

PROMOTION OF GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS THROUGH MILITARY  
INTERVENTION IN REGIONAL CONFLICTS:  
US/NATO INTERVENTION IN FORMER YUGOSLAVIA IN 1999 AND RUSSIAN  
INCURSION INTO GEORGIA IN 2008

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in the Curriculum in Russian and East European Studies.

Chapel Hill  
2009

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **ZUMRAT K. SALMORBEOVA: PROMOTION OF GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS THROUGH MILITARY INTERVENTION IN REGIONAL CONFLICTS: US/NATO INTERVENTION IN FORMER YUGOSLAVIA IN 1999 AND RUSSIAN INCURSION INTO GEORGIA IN 2008**

(Under the direction of Dr. Robert Jenkins)

The August 2008 Russian use of force against sovereign Georgia shocked the international community. The intervention triggered comparisons with the US-led NATO military intervention into the former Yugoslavia in 1999. This paper explores key foreign policy interests of the US and Russia and examines how these interests were expressed in these military interventions. The analysis revealed similarities in goals and differences in approaches. Both the US and Russia promoted their national geopolitical interests through military intervention. Nevertheless, there are considerable differences in their peace-mediation approaches with the involvement of international institutions preceding military intervention. The author believes that Russia's incursion into Georgia sends a strong message to newly independent states, in particular Ukraine, about the possible consequences of seeking close relations with the West. Indeed, the building of mutual trust and understanding between the United States and Russia provides the best hope for overcoming future aggressive actions in response to other regional conflicts in the post-Soviet space.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This work would not have been possible without the support and effort of many people. I am extremely grateful to Dr. Robert Jenkins for bringing me to UNC and for his valuable advice, which enhanced this paper. I am thankful as well to my thesis committee members Dr. Graeme Robertson and Dr. Mark Crescenzi for their constructive criticism, suggestions, and time. I am pleased to acknowledge the assistance and support of the Center for Slavic, Eurasian, and East European Studies. My deep appreciation goes to Nydia Fors for providing valuable feedback on my English writing skills and constant moral support. I would like to give special thanks to my family for encouraging and believing in me. Last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to the Rotary World Peace Fellowship for giving me the opportunity to study at the great University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| LIST OF TABLES .....  | vi |
| Chapter   |    |
| I. INTRODUCTION .....   | 1  |
| Research Question and Argument .....  | 3  |
| Methodology .....   | 8  |
| Organization of the thesis .....  | 9  |
|   |    |
| II. FOREIGN POLICY AND NATIONAL INTERESTS OF THE UNITED STATES AND<br>THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION..... | 12 |
|   |    |
| National Interests and Foreign Policy of the United States .....                                  | 13 |
| US interests in Kosovo.....   | 15 |
| US interests in Georgia .....   | 18 |
| United States Participation in Multilateral Organizations.....                                    | 21 |
| National Interests and Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation .....                             | 26 |
| Russian interests in Kosovo .....   | 33 |
| Russian interests in Georgia.....   | 36 |
| Russia's Participation in Multilateral Organizations .....  | 42 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| III. “OPERATION ALLIED FORCE”: DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS AND MILITARY INTERVENTION INTO KOSOVO IN 1999.....       | 51  |
| US motives for military intervention into the former Yugoslavia .....                                      | 51  |
| History of conflict .....  | 55  |
| Peace mediation process and use of force .....   | 58  |
| Reaction of the Russian Federation.....  | 66  |
| IV. “COERCION OF GEORGIA TO PEACE”: DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS AND MILITARY INTERVENTION INTO GEORGIA IN 2008..... | 70  |
| Russia’s motives for military intervention in Georgia .....  | 71  |
| History of conflict and peacekeeping operation.....  | 74  |
| Use of force .....   | 81  |
| V. CONCLUSION .....  | 86  |
| Similarities in goals .....  | 86  |
| Differences in approaches .....  | 91  |
| Confrontation of interests.....  | 93  |
| Implications for US and Western policies toward Russia and its ‘zone of influence’ .....                   | 95  |
| APPENDICES .....   | 98  |
| REFERENCES .....   | 102 |

**LIST OF TABLES**

Table

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 1. US’s and Russia’s strategic interests.....      | 90 |
| 2. Differences and similarities in approaches..... | 92 |

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| CIS    | Commonwealth of Independent States                        |
| CSTO   | Collective Security Treaty Organization                   |
| EU     | European Union  |
| FRY    | Federal Republic of Yugoslavia                            |
| JPKF   | Joint Peacekeeping Force                                  |
| MAP    | Membership Action Plan                                    |
| NATO   | North Atlantic Treaty Organization                        |
| OSCE   | Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe      |
| UN     | United Nations  |
| UNOMIG | United Nations United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia |
| UNSC   | United Nations Security Council                           |
| US     | United States   |
| USSR   | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics                       |

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The five day war in the South Caucasus between Russia and Georgia in August 2008 shocked the international community and raised many questions regarding the ability of international institutions to prevent unlawful military interventions into the territory of sovereign states, as well as their ability to respond to such regional conflicts. The Russian military intervention into the territory of Georgia provoked widespread discussion about the legitimacy of the use of force against a sovereign state and, as a consequence, raised questions about its impact on stability in Europe, threats to the energy corridor, which goes through Georgian territory, and the real role of Russia as an equal partner to democratic countries in ensuring peace and security in the region.<sup>1</sup>

In academic circles and the mass media, this event triggered discussions that the US-led NATO war over Kosovo created precedents for opportunistic adaptations. George Friedman argues that “the war in 1999 was the framework that created the war of 2008” and points out that without understanding Kosovo it is impossible to understand the war between Russia and Georgia.<sup>2</sup> On the contrary, Charles King argues that South Ossetia and Kosovo

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<sup>1</sup> “Russia vs. Georgia: The Fallout.” International Crisis Group. Europe Report no 195, Tbilisi/Brussels. 22 Aug. 2008. 15 Oct. 2008.  
<[http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/europe/caucasus/195\\_russia\\_vs\\_georgia\\_\\_\\_the\\_fallout.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/europe/caucasus/195_russia_vs_georgia___the_fallout.pdf)>.

<sup>2</sup> Friedman, George. “Georgia and Kosovo: A Single intertwined Crisis.” Stratfor.com, 25 Aug. 2008. 17 Oct. 2008 <[http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/georgia\\_and\\_kosovo\\_single\\_intertwined\\_crisis](http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/georgia_and_kosovo_single_intertwined_crisis)>. George Friedman is Founder and CEO of Stratfor, a private intelligence company publishing geopolitical and security analysis. He is author of America’s Secret War. His new book, The Next Hundred Years, will be published in January 2009.



are not the same; he indicates that there are differences in the circumstances of the military interventions, as well as in the involvement of multilateral institutions before and during the operation, which in Kosovo was undertaken by a Western coalition and afterwards followed by a UN peacekeeping mission.<sup>3</sup>

Ironically, the Russian leadership used the same terminology as did the US and NATO during the Kosovo crisis in 1999 in justifying its use of force against Georgia, such as “genocide,” “peacekeeping,” “humanitarian intervention,” “coercion to peace,” “pre-emptive-strike,” and others. In addition, the Kremlin used the Kosovo case to legitimize its own actions, pointing out that Kosovo is a ‘precedent,’ arguing that the people of Abkhazia and South Ossetia equally have the right to decide their own future. Russia staunchly opposed NATO’s military intervention, calling it a violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia and accusing the US of using double standards in international affairs. In August 2008, Russia itself was highly criticized and condemned for undermining Georgian sovereignty and territorial integrity. A sequence of events in the post-Soviet space, such as the gas scandal with Ukraine, the strengthening of the Collective Security Treaty Organization in the CIS, and the decision of the government of Kyrgyzstan to close the US air base, has demonstrated the need for a deeper understanding of Russian foreign policy and US national interests in the post-Soviet space. Russia’s assertive behavior in the ‘near abroad’ and its self-perception as a ‘big brother’ have limited the interaction of newly independent states with western countries, impeding processes for democratic development and supporting ill-governments in post-Soviet states.

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<sup>3</sup> King, Charles. “The Five-Day War.” *Foreign Affairs*, 87.6 (Nov/Dec 2008): 2-11.

### *Research Question and Argument*

Taking into consideration discussions about Kosovo as a precedent for the use of force by Russia against Georgia over South Ossetia, as well as about Russia's real intentions in preserving peace and stability in post-Soviet space, I attempt to explore the key foreign policy interests of the US and Russia, and how these interests were expressed during the US-led NATO military interventions into the former Yugoslavia in 1999 and Russia's incursion into Georgia in 2008. The paper compares and reveals similar and different approaches undertaken in diplomatic efforts with the level of involvement of multilateral organizations during the peace-mediation process and in the decisions to use force. This study will attempt to provide an understanding of what drives major powers, without a comprehensive UN Security Council resolution authorizing the use of force, to undertake such large-scale, risky, and expensive military interventions in sovereign countries.

The study endeavors to uncover any other motivations hidden behind the argument of 'protecting ethnic groups from ethnic cleansing,' which was used in both cases as justification. Additionally, the analysis reveals the role of the US in the Russo-Georgian conflict, as well as role of Russia during the Kosovo crisis, because the US and Russia were engaged in both conflicts, even though their roles were opposite to each other.

I believe that a comparison and analysis of the methods and tactics used by the US and Russia in the promotion of their national interests in regional conflicts is of strategic importance in predicting Russia's future actions in response to other regional conflicts in the post-Soviet space. I hold that a decisive counter-offensive attack on Georgia sends a strong message to other post-Soviet republics, in particular to Ukraine, about possible outcomes if the 'near abroad' continues to seek close relations with the West. It is a signal to the US and

Europe that the post-Soviet space is Russia's 'zone of influence,' and that without its permission no other country has the right to build partnerships and friendly relations with its 'protectorates.'

At first glance it seems that the NATO intervention into Serbia in 1999 and the Russian intervention into Georgia in 2008 are similar. Such an argument might be based on the fact that the former Yugoslavia, like Georgia, was experiencing interethnic conflict. Both countries' conflicts were rooted in aggressive national policies against ethnic minorities, which led to social, political, and economic inequality and resulted in the creation of vehement separatist movements. Structural violence, including institutionalized poverty and discrimination against ethnic minorities, widened divisions. Both military interventions could be said to be illegitimate due to the absence of the comprehensive endorsement of a United Nations Security Council resolution. In both cases "protection of ethnic groups from cleansing" was considered the official reason for military intervention. However, this study exposes the fact that the humanitarian reason took a backseat to other key motives and was mainly used to gain public support and as international justification. The analysis discloses that the US's and Russia's involvement in the conflicts were largely motivated by the promotion of strategic and geopolitical interests, the securing of leadership positions, and domination in Europe and the post-Soviet space.

US involvement in the Kosovo crisis was motivated by two main factors. The first factor relates to preserving regional security in the Balkans and Europe. Being committed to NATO and its allies in Europe, Washington was concerned by refugee flow and war atrocities in Kosovo, which meant the possibility of the spreading of conflict into neighboring countries, and therefore of threats to peace and stability in Europe. The second

factor was to secure NATO's credibility and determine its new role in the post-cold war world. Defining a new role for NATO was a strategic issue for the US because through NATO it could secure a leadership position in Europe, which would allow for the promotion of the US's economic and political interests in the region and elsewhere. The Kosovo crisis was an opportunity for the US to demonstrate NATO's credibility and capability to secure peace and stability in the region. The effective military intervention into Kosovo made it clear to Western European countries that without the US's technological capabilities and resources the protection of national security would be challenging. NATO's failure to act decisively in the crisis could have provoked discussions and undermined its future role in Europe. In that case Washington risked losing a tool for maintaining its leadership position in Europe and elsewhere, and for pursuing its own national interests.

