU refused to provide real peacekeepers to Georgia, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia who may have kept the peace in 2008. They also failed to anticipate the fallout from their recognition of Kosovo and their compromise statement on future NATO membership. The USA insisting that Russia would not damage Georgia did not constitute contingency planning. Bush insisted on some statement of support for NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine in the face of a badly divided NATO, the opposition of his senior advisors, and at relatively the last minute. During the August crisis, the USA was AWOL (Asmus, 2010: 221-222) or proved to be, in a Texas phrase, "all hat and no cattle".

### **Some Concluding Observations**

John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State (1953-1959) during the presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower, would regularly talk about the "good Russian state" and the "good Russian national interest" opposing then to the "bad Communist Party" (Holsti, 196: 247). Yet, over the years of a post-Soviet Russia, The United States did very little to help that country during the economic upheavals of the 1990s. These included substantial unemployment, decline in natural income, recessions, and massive shortages. To add insult to injury, the USA and the EU refused to acknowledge Russia's claim to having legitimate security interest when it came to the former SSRs. Even without giving a blank cheque to any country, there is a general understandability that a country does have legitimate interests when it comes to bordering states.

During that same time, NATO and EU added multiple members to their organization. Focusing on NATO, the security alliance added the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary in 1999, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria in 2004, brushing aside the concerns of the Russian government as irrelevant.

Post-Soviet Russia refrained from using military force against any of the former SSRs from December 1991 to July 2008; instead using diplomatic and economic strength (including negative and positive sanctions) to try to achieve its foreign policy goals. When Russia did use military force against Georgia in August 2008 in response to a Georgian invasion of South Ossetia, it was roundly denounced as a country caught in, at best, a nineteenth century time warp, an anachronism.

The USA has an extensive history of using military force and covert action against Latin American countries, all in the name of protecting US national interests, and yet it was not made a pariah by the international community. Just referencing the post-World War II history, the USA has quite a record in Latin America. In 1954, a CIA operation overthrew the democratically elected Jacobo Árbenz government. In 1961, the CIA trained Cuban paramilitaries who attacked Cuba at the Bay of Pigs and were totally routed by Cuba troops. President Lyndon B. Johnson ordered the invasion of The Dominican Republic in 1965. President Ronald Reagan ordered the invasion of Grenada 1983 and created and funded the Contras, a paramilitary group designed to overthrow the Sandinista government in Nicaragua throughout his presidency. His successor, George H.W. Bush, invaded Panama in 1989, while Clinton invaded Haiti in 1994.

At no time did the USSR try to lead an international coalition against the USA to ostracize and isolate it in the international community. In fact, when then Soviet leader Gorbachev visited the USA in June 1990 and met with the Congressional leadership, he brought up the US invasion of Panama. Gorbachev asked why the USA took issue with Soviet action towards Lithuania, then still a part of the USSR, after the USA had invaded Panama. He asked, "Why that double standard?" (*Los Angeles Times*, June 2, 1990).

The only incident where the Soviet Union ignored US dominance in the western hemisphere was when Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev sent Soviet nuclear missiles to Cuba in 1961. The response of the US government is well known, but that of McNamara's not so much. Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara initially argued that the US need not react because Soviet missiles in Cuba did not significantly affect the overall nuclear balance between the USA and the USSR (Allison, Graham, 1971: 195-196). At the end of the first day of the ExCom meetings, McNamara repeated his position saying, "I don't believe it's primarily a military problem." McNamara identified the real issue: "The missiles were principally a political problem" (Allison and Zelikow, 1999: 341, 340).

The reason the US government reacted to the installation of Soviet missiles in Cuba was not because it negatively affected US global dominance in nuclear weapons. It was because President John F. Kennedy, and most of his advisors, realized that a lack of US military response would destroy Kennedy's presidency and the credibility, prestige, and power of the USA in the eyes of the international community. The missiles in Cuba would do that because of their geographic proximity to the USA. If the USA could not protect itself from nuclear

weapons in Cuba, how could it protect itself and other countries from more distant weapons? (Allison, 1971: 194; Allison and Zelikow: 339-340).

Except for the Cuban crisis, the Soviet Union, and later, post-Soviet Russia respected US interests in the western hemisphere. Yet, during the George W. Bush administration, the USA ignored legitimate security interests of Russia in the former SSRs. Bush visited Georgia in May 2005 and on 10 May participated in a rally with Georgian president Saakashvili.

During the rally, Bush addressed the people in the central square in Tbilisi and lauded Georgia's Rose Revolution.

"Your courage is inspiring democratic reformers and sending a message that echoes across the world: freedom will be the future of every nation and people on Earth... Now across the Caucasus, in Central Asia and the broader Middle East, we see the same desire for liberty burning in the hearts of young people... They are demanding their freedom and they will have it. As free nations, the United States and Georgia have great responsibility and together we will do our duty" (Toal, 2017: 122-123).

Bush had been pushing for a fast-track process for Georgia to join NATO.

As Meyer has conjectured "Imagine Washington's response had Brezhnev himself taken part in a rally in Nicaragua to announce that Nicaragua would be welcomed as a new member of the Warsaw Pact, and then offered the equivalent of a billion dollars to stiffen Sandinista resolve" (Meyer, 2008: 121).

Bush's warm embrace of Georgia in becoming a member of NATO and the EU furthered Russia's perception of a US threat arising from Washington's new national security doctrine announced in Bush's Second Inaugural Address. The then new U.S. doctrine defined foreign democratization and human rights as a primary national security interest. On 20 January 2005, President Bush said "It is the policy to seek and support the growth in every nation and culture, the growth of democratic movements and institutions with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world" (Darden, 2017: 134). For Russia, the external and internal security threats were merging and NATO expansion to include Georgia and Ukraine was all of a piece with the US interfering in the domestic affairs of countries in the name of democratization.

If the USA is so against Russia's interests being recognized in the former SSRs because it views such articulated interest as anachronistic, then it may want to consider returning Guantanamo Bay to Cuba. As Toal observed, "Given this history of intervention... it is difficult for U.S. leaders to frame Russian interventions in its 'backyard' as anachronistic and reprehensible 'sphere of influence' behaviour without generating countercharges of hypocrisy and double standards" (2017: 288-289).

Kotkin correctly described the nub of the problem of Russia wanting acknowledgement from the West of Russia's security interests in the former SSRs. That is "the real challenge today boils down to Moscow's desire for Western recognition of a Russian sphere of influence in the former Soviet space (with the exception of the Baltic states)." That recognition the West

will not grant. Yet, at the same time, “Neither is the West really able to protect the territorial integrity of the states inside Moscow’s desired sphere of influence” (2016: 8-9).

Russia’s decision to invade Georgia can be seen to mark the end of the unipolarity that emerged from the disintegration of the former Soviet Union. It can also be seen as a change of tactics by Russia towards the West given that the USA, from Russia’s point of view, has ignored Russia’s legitimate national security concerns by taking the following actions: nullification of the ABM treaty (2002), US invasion of Iraq (2003), instituting a Train and Equip Programme with Georgia (2002), favouring of Georgia quickly joining NATO (2004-2008), Bush visiting Tbilisi and taking part in a rally showing strong support for the Georgian president, and the US recognition of Kosovo (2008) (Meyer, 2008: 121; Stent, 2019: 306). It is due to such actions by the West that led John Mearsheimer to assert that the West was to blame for the Ukraine Crisis (Mearsheimer, 2014: *passim*).

The lack of diplomatic creativity in the West coupled with the increasingly suspicious and distrustful Russian government that believed correctly the West would never recognize what it considered its legitimate security interests led to the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2022. Another factor in the latter invasion was the US insistence that both countries were going to be NATO member without taking one practical action to enhance the security of those states.

It is not an accident that the only two former SSRs that Russia has invaded border the Black Sea. When Ukraine and Georgia became independent, Russia lost more than half of its southern seacoast and its most important ice-free ports. The old Russian Black Sea littoral has a place in the Russian national imagination which its lands washed by the icy waters of the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Finland do not. Even without the “affective geopolitics” (Toal, 2017: 217, 231) of Southern Russia, the Black Sea territories lost by Russia were and are very important. Imagine by analogy, that the states of Texas and Florida became independent countries and expressed interest in joining a Russian-backed collective security organization. Instantly, the USA would lose more than half of its sea-coast on the Gulf of Mexico and lose the NASA facilities at Cape Canaveral and Houston. It is doubtful that the USA would raise no objection to the expressed goal of Texas and Florida joining a new Warsaw Pact.

One final point needs to be addressed, concerning the West’s relations with Russia. Due to today’s debased political discourse in the USA, many may not realize how different comments made by Western, especially US, leaders have done real damage to international peace and security. Saakashvili referring to the Russian leader as “Lilli-Putin” and Obama describing Putin as “the bored kid in the back of the classroom” and Russia as a “regional power,” helped convince Putin that the only thing the West was sincere about was to turn practically every former European SSR into a member state of NATO (Asmus, 2017: 71; Stent, 2019: 310).

Bartmann made a strong case almost twenty years ago that Abkhazia and many other *de facto* states have legitimate claims to become recognized as sovereign independent states by the existing of the international community. He argued that a substantial number of “would-be states... would seem to demonstrate more convincing and more promising conditions of long-term capacity and viability than a number of the smallest states” in the General Assembly (Bartmann, 2004: 17).

Bartmann also raised the issue of the newer norms that the international community has used to recognize states as full-fledged members of the international community since the 1960s. Bartmann points out, correctly, “the nearly four-dozen micro-states that sit in the General Assembly have not undermined the authority and effectiveness of United Nations bodies. Nor have they compromised conventional conditions of statehood” (Bartmann, 2004: 17-21).