Russia's incursion into Georgia has been motivated by mainly geostrategic reasons that combine local, regional, and geopolitical interests.<sup>4</sup> These interests include maintaining protectorates such as South Ossetia and Abkhazia, exercising a predominant position in the region through political and economic influence, and sending a message to the West about Russia's growing status as a great power and as a counterweight to the presence of the US and NATO in the post-Soviet space. The preservation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as protectorates was needed for securing Russia's strategic economic and politico-military interests, which would allow Russia to secure its presence in Georgia. Moscow's presence in Georgia is of strategic importance for exercising Russia's political influence and opposing the possible location of US or NATO military forces in the region. For Russia, presence in

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<sup>4</sup> Allison, Roy. "Russia resurgent? Moscow's campaign to 'coerce Georgia to peace'." *International Affairs* 84.6 (2008): 1145-1171. <[http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/files/12445\\_84\\_6allison.pdf](http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/files/12445_84_6allison.pdf)>.

the region is also beneficial for keeping economic influence by controlling energy transportation, thus undermining European attempts to build an alternative energy pipeline.

Nevertheless, my research reveals differences between NATO's military intervention into the former Yugoslavia and the incursion of Russia into Georgia. The distinctive differences are seen in the respective peace-mediation processes with the involvement of multilateral institutions, as well as in the peacekeeping operations. Prior to military intervention into Kosovo, the US and NATO member states undertook lengthy multistage mediation and negotiation processes with the wide involvement of international institutions such as the UN, the Contact Group, and the OSCE. UNSC Resolution 1199 recognized that the crisis in Kosovo presented a threat to stability and security in the region.<sup>5</sup> Another UNSC Resolution 1203 endorsed and supported signed agreements between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and the OSCE and between the FRY and NATO on establishing an OSCE monitoring verification mission and NATO air verification mission over Kosovo.<sup>6</sup> The decision to use force was made multilaterally based on a consensus among NATO member states; however, the comprehensive authorization of the United Nations Security Council was lacking. The main cause of the lack of authorization was Russia's veto power at the UNSC. Even though Russia played an insider role in assisting in the negotiation process with the Serbian leadership, the Kremlin actively opposed the possibility of the use of force by NATO against the Former Republic of Yugoslavia. The main reason for such opposition was the affirmation that Kosovo was an internal matter of, and therefore the problem should be solved by, the FRY government. The Kremlin's position might be explained by the fact that

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<sup>5</sup> UNSC Resolution 1199. UNSC S/RES/1199. 23 September 1998. 17 Feb. 2009  
<<http://www.un.org/peace/kosovo/98sc1199.htm>>

<sup>6</sup> UNSC Resolution 1203. UN S/RES/1203. 24 October 1998. 17 Feb. 2009.  
<<http://www.un.org/peace/kosovo/98sc1203.htm>>

Russia had a separatist problem in Chechnya at that time. Moscow's stance was closely linked with aspirations to preserve its great power status. Accordingly Russia, along with China, warned the US and the EU that it would use its veto power and prevent them from obtaining permission from the UNSC to conduct military intervention into the territory of the Former Republic of Yugoslavia. In light of this warning, NATO did not appeal to the UNSC in order to get comprehensive Security Council authorization to conduct military intervention. This case serves as evidence of Russia's use of UNSC veto power as a tool for maintaining its national interests.

In 1991-1992, the first armed conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia took place. On 24 June 1992, Russia played the role of mediator and brokered a ceasefire agreement in Sochi between warring parties that led to the deployment of the tripartite Joint Peacekeeping Force (JPKF) with Georgian, Russian, and North Ossetian units, and a limited observation mandate of the OSCE.<sup>7</sup> Deployment of joint Russian, Georgian, and North Ossetian peacekeeping forces to the conflict zone successfully restricted international involvement. Only bilateral peace-negotiation was conducted by Moscow, before deployment of the tripartite peace keeping forces (Russia, Georgia and Ossetia).

After the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict in May 1994, the UN and Russia signed the Moscow Agreement which established the CIS Peacekeeping Forces (CISPKF). However, the peacekeeping force of 2,000 peacekeepers and military observers were composed exclusively of Russian forces, unlike the JPKF in Ossetia. The Moscow Agreement also provided the conditions for the deployment of a United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) with the task of observing the implementation of the agreement. Thus, in

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<sup>7</sup> OSCE mission in Georgia activated in December 1992 after Georgia applied to the CSCE HQ in Vienna with a request for mediation assistance. The initial objectives of the OSCE mission were to liaise with peacekeeping force, to monitor situation and to promote negotiations in order to reach peaceful solution.

Georgia peace-mediation and peacekeeping operations were under the obvious domination of Russia with limited involvement of international organizations and therefore cannot be seen as equivalent to United Nations peacekeepers in Bosnia or Kosovo. The role of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in the peace-mediation process is under doubt due to a vague initial structure and the apparent domination by Russia in the decision making process. Thus, Russian leadership decided to use force against Georgia unilaterally, without any consultations with the CIS or support from multilateral institutions.

Lastly, the Kosovo crisis was not generated by the NATO alliance or the US. Third-party involvement came later and the airstrike against Serbia was provoked by the deterioration of the situation and escalation of ethnic cleansing. In addition, the US and the NATO alliance did not support Albanians in Kosovo, unlike Russia, who supported breakaway regions by backing separatist movements and distributing Russian citizenship to South Ossetians.<sup>8</sup> Thereby Russia took a dominant role in the conflict between Georgia, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia, and was mainly focused on pursuing its own geopolitical interest rather than on helping Georgia solve the problem with its breakaway region.

### *Methodology*

This research explores three categories: (1) the strategic interests and motives for the US's and Russia's military interventions, (2) the level of international institutions' involvement in the peace-mediation process, and (3) the decisions to use force.

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<sup>8</sup> Mackinlay, John and Sharov, Evgenii. "Russian Peacekeeping operations in Georgia." Regional Peacekeepers: The Paradox of Russian Peacekeeping. Eds. Mackinlay John and Cross Peter. United Nations University Press: Tokyo-New York-Paris, 2003. 63-87.

The broad foreign policy interests of the United States and the Russian Federation were divided into two periods: the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s. Also each country's national interests and motives to intervene were examined in the respective regions: Kosovo and Georgia.

The US's and Russia's participation in multilateral organizations and level of engagement of these institutions in diplomatic efforts were studied. The role of regional and international institutions in the promotion of the US's and Russia's national interests in regional conflict management were studied as well.

Taking into account that both military interventions were conducted without comprehensive UNSC authorization, the study explores how the decisions to use force were made and on what basis. This study reveals a considerable difference between the two cases. In the Kosovo case the decision was multilateral based on a consensus between NATO member states. On the other hand, in the Georgia case the decision was made unilaterally by Russia without consultation with CIS member states.

### *Organization of the thesis*

The organization of this thesis is as follows. Chapter 1 presents the research question, argument, and methodology of the study. Chapter 2 will examine the broad and region-oriented foreign policy interests of the United States and Russian Federation. Later, the chapter describes the participation of the US and Russia in regional and international multilateral organizations, as well as differences in their understandings of a multilateral approach in solving interethnic conflicts.



Chapter 3 will discuss the possible strategic motives that drove Washington into the Kosovo crisis. The process of interest realization through negotiation and mediation processes with the involvement of regional and international institutions will be discussed as well. Also, the chapter will illustrate the role of Russia in the peace-mediation process and its position on the Kosovo issue. In addition, the wide engagement of the international community and the presence of a previous UNSC resolution allowing for the establishment of a NATO verification air mission over Kosovo and OSCE's monitoring mission, which led to the conclusion that the decision on "Operation Allied Force in Kosovo" was based on multilateral consensus, will be discussed. This, incidentally, is the main difference between NATO's military intervention into Kosovo and Russia's intervention into Georgia.

Chapter 4 will discuss the motives of the Russian counter-offensive attack on Georgia in August 2008, as well as the role of Russia in Caucasian conflicts, in particular the Georgia-Ossetia conflict. Russia's dominant position in negotiations and peacekeeping processes created limitations on international involvement in the conflict, which played a negative role in solving the root causes of the conflict and resulted in Russia's active participation in fueling tensions in order to advance its national interests. Russia's perception of Georgia as a "territory with special interests" influenced its unilateral decision to intervene through the use of force with the aim of restoring its political and military presence. This situation created all the necessary conditions for escalation of the conflict and threatening European peace and stability. This war raised many questions about the effectiveness of security policies in Europe and the international system of preservation of the territorial integrity of a sovereign state. Also, chapter 4 depicts the role of the US in increasing

tensions between Russian and Georgia, which led to a situation in which US and Russian interests conflicted and caused a dramatic shift in Russian-Western relations.

Finally, in the conclusion I summarize the vital and strategic interests of the US and Russia in both regions, and review differences and similarities in the engagement of multilateral institutions in peace-mediation processes and decisions to use force. The Russia-monopolized “mediator” role in interethnic conflicts in the post-Soviet space indicates that Russia will use ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ methods to influence and promote its national interests in the near abroad in order to counterbalance the US’s interests.

Now we turn to chapter 2 where will be discussed foreign policy interests of the United States and Russia in a broad and regions oriented context. The foreign policy interests will be divided into vital and strategic national interests. In addition, in the chapter portrays the role of regional and international institutions in the promotion of US and Russian national interests in regional conflicts.

## CHAPTER 2

### FOREIGN POLICY AND NATIONAL INTERESTS OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

In order to understand the motives behind military intervention it is important to examine the foreign policy interests of the US and Russia in the 1990s and into this century. National interest refers to the self-interest of a nation-state, defined as a state's goal or vision for the defense and projection of its power beyond its borders in order to pursue economic growth and power.<sup>9</sup> Foreign policy is a strategy or set of goals designed to interact with other countries on economic, political, cultural, social, and military issues, as well as with non-state actors. As a rule, these interactions attempt to take a full advantage of the benefits of multilateral international cooperation. Foreign policy is closely linked with national interest because it is developed in order to protect a country's national interest, security, ideology, and economic prosperity.

The paper divides national interests into two groups: *vital* and *strategic* interests. Vital interests concern survival issues and could affect the security and economic future of a country. Vital interests require total military mobilization and readiness to conduct war in order to protect and defend a country's welfare, as well as the regions that directly affect its security interests. Strategic interests include concerns that do not affect issues of survival or present a threat to the nation, but have the potential to become vital over an extended period

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<sup>9</sup> Coicaud, Jean-Marc and Wheeler, Nicholas J. "Introduction: the changing ethics of power beyond borders." National Interest and International Solidarity: Particular and Universal Ethics in International Life. Eds. Coicaud Jean-Marc and Wheeler Nicholas J. UN University Press: Tokyo-New York-Paris, 2008. 1-24.

of time. In addition, pursuing strategic interests facilitates obtaining political, economic, and military advantages to keep a hegemonic position, either regionally or globally.

### **National Interests and Foreign Policy of the United States**

Sarkesian, Williams, and Cimbala define the national interests of the United States as “... expressions of US values projected into the international and domestic arena. The purpose of interests includes the creation and perpetuation of an international environment that is most favorable to the peaceful pursuit of US values. It follows that interest’s nurture and expand democracy and open systems.”<sup>10</sup> This definition emphasizes the vital role of American values in the formulation of the principles of the US political-social system upon which national interests are based. Promotion of American values and national security interests requires projection of power into different parts of the globe.

US foreign policy is not defined only by the ruling leadership. American foreign policy is developed through the close interaction of societal forces and the institutional branches that were established by the US Constitution. The societal force concept embraces the broad viewpoints and orientations of the American people that consist of “... shared ideas, ideals, concepts, stories and myths that orient citizens within their political systems.”<sup>11</sup> At the institutional level foreign policy materializes as a result of interaction between two parts of the institutional establishment—the President of the United States within the executive branch and the US Congress. Each of these institutions influences foreign policy

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<sup>10</sup> Sarkesian, Sam, and Williams, John Allen, and Cimbala, Stephen J. US National Security: Policymakers, Processes and Politics. Boulder London: Lynne Rienner, 2008. pp. 8-9.

<sup>11</sup> James M. Scott and A. Lane Crothers. “Out of the Cold: The post-Cold War Context of U.S. Foreign Policy.” After the end: Making US Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War World. Ed. James M. Scott, Duke University Press: Durham-London, 1998. p. 3.

formation and its implementation. Public opinion and its consent in implementing certain policies plays a crucial role in the policies launched by the government. After the end of World War II and up until end of the Cold War, the US's key foreign policy interests included containment of the Soviet Union, prevention of the spread of communist ideology, and promotion of a global economy under US leadership. At that time, defining national interest was clear-cut and every foreign policy decision was seen through this ideological prism. For most of the twentieth century and today, US foreign policy has been driven by geopolitics and the prevention of domination by any strategic power in the world.

With the dissolution of the USSR, serious challenges of territorial domination ended and the principal goal of American policy was achieved. Once the Cold War ended it became more difficult to define national interests and to translate them into coherent foreign policy objectives. Such difficulties occurred due to the unpredictable, uncertain, and unstable situation in the world. The new era demanded new ways of thinking and new approaches in the formulation of strategies, policies, and concepts. In the 1990s, US foreign policy had very broad multiple political, economic, strategic, and humanitarian interests. Convinced that the major war threat was reduced, US policy was directed to solving domestic problems and in 1991 was engaged in the Gulf War to protect Kuwait from Iraq.

Sarkesian, Williams, and Cimbala describe the Clinton's administration grand strategy as that of "engagement and enlargement."<sup>12</sup> One of the vital interests for Washington in the 1990s was defining a new role for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in European affairs and continuing to build strong partnerships with European allies, thus securing US hegemony and leadership.

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<sup>12</sup> Sarkesian, Sam, and Williams, John Allen, and Cimbala, Stephen J. US National Security: Policymakers, Processes and Politics. Boulder London: Lynne Rienner, 2008. p. 225.

Building a strong partnership between itself and Europe is another vital interest for the US. For America, Europe is considered a key region for maintaining a strong US economy, and for obtaining the support of allies that gives the US leverage in advancing its political and economic interest around the globe. The US and its European allies have cultivated strong economic ties which increase employment opportunities, as well as provide trade and profitable investment opportunities for Americans. The US engagement in Europe's security issues and in expanding stable zones decreases the threat to stability and creates a secure environment that fosters economic benefits and results in reducing defense costs and increases the possibility of promoting its vital economic interests. For example, according to Institute for National Strategic Studies about 50percent of the US's direct investment abroad is in Europe, and over 60 percent of foreign direct investment in the US is from Europe.<sup>13</sup> A strong US economy became a unified objective that intertwined economics and politics.

Among strategic interests, these include issues of the protection of the homeland from nuclear, biological, chemical (NBC), or conventional military attack, as well as the prevention of any hostile power from dominating Europe, the Middles East, Asia, or the high seas.

#### *US interests in Kosovo*

The United States was engaged in the Yugoslav crisis in 1994 as a member of both NATO and the United Nations Security Council. Despite efforts of European countries in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the situation deteriorated in Bosnia and the US was a high profile

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<sup>13</sup> Department of Defense Office of International Security Affairs. "United States Security Strategy for Europe and NATO." 19 Mar. 2009 <<http://www.dod.mil/pubs/europe/index.html>>.

participant in the negotiation process and played a decisive role in stopping the war in Bosnia by assisting in signing the Dayton agreement in 1995. NATO was used as a peacemaking tool during the war and replaced the UN peacekeeping personnel afterwards.

On 24 March 1999, NATO, backed by the US, launched a 78 day air campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). In that military intervention, NATO used sustained force for the first time in the history of the alliance. It involved the large-scale use of air force operations against the Yugoslav state's army and resulted in policy changes by the Yugoslav government. NATO and its allies justified the military campaign with overwhelming humanitarian reasons, notably stopping the killing and expulsion of the Albanian population in Kosovo by Serbian paramilitary and law-enforcement forces.

US involvement in the Kosovo crisis was motivated by two interests. First, the issue of NATO's credibility in its new role in European affairs was vital to American politics in the 1990s. Having engaged in international diplomacy over the Kosovo crisis and having made military threats to Belgrade over the continuation of atrocities, NATO member states could have lost confidence in the credibility and capability of NATO to guarantee peace and security in the region if Milošević refused to agree to a diplomatic solution.<sup>14</sup> In addition, as a founder of NATO, the US was interested in the expression of NATO's new mission in Euro-Atlantic political relations. It was a vital interest to preserve US leadership in NATO in order to secure a continued leadership position in Europe, influence European security issues, and promote the US economy in Europe and beyond.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Roberts, Adam. "NATO's 'Humanitarian War' over Kosovo." *Survival*, 41.3 (Autumn 1999): 102-23.

<sup>15</sup> Gowan, Peter. "The Euro-Atlantic Origins of NATO's Attack on Yugoslavia." *Masters of the Universe? NATO's Balkan Crusade*. Ed. Tariq Ali. Verso: London-New York, 2000. 3-45.

Accordingly, President Clinton stated during his address to the nation prior to intervention into the Former Republic of Yugoslavia on 24 March 1999 that “Kosovo is about the US’s relation with Western Europe.”<sup>16</sup> The US commitment to multilateralism in NATO resulted in the transformation of the institution from a regional defense-alliance to a peacemaking mechanism and ensured a leadership role for the US, allowing it to promote its national interests within a multilateral framework in regional conflict. Preserving NATO as an instrument for maintaining a leadership position in Europe and beyond was a key interest for the US rather than saving Kosovo per se. With Kosovo’s declaration of independence in February 2008, it is a matter of honor for the US and EU to provide sustained support for the promotion of democratic principles and establishment of the rule of law in Kosovo, in order to ensure sustainable development in the Balkan region.

The second interest was preserving regional security in the Balkans. The situation in Kosovo threatened international peace and security due to the intensification of war atrocities and ethnic cleansing that generated refugee flows. Large refugee flows from Kosovo into neighboring countries were considered a destabilizing factor for Europe and a potential source for the conflict to spill over into neighboring countries.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, according to UNHCR (March 1, 1998-March 24, 1999) about 100,000 Kosovo Albanians left the region before NATO’s campaign.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Gowan Peter. “The Euro-Atlantic Origins of NATO’s Attack on Yugoslavia.” Masters of the Universe? NATO’s Balkan Crusade. Ed. Tariq Ali. Verso: London-New York, 2000. 3-45.

<sup>17</sup> Roberts, Adam. “NATO’s ‘Humanitarian War’ over Kosovo.” Survival, 41.3 (Autumn 1999):102-23.

<sup>18</sup> Wilkinson, Ray. “Kosovo: One last chance. The race against winter, yet another exodus.” Refugees 3.116 (1999). UNHCR. 19 March 2009 <<http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/3c6914bc5.pdf>>.



### *US interests in Georgia*

The region of the Southern Caucasus, with its three sovereign countries Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia, takes one of the central places in the promotion of US foreign policy. US strategic interests are focused on several issues, such as the promotion of freedom and democracy, energy security, counterterrorism, and the peaceful resolution of “frozen conflicts.” Georgia plays a significant role in US strategic geopolitical and economic interests in terms of energy security, counterterrorism, averting great power domination and NATO enlargement.

The strategic economic interest is concerned with the security of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline that goes through Georgian territory from the Caspian Sea and Central Asia to Turkey and ultimately to Europe and the US. BTC is the only regional transit route that avoids Russia and Iran. The 1,100-mile long pipeline started service in 2006 and pumps up to 1 million barrels of oil per day from Baku, Azerbaijan, to Yumurtalik, Turkey. In Georgian territory the BTC stretches 154.7 miles.<sup>19</sup> There is also the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) pipeline that transports natural gas from the Shah Deniz gas field in Azerbaijan to Turkey. The BTE pipeline started its first deliveries on December 15, 2006.<sup>20</sup>

Bernard Gelb refers to the estimates of BP and the Energy Information Administration of the US Department of Energy and points out that the Caspian Sea is a significant but not major source of crude oil to the world market.<sup>21</sup> To put things in

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<sup>19</sup> Pagnamenta, Robin. “Analysis: Energy Pipeline that Supplies the West Threatened by War Georgia Conflict.” Times Online. 28 Dec. 2008. 29 Dec. 2008  
<<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article4484849.ece>>.

<sup>20</sup> During the Russo-Georgian war the pipeline was closed for a couple of days and resumed operation on August 14, 2008.

<sup>21</sup> Gelb, Bernard A. “Caspian Oil and Gas: Production and Prospects.” CRS Report for Congress received through the CRS Web. 8 Sep. 2006.

perspective, in 2005 the Caspian Sea's energy production was 1.9 million barrels per day (only 2percent of total world output), while each country within the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries produces more than 1.9 million barrels per day.<sup>22</sup> However, by BP's estimates the Caspian basin has on reserve about 48 billion barrels of oil, which is about 4percent of world reserves, compared to the US's estimated 29 billion barrels of reserves.<sup>23</sup> Gelb points out that gas reserves in the Caspian region are higher, proportionally, than those of oil; thus, BP estimates confirm that the Caspian region has 4percent of the world's total in gas reserves.<sup>24</sup> Thereby the Caspian Sea contains more energy resources than it produces and as a consequence, it is of long-term importance.

The region is attractive for other energy-thirsty countries such as Turkey and China. Considering that the Caspian basin is a landlocked region, Russia has monopolized energy transit, controlling the majority of energy routes from the Caspian reserves. In addition, with the difficulties of post-war Iraq and the deterioration of relations with Iran, the importance of the Caspian region and Central Asia has increased. In this regard the BTC pipeline became an additional, however not main, source for energy supply that reduces heavy reliance for oil on the Middle East and Russia. Georgia as a transit country plays an important role for Euro-Atlantic society because its geographic location serves as an option for a non-Russian export route and provides an important access point to the northern borders of Middle East and Central Asian energy resources.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the preservation of stability in the region will

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<sup>22</sup> Gelb, Bernard A. "Caspian Oil and Gas: Production and Prospects." CRS Report for Congress received through the CRS Web. 8 Sep. 2006.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Tsereteli, Mamuka. "Beyond Georgia: Russia's Strategic Interests in Eurasia." CACI analyst, 11 June 2008. 24 Jan. 2009 <<http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/4879>>.

make access of Caspian energy resources to the global market easier, thereby diversifying energy resources and releasing monopolistic pressure.

Another strategic interest of the US is to prevent great power domination in the region. The US is concerned about Russian aspirations to influence and dominate in the region. In this regard, Washington tries to counterbalance the Kremlin's ambitions by providing considerable support in the implementation of reforms and promotion of democracy in Georgia, and encouraging Georgia in finding peaceful ways to solve separatist conflicts. The US considers the promotion of democracy in countries in transition to be indispensable to America's own national security, since the United States does not feel fully secure when undemocratic countries dominate in the world.

Within the framework of support for democratic reforms in Georgia, the United States provided assistance in the modification and restructuring of the Georgian defense system and trained the Georgian military within the framework of the Georgian Train and Equip Program (GTEP).<sup>26</sup> This training program was in line with the US's vital interest in the "war on terror" as well as in enhancing Georgian counter-terrorism capabilities and addressing the situation in the Pankisi Gorge. According to numerous intelligence data, terrorists supported by international terrorist organizations including Al-Qaeda, remain there.<sup>27</sup> In turn, Georgia has provided military forces that support the peacekeeping missions in Iraq under Operation 'Iraqi Freedom' and in Kosovo, KFOR.

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<sup>26</sup> Gularidze, Tea. "U.S. Boosts Successful Military Cooperation with Georgia." Civil Georgia. 5 Aug. 2004. 24 Feb. 2009 <<http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=7556>>.

<sup>27</sup> Ignatov, Oleg. "Gruziya v fokuse vneshnei politiki SSHA" Russian Journal. 12 Oct. 2006. 19 Mar. 2009 <<http://www.russ.ru/Mirovaya-povestka/Gruziya-v-fokuse-vneshnej-politiki-SSHA>>.

US support of Georgia in obtaining NATO membership is directly linked with the strategic interest of averting of great power domination and in line with the US policy on NATO enlargement in Europe. The US considers the NATO enlargement process to be a contribution to security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic region. For America it is strategically important to maintain NATO as a capable and successful alliance with a strong adherence to its principles.