According to the UNDP, thirty-two member states of the United Nations have less territory than Abkhazia. The UN estimated the population of Abkhazia in 2020 to have been 244,926. Twenty-one member states of the UN have less of a population than Abkhazia. Why has the international community, except for Russia, Syria, Nicaragua, Venezuela and Nauru, not extended diplomatic recognition to Abkhazia even though smaller states have received such recognition? Many would say that it is because Abkhazia is not economically viable, that it would not exist without Russian financial and military support.

Some would argue that Abkhazia is not economically self-sufficient and relies over much on Russian aid to pay Abkhazian government expenses, thereby making Abkhazia not truly independent. The Abkhazian economy is weak, but most Abkhazians blame their economic isolation and relative poverty on the refusal of the USA and the EU countries to grant their country diplomatic recognition in the name of upholding Georgian territorial integrity which does not exist (Hoch, 2018: 404). Further, Russia has funded the Abkhazian government budget from 2009 to 2018 in the amount of approximately 40 billion roubles. Russia also provides Abkhazians their pensions. It’s estimated that the Russian contribution represents more than half of the Abkhazian state budget (Kolstø, 2020: 141, 153).

If such a contribution undermines the legitimacy for internationally recognized statehood, then the USA and Europe should have refused to grant diplomatic recognition to the post-Shevardnadze governments because the United States sent millions of dollars to pay Georgian pensions and government salaries after he was overthrown (Toal, 2017: 112-113).

Abkhazia has repeatedly shown its independence from Russia. Abkhazia re-wrote a treaty drafted by Russia that substantially eliminated or reduced the advantages received from the treaty. Although Russia provides almost 99 percent of all foreign investment and the overwhelming majority of foreign tourists, Abkhazia refuses to enact legislation allowing non-Abkhazian nationals to buy real-estate (Kolstø, 2020: 144-145, 146, 149).

The Abkhazian people see themselves as a nation and are tenacious to protect their independence. A huge part of Abkhazian memory is the catastrophe of the expulsions of hundreds of thousands of Abkhazians from their national homeland during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Since independence in 1993, Abkhazians have increased in number and “they see their survival as a nation as linked to having their own state” (Kolstø, 2020: 151).

An entire generation of Abkhazians have no knowledge of the Georgian language. The Abkhazians link the preservation of their identity with never again existing within a Georgian state (Hoch, 2018: 392). Abkhazian Foreign Minister Daur Kove insisted “We have existed for centuries and will not disappear” (Kolstø, 2020: 149). Abkhazia has established a “foreign policy of social moves” that show “its dedication to the development of its youth, the



preservation of its culture and language, and the rebuilding of its tourism-based economy” (Smith, 2018: 202).

Ethiopia’s territorial integrity was ignored with the recognized independence of Eritrea. Sudan’s territorial integrity was ignored with the recognition of the independence of South Sudan. Yugoslavia’s territorial integrity was violated with the recognized independence of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia, Kosovo, and Montenegro. Yet the “non-existent territorial integrity” (Coley and Mitchell, 2010: 74) of Georgia appear to be sacrosanct and at the expense of a people whose very existence remains under threat – the Abkhazians.

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## Endnotes

[i] The author will be using the term “Russia” for the “Russian Federation” throughout this article.

[ii] There is no agreed upon term for the countries that had been a part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and are now independent of the USSR’s successor state, Russia. Some have used the term “post-Soviet space” (Stent, 2019). Russia and many scholars use the term “near abroad” which Toal has described as the consensus translation of the Russian term that is literally translated as “near beyond border,” or *blizhenye zarubezhye* (Toal, 2017: 3). Cooley uses the term “former Soviet Union” (FSU) (200-2001: 101). This essay will use the term “former-SSRs” to denote the countries other than Russia that had a part of the former Soviet Union.

[iii] Roy Allison is the only scholar the author has found who has used the term “protectorate” but Allison applied that term only to Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Allison, 2008: 1162-1163).

[iv] Cuba was an excellent example of a U.S. protectorate based on the Cuban-US treaty of May 22, 1903. Others include the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Hawaii, and Panama.

[v] The Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine (RCMD) was the last extension or application of the M.D. and was enunciated by President Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909) and his Secretary of State Elihu Root, in 1904. Specifically, Roosevelt claimed that the USA had the authority to enforce international laws, to “exercise an international police power,” in the Western Hemisphere in his annual message to Congress on 6 December 1904. Please refer to Serge Ricard, “The Roosevelt Corollary,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, XXXVI (March 2006).

[vi] On the Russian use of both positive and negative sanctions, see Randall Newnham “Oil, Carrots and Sticks: Russia’s Energy Resources as a Foreign Policy Tool,” *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 2 (2011) 134-143. For a more general analysis of economic sanctions, please see David Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft* (1985).

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