### **United States Participation in Multilateral Organizations**

For Washington unilateralism is a preferred form of action due to its technological and material capacity. According to Clement, the United States is inclined to use a multilateral framework when it needs political support for legitimizing its actions.<sup>28</sup> Generally the United States tends to include its allies and partners who share its ideas and interests, and are able to contribute to common efforts. For the US, the NATO alliance is a great example of a permanent, multilateral framework with a group of credible, reliable, and loyal states that allows the US to promote its national political and economic interests.

#### *Membership in the UN*

The United States is a member of the United Nations (UN) with a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) since its establishment after World War II. Washington played a great role in designing the United Nations system. The US views the UNSC rather than the General Assembly as the main decision making platform on key security issues. The UNSC is the only UN body that has the primary authority to deal with

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<sup>28</sup> Clement, Sophia. "The United States and NATO: A Selective Approach to Multilateralism." Unilateralism and U.S. Foreign Policy: International Perspective. Ed. Malone, David M. and Yuen Foong Khong. Lynne Rienner Publishers: Boulder-London, 2003. 399-417.

issues concerning international peace and security that are reflected in the United Nations Charter. With the end of the Cold War the US emerged as the only superpower due to its financial, technological, and military capabilities, which resulted in distortion of the structural balance in the UN scheme.

The United States is considered the most dominant actor in the Security Council due to its technological, financial, and military capacities. As a consequence of the end of the Cold War, the balance shifted from interstate conflicts to internal warfare, which demanded new approaches in UN peacekeeping operations. The majority of those internal armed conflicts have been based on the issue of self-determination. The success of the UN peacekeeping operations in internal conflicts is unlikely to succeed without strong US backing, due to the US's dominant position in the UN. Before engaging in one of the new types of conflict, Washington's decision-makers first of all question whether it is in the US's security and political interests to respond to these distant conflicts and what approach should be taken in order to respond to the conflict unilaterally, through a UN peace operation, or not at all. In addition, US leadership considers the consequences of this choice on the authority and capacity of the UN to keep peace, and whether the choice would have any rebound effects on the US itself.<sup>29</sup>

A permanent seat with veto power at the UNSC gives the United States, along with the other four SC permanent members, tremendous power to exercise. In this manner the US has actively used veto power in order to protect itself against decisions that have opposed its interests. Washington has exercised veto power in the Security Council largely on issues

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<sup>29</sup> Thakur, Ramesh. "UN Peace Operations and US Unilateralism and Multilateralism." Unilateralism and US foreign Policy: International Perspective. Eds. Malone, David and Yuen Foong Khong. Lynne Rienner Publishers: Boulder London. 2003. 153-179.

related to the Arab-Israeli conflicts and to impose targeted and comprehensive sanctions against, for instance, such countries as Yugoslavia at the time of the Kosovo crisis. Very often due to veto power the UNSC becomes paralyzed and is unable to respond rapidly and decisively to the world's challenges.

### *Membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)*

The US took active part in establishing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization on 4 April 1949 as a military alliance between North America and Europe. The primary role of the organization during the Cold War was to defend Europe and North America from possible attacks by any nation or group of nations (Soviet threat), promote peace and security, and maintain the military balance in the region.<sup>30</sup> Today NATO is an alliance of 26 countries from North America and Europe with the fundamental role of safeguarding the freedom and security of its member countries by political and military means. The principal decision-making body is the North Atlantic Council; NATO decisions are based on a consensus between all member states. Such a decision making process compels the US to undertake bilateral and multilateral consultations with all member states in order to develop a consensus on a particular decision.<sup>31</sup> NATO has the military, material, and political leadership capacity that allows it to fulfill its main mission in Europe and beyond. However, the technological capability of the US and its ability to conduct military operations ensures its leadership role in NATO and allows it to pursue national interests within a multilateral

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<sup>30</sup> Clement, Sophia. "The United States and NATO: A Selective Approach to Multilateralism." Unilateralism and U.S. Foreign Policy: International Perspective, Ed. Malone, David M. and Yuen Foong Khong. Lynne Rienner Publishers: Boulder-London, 2003. 399-417.

<sup>31</sup> This is a big difference between the Russia-led CIS, CSTO institutions, where all members are subordinated to Russia.

framework. Thus, the United States uses NATO as a tool in maintaining its leadership role in Europe; in turn, its presence ensures NATO's credibility as a central European security institution. In addition, Washington sees in NATO a prime multilateral framework for legitimizing its activities, which allows for the promotion of its political and economic interests. In turn, for NATO member states it is beneficial to use the US's capacities in ensuring peace and stability in Europe. Thus, during the Kosovo crisis, NATO became the prime multilateral institution able to obtain legitimacy for military action because the UN Security Council was paralyzed by the threat of Russia's and China's veto powers. Russia and China strongly considered the Kosovo crisis to be a purely internal problem of the Former Republic of Yugoslavia and therefore that use of force against a sovereign state would violate its territorial integrity.

In the 1990s NATO was significantly reoriented through organizational changes in four areas: 'internal adaptation', 'external adaptation', 'peace support', and 'crisis management and response'.<sup>32</sup> Internal adaptation was mainly concerned with rebalancing relations with member states; specifically, the issue of NATO enlargement raised questions about establishing new decision-making procedures, because consensus-based decisions would become difficult with an increased number of members. Another issue of internal adaptation was the creation of a mechanism which allows the undertaking of military operations without the direct participation of US forces. This discussion resulted in the establishment in 1994 of the Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF), with the idea of deploying flexible military forces by a 'coalition of the willing.'

The 'external adaptation' process was related to the establishment of relations between NATO and non-member states. In 1994, NATO adopted the Partnership for Peace

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<sup>32</sup> Smith, Martin. From Cold War through cold peace to partnership? Routledge: London and New York, 2006.

(PfP) process, which was in line with the external adaptation framework, notably with Russia. NATO's third unplanned peace support role took place with the arising of violent conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia. In this way NATO's troops and command resources were deployed in Bosnia during the violence. In addition, after signing the Dayton agreement in 1995, NATO played a central peacekeeping role in Bosnia along with the OSCE and the UN. The fourth role of NATO in response to a crisis came with the use of military force, without a UNSC resolution, in 1999 under Operation Allied Force, which was aimed at coercing the Serbian leadership to peace in Kosovo, similar to the 1995 air strikes in Bosnia against Bosnian Serb positions near Sarajevo. This new role of the alliance was called 'crisis management and response' at a NATO summit in Washington in April 1999.<sup>33</sup>

*Membership in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe*

The US has a seat in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), which is the largest regional security organization in the world. The OSCE is a platform for political negotiations and decision-making in the field of early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict rehabilitation in the region. The OSCE has a network of field missions around Europe and Central Asia that enables participating states to put their political will into practice.<sup>34</sup>

The OSCE is an organization that positions the US, Russia, and European countries on a level surface and bring together states from the west and east. It is a forum where all 56 member states have an opportunity to work closely on issues of common interests and make

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<sup>33</sup> Smith, Martin. *From Cold War through cold peace to partnership?* Routledge: London and New York, 2006.

<sup>34</sup> OSCE Homepage. 15 Feb. 2009 < <http://www.osce.org/about/19298.html> >



decisions by consensus. The OSCE as a multilateral organization has a specific set of capacities such as mediation power in a conflict situation, institution-building in a post-conflict environment, and information dissemination in democratic processes, like elections. Thus the organization took a special position with regards to the Balkan wars in post-conflict rehabilitation, resettlement of refugees, establishment of electoral systems, and reforming the local police. In addition, the OSCE was present in Kosovo as an international monitoring organization before NATO's military intervention into the former Yugoslavia. In contrast to NATO, the US uses the OSCE as an instrument for the promotion of security and peace in the region by non-military means.

### **National Interests and Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation**

Foreign policy formation and implementation in contemporary Russia is affected by an imperial and totalitarian past. Andrei Tsygankov argues that Russian interaction with the world depends upon its own unique patterns of thinking and behavior, because throughout history the Russian response to national security threats was similar and resulted in the development of three main groups of interests: neighboring countries, external threat of invasion, and preservation of state integrity.<sup>35</sup>

Tsygankov states that such historical developments resulted in the emergence of three schools of foreign policy making: *westernizers*, *statists*, and *civilizationists*, or so-called *eurasianists*. *Westernizers* affiliate themselves with the West and share Western values such as democracy, human rights, freedom, and free market.<sup>36</sup> *Statists* strongly believe that only

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<sup>35</sup> Tsygankov, Andrei. Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2006. p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

the state, without external assistance, is able to preserve the political, economic, and social order. Statists value strong state power, independence, and stability, and they sturdily believe that Russia's national security is under the threat. Such a perception moves Russia toward great power ambitions and enables it to respond to challenges and threats from the inside and out. In foreign policy, the vital interest is associated with promotion of Russia's greatness and demonstration of its strength.<sup>37</sup> *Civilizationists* are characterized as hard-line politicians and intellectuals who recognize widespread expansion as an approach to guarantee national security. To Civilizationists, the dissemination of Russian values is important in challenging the Western system of values. Civilizationists believe that the expansion of territory and dissemination of their values is competition for power against the West, in particular the US.<sup>38</sup>

To Tsygankov, Russian foreign policy formulation and its implementation depends upon the political establishment following a particular school of thought.<sup>39</sup> With the dissolution of the USSR in the early 1990s, Russia lost its superpower position in the world and was engaged in political, economic, and social transformation. The new Russian leadership under Yeltsin was devoted to developing a pro-Western vision of national identity and motivated by initiating democratic reforms with the aim to integrate with the West. At that time national interest consisted of three main components. The first component was related to the conducting of radical economic and political reforms by investing resources in the creation of a modern economy without fear of military threat or geopolitical interests.

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<sup>37</sup> Tsygankov, Andrei. Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2006.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Tsygankov, Andrei. Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2006. 58.

The second component was joining international organizations and becoming a full member of the transatlantic economic and security community (such organizations as the OSCE, NATO, the G-7, and others). Finally, the last component was related to the economic, political, and cultural separation of Russia from the former Soviet republics. The Russian leadership considered the former republics to be a heavy burden to the economy. In this regard Moscow aimed to gradually withdraw the army and military equipment from the territories of the former republics and relied on assistance from international organizations in solving the local conflicts that occurred in the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia. With the intention to “divorce” the former Soviet republics in a civilized way, Russia played a great role in establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in 1991. The CIS was also meant to be a platform for economic and cultural integration among the former Soviet republics.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, in 1992 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation prepared a new concept of foreign policy that denied imperial ambitions and placed its trust in the Western concept and support.<sup>41</sup> However, due to weak economic capabilities the new strategy did not work. People’s growing dissatisfaction with the declining economy, the worsening standard of living, and skepticism toward the new reforms resulted in the intensification of the opposition. Such developments led toward the strengthening of the state’s role and the revitalization of the ‘great Russia’ status. External and internal threats to Russian security considerably affected the revival of great power status ambitions. The war in Chechnya undermined the country’s stability from the inside. Ethnic conflicts that

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<sup>40</sup> Tsygankov, Andrei. Russia’s Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2006.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

occurred in the “near abroad” threatened Russia’s security from the outside, such as brutal fights between Georgians and South Ossetians, Georgians and Abkhazians, and disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno Karabakh region. In addition, despite Russia’s protests, NATO’s expansion toward the east became a factor reinforcing the power of the statist school and the cooling of relations with the West.

An even more assertive and solid stance emerged with the appointment of Yevgeny Primakov as Foreign Minister in 1996. A fundamental part the definition of national interest at the end of 1990s was related to securing great power status, counterbalancing the United States, and promoting the concept of a multipolar international system.<sup>42</sup> The concept of multipolarity became central to Russia’s foreign policy and promoted the conditions needed to be a counterweight to US hegemonic aspirations.<sup>43</sup> However, the great power balance policy did not create favorable conditions for economic development and did not improve the well-being of Russians. The policy turned out to be purely geopolitical, which resulted in a worsening economic situation, increased foreign debt, and a decline in foreign investments.<sup>44</sup> During Yeltsin’s rule, foreign policy decision-making was chaotic and inconsistent due to infighting among different groups and the promotion of interests through the President’s favorites.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Karlsson, H. “The United States and Russia: A clash of strategic visions.” Changing Transatlantic Security Relations: Do the US, the EU and Russia form a new strategic triangle? Eds. Hallenberg, Jan and Karlsson, Hakan. Routledge: London and New York, 2006. 184-204.

<sup>43</sup> Ambrosio, T. “Russia’s Quest for Multipolarity: A Response to US Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era.” European Security 10.1 (Spring 2001): 45-67.

<sup>44</sup> Tsygankov, Andrei. Russia’s Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2006. 25.

<sup>45</sup> Baev, Pavel K. “Russia’s Stance Against Secession: From Chechnya to Kosovo.” International Peacekeeping 6.3 (1999): 73-94.

Putin inherited Russia at a difficult time, with the consequences of the 1998 economic crisis that paralyzed the economy and an external debt of \$133 billion to Western banks and governments.<sup>46</sup> Payment of the foreign debt and pursuing economic priorities was essential for Putin in order to restore Russia's great power status. Dependence on loans from Western banks and governments inevitably meant that Russia lost independence in the formulation of its own political course and sovereignty. During his first years of rule Putin launched two main economic programs that resulted in paying off all Russian debt to the International Monetary Fund in the beginning of 2005, three and a half years ahead of schedule.<sup>47</sup> The world price of oil also played an important part in increasing Russia's wealth; the price rose from under \$10 a barrel in 1998 to over \$140 in 2008.<sup>48</sup> Putin saw Russia's gas and oil as a powerful foreign policy instrument and primary geopolitical asset. Such an understanding led to the creation of conditions where the state took greater control over these resources.

Putin's consolidation of power and resources resulted in a consensus among the political elite about Russia's identity and interests based on their perception of Putin. Like any other country in the world, Russia's first *vital* interest is to ensure the security of the country while preserving its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The *strategic* interest of Putin's Russia is attaining the status of major world power alongside the United States and China. It is clearly stated in an official document on foreign policy formation, adopted in 2000, that "... the Russian Federation is a great power and influential center in the modern

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<sup>46</sup> Gaddy, Clifford G. and Ickes, Barry W. "Putin's Third Way." National Interest online, 21 Jan. 2009. 7 Feb. 2009 <<http://www.nationalinterest.org/Article.aspx?id=20496>>.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Gaddy, Clifford G. and Ickes, Barry W. "Putin's Third Way." National Interest online, 21 Jan. 2009. 7 Feb. 2009 <<http://www.nationalinterest.org/Article.aspx?id=20496>>.

world.”<sup>49</sup> Great power ambition is also emphasized in Putin’s article devoted to the consolidation of Russian society when he says that “Russia has been and will be a great power”.<sup>50</sup> Great power status was directly linked to the cultivation of a Russian sphere of influence in the post-Soviet space, a region identified as a ‘zone of special responsibility and influence.’

The next central interest is a continuation of the 1997 policy on the promotion of a multipolar world in order to balance “... a growing trend towards the establishment of a unipolar world order, with economic and power domination of the United States.”<sup>51</sup> Moscow presents NATO enlargement, US missile defense deployment in Poland and the Czech Republic, and the official US policy on democracy promotion as a serious threat to Russia’s national security. These issues were clearly stated by Putin during his speech at a Munich conference in 2007.<sup>52</sup> In addition, the presence of NATO forces in Central Asia, US military training in Georgia, and the desire of Georgia and Ukraine to obtain NATO’s Membership Action Plan are clearly irritating Russia and increasing its insecure feelings in regards to its geopolitical and national interests. In order to keep multipolarity Russia aims to influence global processes through generally recognized international law (UN Charter) and institutions as the UN Security Council, where Russia has permanent member status.

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<sup>49</sup> “Foreign Policy Conception of the Russian Federation (2000).” Russian Foreign Policy in Transition: Concepts and Realities. Ed. Melville, Andrei and Shakleina, Tatiana. Central European University Press: Budapest New York, 2005. 89-104.

<sup>50</sup> Putin, Vladimir. “Rossia na rubezhe tysiacheletii.” Russian Foreign Policy in Transition: Concepts and realities. Ed. Melville, Andrei and Shakleina, Tatiana. Central European University Press: Budapest New York, 2005, 221-234.

<sup>51</sup> “Foreign Policy Conception of the Russian Federation (2000).” In Russian Foreign Policy in Transition: Concepts and realities. Ed. Melville, Andrei and Shakleina, Tatiana. Central European University Press: Budapest New York, 2005. 89-104.

<sup>52</sup> Putin, Vladimir. “Speech at the 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy.” Munich Security Conference, 10 Feb. 2007. 2 March 2009 <<http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/rede.php?sprache=en&id=179>>.

The election of Dmitri Medvedev as President of the Russian Federation in 2008 offers little chance to anticipate that Russia will change its foreign policy and behavior. On 12 July 2008 Medvedev adopted a new foreign policy for the Russian Federation, which is not too far from Putin's concepts of great power, multipolarity, and a new world order.<sup>53</sup> After the Russo-Georgian conflict the President of Russia underlined five main principles that will guide foreign policy and defend Russia's national interests. The first principle is the primacy of international law in developing and defining relations with other states (this principle seems to be elusive, due to Russia's military action against sovereign Georgia). The second principle is a multipolar world, which means unacceptability by Russia of the primacy of one country (i.e. the US) in the determination of world policy. The third principle of 'no isolation' might be interpreted as that Russia does not seek confrontations with the US and Europe and other countries; however, it requires that its interests should be met first. The next principle is the protection of the lives and dignity of Russian citizens 'wherever they are',<sup>54</sup> and the business community abroad. Moscow warns that any aggressiveness toward its citizens will result in a quick protective response (as "it did in Georgia"). Finally, the last principle demands a "sphere of influence," especially over states on its border, where Russia has privileged interests. Failure by other states to respect Russia's interests in 'zones of influence' might be potential for further conflicts.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ministerstvo Inostrannyh Del Rosii. "Konceptiya vneshnei politiki Rossiskoi Federacii." 12 July 2008. 2 March 2009 <<http://www.mid.ru/ns-osndoc.nsf/0e9272befa34209743256c630042d1aa/d48737161a0bc944c32574870048d8f7?OpenDocument>>.

<sup>54</sup> There is a significant Russian diaspora in Georgia and in general throughout the post-Soviet space.

<sup>55</sup> Reynolds, Paul. "New Russian world order: the five principles." *BBC News*. 9 Sep. 2008. 8 Feb. 2009 <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7591610.stm>>.

Realignment in Russian foreign policy and security policy is enduring and radical since 2000s. Putin's understanding of world order profoundly reappraised Russia's national interests, reverted to old statist's ambitions, and revived Russian nationalism. Putin's Russia has been concerned about more pragmatic relations with the West, i.e. aligning with most powerful states in international affairs, and motivated by protecting national security and national interests through mutually gainful cooperation.<sup>56</sup>

#### *Russia's interests in Kosovo*

During Tsarist times, Russia had strategic, economic, and cultural interests in the Balkans. Strategically, the empire's leaders saw the Balkans as a security zone for Russian borders, which also allowed control of the Bosphorus and Dardanelle Straits for the promotion of commercial and economic development. A second interest was related to pan-Slavism, the idea of the cultural and religious unity of all Slavic peoples. However, Larrabee points out that pan-Slavic and Orthodox Christian interests never drove Russian policy in the Balkans as much as strategic and economic interests.<sup>57</sup>

Great power status aspiration was a reason for Russia's involvement in the Yugoslav crisis, which resulted in the return of assertiveness in Russian foreign policy in 1993. The Yugoslav wars did not pose a threat to Russian security interests per se; it supported its Serbian ally based on great power ambition and vague Slavic ties. Russia's engagement in the Kosovo crisis was mainly to preserve its great power status in European affairs and constrain NATO's influence.

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<sup>56</sup> Smith, Martin. From Cold War through cold peace to partnership? Routledge: London and New York, 2006.

<sup>57</sup> Larrabee, Stephen. "Russia and the Balkans: Old Themes and New Challenges." Russia and Europe: The Emerging Security Agenda. Ed. Baranovsky, Vladimir. Oxford University Press, 1997. 389-402.



NATO's eastward expansion at the end of the 1990s was alarming to the Russian political establishment and created a feeling of threat to Russian interests and security. In addition, in the mid 1990s, the Russian leadership clearly understood that NATO was becoming a foundation for European security. Moscow perceived NATO expansion as a rejection of Russian integration into the western security organization and a refusal to keep a promise not to expand the alliance. Putin stresses that during the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, Western partners assured Soviet leaders that a NATO army would not be placed outside of German territory, and quotes the speech of NATO General Secretary Mr. Woerner in Brussels on May 17, 1990: "The fact that we are ready not to place a NATO army outside German territory gives the Soviet Union a firm security guarantee."<sup>58</sup>

Yuri Romanchenko interprets NATO's action in the Balkans as a possible case-scenario for the disintegration of Russia itself due to the growing separatist mood and movements in the Northern Caucasus and Tatarstan.<sup>59</sup> He deeply believes that ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia was used by the US and NATO to strengthen their influence in the Balkans. Romanchenko states that the US's refusal to participate in the beginning of Yugoslav wars and its 'support for one of the warring parties' resulted in constant destabilization of the region and intimidation of the other party by using force.<sup>60</sup>

However, there might be strategic, economic, and geopolitical motives for Russia as well. James Headley points out that Russia has economic interests in the Balkans. Russia's expansion to the territories of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia might have

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<sup>58</sup> Putin, Vladimir. "Speech at the 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy." Munich Security Conference, 10 Feb. 2007. 2 March 2009 <<http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/rede.php?sprache=en&id=179>>.

<sup>59</sup> Romanchenko, Yuri. Ohota na Rossii: Nashi vrugi i "druz'ya" v XXI veke. Moskva: Veche, 2005. 411.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. 411-412.

strategic importance. A corridor from the Black Sea and further to the Mediterranean would allow diversification of energy pipelines and provide other political and economic opportunities for Russia.<sup>61</sup> Thus, natural gas supply was one of the tools that allowed Russia to be a player in European security affairs during the Yugoslav crisis.

For the Kremlin, neither Kosovo itself, the Kosovo Serbs, nor the Kosovo Albanians mattered greatly. The most vital interest for Russia in the Kosovo crisis was the issue of European security and relations with the West. It seems that Russia sought recognition of its power status, which meant Russia's involvement in the peace-mediation process and participation in multilateral organizations allowing the use of its veto power to oppose the plans of the West. Russia was keen to preserve the territorial integrity of FRY, to prevent unwanted military intervention by western powers into the territory of a sovereign state, and to avert NATO's presence inside the former Yugoslavia. Such a stance was dictated by Russia's internal problems, namely in Chechnya due to growing separatist movements. Moscow was not interested in creating a precedent for third party intervention.

NATO's intervention into Kosovo reinforced Russia's perceptions about the alliance as a major threat to its security, in the form of the creation of Kosovo as a model for future actions, as well as increased feelings of isolation. Such an understanding resulted in the redefining of military doctrine, an increase in budget spending on defense, maintaining the strength of the UNSC, and tightening the defense space in the territory of the former Soviet

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<sup>61</sup> Headley, James. Russia and the Balkans: Foreign policy from Yeltsin to Putin. Columbia University Press: New York, 2008.

Union. In addition, NATO's intervention into Kosovo triggered a stronger partnership with China and India against western powers.<sup>62</sup>

### *Russian interests in Georgia*

Historically, Russia always had special interests in the Caucasus. Since 1801, Georgia was under Russia's control, with a brief period of independence after the Socialist revolution, before its reluctant incorporation into the Soviet Union in 1921. Despite being part of the Russian, then Soviet, empire for almost 200 years, Georgia's inhabitants preserved a strong sense of national identity.

Geographically, Georgia is linked to Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the Northern Caucasus within the Russian Federation. Its geographic proximity to Russia positions Georgia as a special country with particular interests. Russia has four distinct interests in Georgia, which can be summarized as regional stability, politico-military influence, "protection" of the Russian diaspora, and development of economic ties.

### *Regional stability*

With the gaining of independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Georgia has faced political turnover, social instability, economic difficulties, and interethnic and territorial conflicts. However, the tension between South Ossetians and Abkhazians began as early as 1989, when Georgia was still part of the Soviet Union. Russia has an ambivalent attitude towards Georgia. The unstable situation gives Russia the opportunity to maintain its influence in the country. At the same time, however, instability in Georgia threatens security

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<sup>62</sup> Tsygankov, Andrei. Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2006.

in the Northern Caucasus and Chechnya, where Russia has problems with separatism and threats of radical religious extremism. Instability on Russia's frontier could have spill-over effects and endanger the unity of the Russian Federation.

Until 1993 Moscow policy toward the region was passive and became reactive only in ad hoc situations. In the early 1990s, when conflicts erupted between Georgia and South Ossetia and Georgia and Abkhazia, Russia was involved directly as a peace mediator and peacekeeper. Moscow began to support separatist forces in South Ossetia and Abkhazia when the Georgian leadership started to build a close relationship with the US. Russia's support of separatist regions inside Georgia aggravated the situation and created preconditions for the outbreak of open war between Georgia and Russia in August 2008. It seems that the Kremlin wanted to weaken Georgia and gain more geopolitical and geoeconomic control over Transcaucasia.<sup>63</sup> Georgia's destabilization is in Russia's strategic interest because Russia would achieve a much better tactical position, with closed access for the West in the use of ports and the energy transportation system that connects the Caspian Sea with the world market. In addition, destabilization would impede the air corridor that serves NATO as a supply link to Afghanistan. Under such conditions the West would seek support and make better deals with Russia in order to secure alternative supply roads.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Russia has also long-standing desires in other post-soviet countries as Azerbaijan and Moldova by supporting separatists in Karabakh and Trans-Dniester.

<sup>64</sup> Tsereteli, Mamuka. "Beyond Georgia: Russia's strategic interests in Eurasia." *CACI Analyst*. 6 Nov. 2008. 13 Feb. 2009 <<http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/4879>>.

### Politico-military interest

Russia has a critical strategic interest in Georgia, since historically Georgian territory served as a “buffer zone” to protect the southern frontier of Russia and the Black Sea coast. During Soviet times the Transcaucasian military district was located across Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. After the Soviet dissolution, the Russian army inherited about 1600 bases and facilities with ground troops and military bases of the Black Sea Fleet and border guards.<sup>65</sup>

Initially Georgia did not demand immediate Russian military withdrawal from the country. Negotiations about the withdrawal of military bases from Georgia started after Georgia’s defeat in the civil war with Abkhaz separatists in 1992. The conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia resulted in the departure of about 250,000 Georgians from Abkhazia and left up to 10,000 dead.<sup>66</sup> Georgians suspected Russian military assistance to the separatists and perceived Russia as an aggressor and a danger to Georgia’s territorial integrity. In 1993 Russia restored its influence in Georgia and persuaded it to unite with the CIS, thus guaranteeing that Russian military bases would stay on Georgian territory.

Nevertheless, in 1995 Tbilisi and Moscow signed an agreement about the withdrawal of military bases, which was never ratified by the Russian Duma. Despite the lack of ratification, most of the bases were closed between 1997 and 1999. The process of withdrawal was not easy due to strong criticism of the Kremlin by nationalist and communist leaders in Russia. In turn Russia demanded that Georgia would not allow military bases from

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<sup>65</sup> Sokov, Nikolai. “The Withdrawal of Russian Military Bases from Georgia: Not Solving Anything.” PONARS Policy Memo 363. Monterey Institute of International Studies, June 2005.

<sup>66</sup> International Crisis Group webpage. “Conflict history: Georgia.” 20 Mar. 2009  
<[http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?action=conflict\\_search&l=1&t=1&c\\_country=42](http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?action=conflict_search&l=1&t=1&c_country=42)>.

any other country on its territory after Russian withdrawal. The Russian leadership was very much worried about the possible location of US or NATO bases.<sup>67</sup>

In 1999 four Russian bases remained on Georgian territory – Vaziani, Gudauta, Akhalkalaki, and Batumi. During the OSCE's Istanbul summit that year, Boris Yeltsin and Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze signed a statement regarding the future of the military bases. According to the statement Vaziani and Gudauta would be closed in 2001, but only on the condition that the Russian military would have the right to use the military airport in Vaziani. The Gudauta base in Abkhazia generated debate between Georgia and Russia. Georgians believed that this military base had backed separatists during conflict in 1992-1993. Russia, on the other hand, claimed that all military equipment had been removed and that base facilities were used by Russian peacekeepers deployed after the Abkhaz conflict. The timeframe for closing Akhalkalaki and Batumi was left open and remained undetermined. Negotiations were hindered by Russia in an attempt to prolong the presence of the bases. These two bases presented a strategic interest for Russia: the Akhalkalaki base was positioned on the Turkish border on the route from Turkey to the South Caucasus, and the Batumi base was located on the Black Sea coast. Finally, the last two bases were officially removed in 2007, Akhalkalaki on 27 June and Batumi on 13 November.<sup>68</sup> After the war between Russia and Georgia, the Kremlin restored and strengthened its military bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. *The Messenger* staff argues that the main motive for Russia's intervention into Georgia was to restoring its military presence in the South

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<sup>67</sup> Jackson, Nicole J. Russian Foreign Policy and the CIS: Theories, Debates and Actions. Routledge: London-New York, 2003. 119.

<sup>68</sup> Kakachia, Kornely K. "An End to Russian Military Bases in Georgia? The Implications of Past Withdrawals." PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 24. Monterey Institute of International Studies. Aug. 2008. 11 Feb. 2009 <<http://ceres.georgetown.edu/esp/ponarsmemos/page/55918.html>>.

Caucasus, because it would secure Russia's military presence in the region and thereby control and undermine European attempts to build alternative energy pipelines. As a source states, Russia will "... use military muscle to defend [...] economic interests."<sup>69</sup>

#### Economic interests

During Soviet times Georgia was one of the wealthiest republics. However, due to high integration of the Georgian economy with that of other Soviet states, Georgia remained dependent on Russia after its independence. Due to increasingly tense relations with Georgia, Moscow exerted economic and political pressure by closing borders, suspending air and ground transportation, and imposing embargos on Georgian exports and agricultural products. Since economic sanctions and other punishing measures did not make Georgia rethink its western orientation, Russia intensified its support to breakaway regions, which seemed to be the only way to press Georgia and influence its desire joins NATO.

Moscow has its own economic interest in Georgia, especially in Abkhazia, which has agricultural land, the port of Sukhumi, a railway link, and a resort area. Russia's vital interest is Georgia's geographic location; it serves as a bridge between the Caspian and Black Seas. This location allows for monopolization and securing of additional routes to transport oil and gas from the Caspian Sea and Central Asia to Europe and beyond. Russia's actions demonstrate that energy has become a "weapon" for the promotion and advancement of its own geopolitical and economic interests. Russia's near monopoly of Central Asian energy exports, plus instability in the Middle East, have advanced Russia's position as a center for the promotion of geopolitics through energy.

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<sup>69</sup> "Russian Military Bases in Georgia." *The Messenger online*. 4 Feb. 2007. 9 Feb. 2009 <[http://www.messenger.com.ge/issues/1787\\_february\\_4\\_2009/1787\\_edit.html](http://www.messenger.com.ge/issues/1787_february_4_2009/1787_edit.html)>. The Messenger is the Republic of Georgia's leading English language newspaper.

## “Protection” of the Russian Diaspora

Protection of the Russian diaspora in Georgia, South Ossetia, or Abkhazia corresponds with Russia’s foreign policy’s fourth principle, the “protection of life and dignity of Russian citizens.” After the war with Georgia, President Medvedev stressed that Russia will protect Russian citizens ‘wherever they are.’ However, it seems that Russia is concerned not so much with protecting the lives of Russian citizens, as with the mere justification or excuse for Russia’s involvement in the area and strengthening its presence in the ‘near abroad’.

Today, the exact demographic breakdown of the population in South Ossetia is unknown. As of the 1989 census, Georgia had a population of 5.4 million, among them 70 percent Georgian, 8 percent Armenian, 6.5 percent ethnic Russian, 1.8 percent Azeri, 3 percent Ossetian, and 1.8 percent Abkhaz. South Ossetia in 1989 had about 100,000 people, of whom 66.2 percent were Ossetian, 29 percent were Georgian, and 2.1 were ethnic Russian.<sup>70</sup>

Support of Russian Diasporas in CIS countries is reflected in Russian foreign policy and Moscow has come up with the idea of “compatriots,” which is a vague category that includes former Soviet citizens living in newly independent states.<sup>71</sup> This category has become a method for Russian politicians to manipulate and validate their policies in separatist regions inside former Soviet republics. The ‘*passportization*’ process started in South Ossetia and Abkhazia several years ago as well. The majority of the population in those breakaway regions was granted “citizenship of the Russian Federation.” The argument

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<sup>70</sup> Toal, Gerard. “Russia’s Kosovo: A Critical Geopolitics of the August 2008 War over South Ossetia.” Eurasian Geography and Economics 49.6 (2008): 670-705.

<sup>71</sup> Trenin, Dmitri. Getting Russia Right. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2007.



of protection of Russian citizens was used by Moscow as a justification for the military intervention into Georgian territory in 2008. In fact, the Kremlin's readiness to protect its citizens in every corner of the former Soviet Union generates fear because even a small concentration of Russian citizens might be considered a threat for any former Soviet republic.

### **Russia's Participation in Multilateral Organizations**

The Russian leadership, as well as that of any other state, sees multilateral institutions as instruments for promoting its national interests. Multipolarity is mainly understood as competing interests between great powers in which each power pursues its own national interests without taking into account the interests of other countries. According to Ambrosio, Russia pursues the idea of multipolarity with intention to create "... conditions in which Russia can effectively resist American military, geopolitical, and economic encroachment."<sup>72</sup>

#### *Membership in the United Nations*

The Russian Federation has been a United Nations member state and a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council since its establishment.<sup>73</sup> Russia allocates a special place for the United Nations system and considers it the only mechanism able to shape a multipolar world. Still, Russia's belief in the UNSC as the only legitimate institution authorizing the use of force contradicts Moscow's actual way of conducting foreign policy and recognition of international law. For instance, Moscow does not see a need for UNSC authorization for peacekeeping operations on the territory of former Soviet republics. Such a

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<sup>72</sup> Ambrosio, Thomas. "Russia's Quest for Multipolarity: A response to US Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era." *European Security*, 10.1 (2001): 45-67.

<sup>73</sup> Russia inherited a seat at the UNSC after the dissolution of the USSR in 1991. The succession was supported by former Soviet Union republics and was not objected by the UN members.

view closely connects with Moscow's belief that the near abroad is a special "zone of Russian responsibility" and thereby 'peacekeeping' operations should be done mainly by Russia. In addition, Russia's incursion into the territory of a sovereign state in August 2008 leaves doubt about its real commitment to multilateralism and its proclamation of creating multipolar world where interests of all parties are taken equally.

A permanent seat on the UNSC gives powerful states a certain privileged position due to veto power. In this regard, having a permanent seat on the UNSC is considered by Russia as significant for the promotion its national interests. Firstly, building a multipolar world is one of the main principles in Russian foreign policy and the UNSC is viewed by Moscow as an arena for influencing global processes and opposing the dominant power (i.e. the US). Secondly, veto power on the UNSC plays an important role in protecting Russia's interests and provides conditions where Russia treated as a great power by other major powers.

#### *Membership in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe*

Like the United States, Russia has seat at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), which is the largest regional security organization in the world. The OSCE played one of the central roles in facilitating the transitions of the former Soviet republics, as well as in deploying the peace mediation missions to mitigate conflicts that occurred in Georgia, Moldova, and the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, disputed between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Nevertheless, within the OSCE there are differences among participating states, namely between Russia and the West. At one time Russia, due to the threat of NATO expansion, was forcefully advocating making the OSCE (then CSCE) a central European

security institution and hoping to introduce a 'security council' with veto power in order to make decisions on behalf of the member states (as per UN style).<sup>74</sup> However, the battle for the primary role in European security was won by the US, keeping NATO as the dominant institution in the European security arena and the OSCE as a supporting organization.<sup>75</sup>

In this regard, Russia accuses the OSCE of bias and lacking in balance in judging events in the east and west. In turn, western delegations complain that Russia hinders the OSCE's ability to resolve a number of long-standing problems in the post-Soviet space.<sup>76</sup> At the Munich security conference on February 10, 2007, Putin sharply criticized the work of the OSCE and stressed that this institution had become an instrument for the promotion the foreign policy interests of one country or group of countries (western countries). He also accused the OSCE of interference in Russia's internal affairs through non-governmental organizations, and thereby undermining stability.<sup>77</sup>

Despite all of these accusations the OSCE plays a considerable role in Russian foreign affairs. Moscow considers the OSCE a tool for moving its foreign policy interests when needed. First of all, through the OSCE, Russia has an opportunity to act and influence the formulation of the European and Eurasian security agenda. Secondly, Russia has influence and control over OSCE field missions; for instance, Moscow, along with other member states, appoints heads of missions by consensus.

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<sup>74</sup> Smith, Martin A. Russia and NATO since 1991: From Cold War through cold peace to partnership? Routledge: London and New York, 2006.

<sup>75</sup> Mlyn, Eric. "The United States, Russia and the OSCE in 21st Century European Security." 14 Feb. 2009 <<http://www.core-hamburg.de/documents/yearbook/english/02/Mlyn.pdf>>.

<sup>76</sup> Eggleston, Roland. "Russia: Relations Cooling With Other OSCE States." Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 21 Jan. 2004. 14 Feb. 2009 <<http://www.rferl.org/Content/Article/1051263.html>>.

<sup>77</sup> Putin, Vladimir. "Speech at the Munich Conference on Security Policy". 10 Feb. 2007 <[www.kremlin.ru](http://www.kremlin.ru)>

*Membership in the regional institution of the Commonwealth of Independent States*

The Commonwealth of Independent states (CIS) is an institution in which Russia enjoys an unquestionable leadership position and exercises its influence unchecked, for all intents and purposes. Moreover, the CIS corresponds with Moscow's understanding of multilateralism. The CIS was created on 8 December 1991 by three core Slavic states. Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus signed a 'Creation Agreement' that marked a formal civilized divorce from the USSR. At the same time the agreement was open for other former Soviet republics to join the alliance. On 21 December 1991 in Almaty, leaders of eight other former Soviet republics (Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan) joined the CIS. Georgia joined the CIS later in 1993, albeit reluctantly due to the stationing of Russian peacekeeping forces on Georgian territory. The CIS declaration bound all members to cooperate on an equal basis in foreign, military, and economic policy. As a regional organization, the CIS participates in UN peacekeeping forces.<sup>78</sup> Russia, Belarus, Armenia, and four Central Asian states (except Turkmenistan) founded, within the CIS framework, the Eurasian Economic Community, with the objective of creating an integrated common economic market, border security standards, customs union, standardized currency exchange, and joint programs on social and economic development. Throughout the 1990s, CIS member states were busy discussing the shape of the organization but were divided about what directions the CIS should take.

In May 1992 in Tashkent, the Treaty on Collective Security was signed by six CIS member states (Armenia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan), and

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<sup>78</sup> Department of Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations. "Cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations/arrangements in peacekeeping environment: Suggested Principles and Mechanism." March 1999. 14 Feb. 2009 <<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/lessons/Regional%20Organizations.pdf>>.

in 1993 Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Belarus joined the organization. However, in 1999, Georgia, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan withdrew from the Treaty on Collective Security by refusing to sign the protocol renewing the treaty for another five year period. On 18 September 2003, in accordance with the decision of the heads of the member states, the Treaty was transformed into an international organization and renamed the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). This transformation was initiated by Russia in order to demonstrate to the outside world that Moscow is the leader of a politico-military bloc in Eurasia and continues to play the dominant role in post-Soviet space. Officially, the main purpose of the organization was declared to be the coordination and deepening of military and political cooperation, the development of multilateral structures and mechanisms of cooperation for ensuring national security of the member-states on a collective basis, and providing assistance, including military, to member-states who fall victim to aggression.<sup>79</sup>

The last CSTO summit, which was held in Moscow on 4 February 2009 with the participation of Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, adopted the decision to develop the Collective Rapid Response Forces to respond to broader threats and challenges.<sup>80</sup> In this regard all seven member states signed a document on providing one battalion for the formation of the force.<sup>81</sup> During the summit the CSTO's mission was defined as "... deterring and repelling aggression by conventional

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<sup>79</sup> Central Asia Gateway. "The Collective Security Treaty Organization." 19 Feb. 2009  
<<http://www.cagateway.org/en/topics/23/84/>>.

"Ustav Organizacii Dogovora o kolektivnoi Bezopasnosti." 19 Feb. 2009  
<<http://www.odkb.gov.ru/start/index.htm>>.

<sup>80</sup> All seven member state participated in the summit: Armenia, Belorussia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

<sup>81</sup> "Russian-Led CSTO Grouping Adds Military Dimension." Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. 4 Feb. 2009. 19 Feb. 2009  
<[http://www.rferl.org/Content/Rapid\\_Reaction\\_Force\\_Adds\\_Military\\_Dimension\\_To\\_CSTO/1379324.html](http://www.rferl.org/Content/Rapid_Reaction_Force_Adds_Military_Dimension_To_CSTO/1379324.html)>.

military forces; defending the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the organization's member countries; conducting "special operations"; and dealing with asymmetrical threats and challenges, including international terrorism, radical Islam, and other forms of "violent extremism," trans-border organized crime and drug trafficking, and even natural or technological disasters.”<sup>82</sup> Vladimir Socor doubts that the explicit mission is in accordance with the real capabilities of CSTO member states. Thus, he states that “those forces consist of 10 battalions in Central Asia-five Russian battalions stationed in Tajikistan and another five battalions contributed in theory by Central Asian countries but based in practice permanently at home. Designated as "rapid-deployment forces," they seldom exercise together and their on-call, rapid-deployment capability is dubious.”<sup>83</sup>

The issue of collective peacekeeping was also among the missions of CSTO. Interestingly, “peacekeeping” operations of the CSTO might be conducted without an international mandate; however, the possibility to participate in internationally mandated peacekeeping actions outside of the CSTO were mentioned during the summit too.<sup>84</sup> Such differentiation is a clear example of the Russian claim for CSTO as its “zone of influence,” where it can conduct “peace operations” without any international authorization.

Russian policy toward the CIS has not been consistent throughout the institution’s history. The increased focus of Russia’s CIS policy derives mainly from the political and socio-economic situation in the Russian Federation, relations with the West, and

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<sup>82</sup> Socor, Vladimir. “The CSTO: Missions, Capabilities, Political Ambitions.” Jamestown Foundation website. Eurasia Daily Monitor, 6.25. 6 Feb. 2009. 19 Feb. 2009  
<[http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Bttnews%5D=34473&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=438698c817](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Bttnews%5D=34473&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=438698c817)>.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

developments inside the newly independent states. In fact, Russian foreign policy right after the collapse of the Soviet Union was directed toward integration with the West. This policy was the result of a willingness to integrate with European states, but also due to deep economic and social stress and the need for external financial support. Thus, closer cooperation with the West significantly eliminated Russian interest to reintegrate with the near abroad and develop the CIS institution. Notably, the Central Asian states in the early 1990s were considered a burden. Conversely, with the deterioration of Russian-Western relations during the Kosovo crisis and with NATO expansion, the discourse of common historical unity has turned out to be central in relations with the CIS.<sup>85</sup> According to Smith, Russian rhetoric of reintegration with the CIS was mainly a tactical device: with threat of NATO expansion toward Central Europe, Russia rushed to strengthen collective security ties within the CIS as a counter measure.<sup>86</sup> The decisions taken during the last CSTO summit in Moscow in February 2009 serve as evidence of Russia's decisiveness to strengthen ties between CIS countries due to deteriorated relations with the West.<sup>87</sup>

In the Putin era, the integration of the CIS was more tangible than it was during Yeltsin's reign. The series of 'colored revolutions' in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan was seen as a potential weakness of Russian influence in these countries. During Putin's reign and with election of Dmitri Medvedev as a President of the Russian Federation, there was

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<sup>85</sup> In fact, during the Kosovo crisis members of the Collective Security Treaty on April 1999 signed a protocol renewing the treaty for a 5 year period.

<sup>86</sup> Smith, Hanna. "What can Multipolarity and Multilateralism: Tell us about Russian Foreign Policy Interests?" Russia and its Foreign Policy. Ed. Hanna Smith. Kikimora Publications: Gummerus, 2005.

<sup>87</sup> It is more likely that the summit was held in response to the sharp condemnation by the west of Russian's military intervention into Georgia. There is a high likelihood that NATO will continue a close relationship with Georgia and provide technical and financial support to the country. The decision of the Kyrgyz government to close the US military base that operated in support of the "war on terror" in Afghanistan was influenced by the Kremlin in order to demonstrate to the outside world who is "chief" in the region. The decision was announced by K. Bakiev, President of Kyrgyzstan, right before the CSTO summit in Moscow on 3 February 2009.

and still is open political and diplomatic intervention into western CIS states. This can be seen in the Kremlin's political support to pro-Russian politicians in Ukraine, the maintenance of separatist movements in breakaway regions of Georgia and Moldova, etc.

In sum, the strength of the CIS as an international organization is questionable due to vagueness of its organizational structure and capabilities. However, Russia's eagerness to strengthen the CSTO is important in the implementation of its policies in the 'near abroad.' Also, the existence of the CSTO as a military block (prototype of NATO) in the post-Soviet space will serve as an instrument for the promotion of Russia's geopolitical interests and legitimize its military activities in conflict zones. Russia, by heading the CSTO, takes its role of security guarantor into conflict-affected areas by imposing agreements where it can use "peacekeeping forces" without international authorization. The proposal to conduct peace operations without international authorization could lead to serious destabilization in Eurasia and gives quite a lot of room for Russia to maneuver and pursue its self-interested policies by ignoring the interests of other CIS countries. The fact of military intervention into the territory of one of the CIS member states is a clear indication that Russia can no longer pretend to be a guarantor of stability in the post-Soviet space.

In summary, having looked at the national interests of the US and Russia, the analysis has revealed that both countries were motivated in their engagement in respective regions by the objective of protecting their geostrategic and economic interests. The US, with its great military and economic capabilities, is inclined to examine its engagement from a vital and strategic interest point of view prior to responding to distant violent conflicts. In terms of engagement of a multilateral framework, the US prefers to engage the NATO alliance rather than the UNSC or OSCE due to NATO's flexibility and ability to rapidly respond to



challenges. In the Balkans, the US's vital interest was to demonstrate NATO's credibility and therefore maintain its leadership position in Euro-Atlantic relations. The Southern Caucasus represents more strategic interests in terms of alternate energy sources and a counterbalance to Russian regional power domination.

For Russia, Georgia, rather than the Balkans, represents a vital geostrategic interest. The region is of geostrategic importance in terms of keeping its energy monopoly, dominating, influencing and controlling the region, and preventing NATO (and therefore US influence) from expanding in the post-Soviet space. The Kosovo crisis was of less importance to Russia's national interests. The Kremlin's interest was mainly about the inclusion of Russia in European security affairs and therefore recognition of its great power status. Moscow considers the UN to be the only legal institution empowered to deal with conflicts, although in reality Russian action contradicts its rhetoric. The Kremlin is very comfortable in the CIS since it gives Russia room to maneuver and pursue its own geopolitical and strategic interests in the post-Soviet space. The incursion into the territory of sovereign Georgia sets a dangerous precedent for possible future Russian actions in the post-Soviet space.

The next chapter discusses the US's motives for military intervention into the former Yugoslavia. It briefly touches on the history of conflict and describes the process of diplomatic efforts made before military intervention into the Former Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999.

### CHAPTER 3

#### “OPERATION ALLIED FORCE”: DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS AND MILITARY INTERVENTION INTO KOSOVO IN 1999

On March 24, 1999 NATO, led by the United States, conducted airstrikes against Serbia under “Operation Allied Force” with the official aim of protecting Kosovo Albanians. As Daadler and O’Hanlon point out, it was not initially planned as a real military action; rather, it was more about threatening measures to convince Slobodan Milošević, the Yugoslav President, to accept the Ramboulet agreement to achieve the political settlement of the Kosovo province.<sup>88</sup> The authors cite the statement made by President Bill Clinton on the day the NATO bombing began, which points out that the Alliance had three goals: (1) to demonstrate to the Serbian leadership the seriousness of NATO’s purpose, (2) to deter violence against innocent civilians in Kosovo, and (3) to damage the Serbs’ military capacities.<sup>89</sup> In this chapter I will discuss the United States’ motives for engagement in the Kosovo crisis and its commitment to get the allies on board to go along with the use of force.

#### *US motives for military intervention into the former Yugoslavia*

There were two main motives that drove the United States during the Kosovo crisis. The first motive concerns the threat to stability in Europe due to intensification of war atrocities in Kosovo, which resulted in refugee flows. The US, along with its European

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<sup>88</sup> Daadler, Ivo H. and O’Hanlon Michael E. Winning Ugly: NATO’s war to save Kosovo. Brookings Institution Press: Washington D.C., 2000. 101.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

allies, considered large refugee flows into neighboring countries a potential source of instability and thus a threat to peace and security in Europe. According to the UNHCR, after the abolishment of Kosovo's autonomous status in 1989, about 350,000 ethnic Albanians left Kosovo and sought asylum in Western Europe.<sup>90</sup> With the beginning of the conflict in 1998 another 100,000 people fled their homes to neighboring countries such as Albania, Montenegro, and Macedonia.<sup>91</sup> Considering that recipient countries were already in deep economic and political crises, the US and its NATO allies were concerned that refugee flows could greatly destabilize the whole European region and lead to a "second Bosnia." As a result of the Bosnian war about 340,000 Bosnians fled to Germany. After signing the Dayton agreement in 1995, some 60,000 returned home and an additional 30,000 Bosnians returned in the first half of 1997. Since Bosnia has been unable to house the approximately 750,000 refugees forced from their homes by ethnic conflict, Bosnia told the German government that it could not accommodate more returnees from Germany.<sup>92</sup>

The second motive is the issue of NATO's credibility and determination of its new role, which was a central question in American politics in the 1990s. It was of strategic interest to ensure NATO's new mission in Euro-Atlantic political relations and preserve NATO as an instrument for power projection and maintaining a leadership position in Europe. Continued leadership is vital for the promotion of American economic and political interests in Europe and elsewhere. Therefore, Kosovo per se was not a US interest; it was more a vehicle through which to demonstrate NATO's credibility and preserve it as an

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<sup>90</sup> Wilkinson, Ray. "Kosovo: One last chance. The race against winter, yet another exodus." Refugees 3.116 (1999). UNHCR. 19 March 2009 <<http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/3c6914bc5.pdf>>.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Migration News. "Germany: Bosnians and Turks." 3.4. Aug. 1997. 19 March 2009 <[http://migration.ucdavis.edu/mn/more.php?id=1288\\_0\\_4\\_0](http://migration.ucdavis.edu/mn/more.php?id=1288_0_4_0)>.

instrument for maintaining the US's leadership position. In addition, Kosovo was a chance to demonstrate once again to Western European countries that without the US's technological capabilities and resources the protection of security on the continent would be challenging. For the US it was very important to act decisively; anything else could have provoked discussion and undermined the future role of NATO in Europe. If NATO's role were weakened, Washington risked losing a tool for the projection of its own national interests and leadership in Europe.

There were discussions among the European countries about the creation of an alternative security mechanism to NATO, which could weaken the US leadership role. Smith points out that in the course of NATO's internal adaptation process there had "... been the discussions and studies focusing on the possibility of creating mechanisms whereby European members of the alliance might undertake military operations without the frontline participation of US forces."<sup>93</sup> This principal resulted in the establishment of the Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF) during the Brussels summit in 1994. The idea was the deployment of flexible forces by a 'coalition of the willing' within NATO framework for reasons other than responding to a direct attack on a member state.<sup>94</sup> Not all NATO members could participate in such an operation even though there was the assumption that all members would participate in defining the strategic and political goals of the CJTF.

The Kosovo crisis represented in some ways a turning point for the Europeans in defense policy and confirmed that the European Union's role in international crisis management is ineffective. Taking into account the failure of EU countries to efficiently respond to the war in Bosnia, the Kosovo conflict underlined once again their collective

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<sup>93</sup> Smith, Martin. From Cold War through cold peace to partnership? Routledge: London and New York, 2006.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

inability to deal with a European security problem without substantial support from Washington. Increased hostilities in Kosovo sidelined the EU and demonstrated the limits of diplomatic negotiations and economic sanctions. The conflict therefore made clear to the Europeans that there was a gap between diplomatic and security aspirations and the capacity to act and make decisions independently. The US's technological capability and key elements of effective conduct of war such as command, control, communication, and intelligence capacity were lacking in the EU.<sup>95</sup> Besides European dependence on the US's technological and resource capacity, the war in Kosovo was dictated by the American 'zero casualty' doctrine, i.e. not sending ground troops, thus reducing the risk to American soldiers. In addition, for EU members it was apparent that EU and US security interests were not always convergent. The fact that the Clinton administration faced difficulties at home in getting public support throughout the operation indicates that Kosovo was not considered a vital US interest.<sup>96</sup> Western allies realized that the US's strategic interest was NATO credibility, not Kosovo.

Considering all these factors, the EU generated political discussion about the creation of a genuine European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), which would give them the capacity for independent actions backed by European military force.<sup>97</sup> This idea was initiated at the end of 1998 by the Franco-British leadership and for the first time all EU members took this idea seriously and agreed on the necessary capabilities in order to effectively tackle an international crisis. Still, after a series of summits, EU members agreed

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<sup>95</sup> Weymouth, Anthony and Henig, Stanley. The Kosovo Crisis: The last American War in Europe? Reuters: Pearson Education: London, 2001.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

that collective defense would remain NATO's responsibility.<sup>98</sup> The EU, adhering to the principles of tolerance and compromise, emphasized the creation of an autonomous military structure based on the inability to effectively conduct crisis prevention and management. Such political debates inside the EU created conditions for the possible limiting of the US's leadership role in European security policy, which in turn motivated America to take a decisive role in managing the Kosovo crisis.

### *History of conflict*

Hostility and resentment intensified with the March 1989 abolishment of Kosovo's autonomous status from the 1974 Yugoslav constitution. The Yugoslav government, under the direct command of Milošević, stopped providing social, economical, and political goods to the province and the use of the Albanian language was restricted. Aggressive national policies against Kosovo Albanians led to social, economic, and political inequalities, which resulted in the creation of separatist army, cited as the main root causes of the conflict. Structural violence, including institutionalized poverty, widened divisions and hostility between Serbs and Kosovo Albanians. In the beginning of the 1990s Kosovo Albanians experienced constant repression from the Yugoslav government that led to some international protest. However, the international community was engaged in solving violent conflicts in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia and did not pay much attention.

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<sup>98</sup> Weymouth, Anthony and Henig, Stanley. The Kosovo Crisis: The last American War in Europe? Reuters: Pearson Education: London, 2001.

In May 1992, Ibrahim Rugova was unofficially elected as Kosovo's first President.<sup>99</sup> He insisted that Albanians undertake only peaceful resistance for equal rights, hoping that the international community would intervene and support the Kosovo Albanian population. Under Rugova's leadership, a parallel government was created in Kosovo as a response to the neglectful and discriminative policy of the Serbian leadership. However, until the signing of the Dayton agreement in 1995, the international community had undertaken few initiatives to prevent the outbreak of violence. One of these initiatives was authorization by the United Nations Security Council of the Preventive Diplomacy Operation (UNPREDEP) on the border between Serbia and Kosovo in March 1993.<sup>100</sup> It is important to mention that Milošević was viewed as a 'peacemaker' in Bosnia Herzegovina, and the US, as well as European Union, did not want any confrontations with the Serbian leader in order to ensure the smooth implementation of the Dayton agreement. The international community, up until March 1998, considered the province as a separate case in the Yugoslav crisis, since Kosovo, unlike Bosnia, Croatia, or Slovenia, never had Yugoslav republic status, and therefore it was considered Serbia's internal matter.

Due to Kosovo's 'special status' and the inability of the international community, and the European Union in particular, to act proactively and stop human rights violations in Kosovo, peaceful turned to violent resistance by the rise of the less compromise-minded Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). The KLA's military activities reshaped the political situation, radicalized Kosovo Albanian politics, and attracted the attention of the

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<sup>99</sup> Papasotiriou, Harry. "The Kosovo War: Kosovar Insurrection, Serbian Retribution and NATO Intervention." *The Journal of Strategic Studies*. 25.1 (March 2002): 39-62.

Ibrahim Rugova was the leader of the Kosovo Democratic Alliance (KDA). The Kosovo assembly held a secret meeting on September 7, 1990 and proclaimed the "sovereign Republic of Kosovo."

<sup>100</sup> Weymouth, Anthony and Henig, Stanley. *The Kosovo Crisis: The last American War in Europe?* Reuters: Pearson Education: London, 2001.

international community due to the intensification of war atrocities and ethnic cleansing that generated refugee flows. The international community accepted the fact that the government may use force against terrorists to keep order and security. But the Yugoslav government's response was extreme, resulting in notorious humanitarian abuses, especially in areas where the KLA was active. Thus, between the end of February and the beginning of March 1998, Serbian security forces murdered eighty five people, including women, children, and leaders of KLA.<sup>101</sup> The massacre in the village of Donji Prekaz on 5 March 1998 was a turning point for the close engagement of the international community on the Kosovo conflict, and particularly for US policy towards Yugoslavia. Secretary of State Albright recognized that the situation in Kosovo was grave and initiated meetings with the Contact Group with aim of pushing the European allies to action in order to prevent a tragedy like the one in Bosnia. As a result, the Contact Group, consisting of France, Italy, Germany, Russia, the UK, and the US, issued a statement on March 9, 1998 condemning the brutal actions of the Serbian leadership and demanding a set of actions from the Serbian side to be undertaken. Among these demands were initiating dialogue with the Kosovo leadership, withdrawing Serbian security forces from Kosovo, and allowing humanitarian organizations and OSCE and Contact Groups diplomats to monitor implementations of these demands.<sup>102</sup> The members of the Contact Group issued a statement recognizing the Kosovo crisis as an international problem.

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<sup>101</sup> Daalder, Ivo H. and O'Hanlon Michael E. Winning Ugly: NATO's war to save Kosovo. Brookings Institution Press: Washington D.C., 2000. 27-28.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.



### *Peace-mediation process and use of force*

Before military intervention into the former Yugoslavia, the US and NATO member states undertook a lengthy, multistage mediation and negotiation process with the wide involvement of multilateral international institutions, such as the UN, the Contact Group, EU and the OSCE. Bellamy divides international engagement during the Kosovo crisis into seven periods. More precisely, Bellamy breaks the period before NATO intervention into four periods, namely “debating intervention (March 1998 – October 1998), unarmed intervention (October 1998 – January 1999), coercive diplomacy (January 1999 – March 1999), and limited war (March 1999 – June 1999).”<sup>103</sup>

The “debating intervention” period was crucial to what happened in 1999. Throughout 1998 the international community undertook almost a year of peace initiatives. At first, the US, NATO and European countries’ policy was marked by a focus mainly on the imposition of economic sanctions and calling the warring parties to a dialogue for a peaceful decision on the political future of Kosovo. The US took a leading role in conducting the negotiations.

Despite the European community’s recognition that the actions of Serbian forces were cruel, NATO countries were divided on the issue of using military force in the former Yugoslavia. On one side were the reluctant countries, such as Germany, Italy, and Greece, and they were concerned with two main issues. The first issue was related to the legitimacy of using force and the second one was related to the efficiency of military intervention. In particular, Italy was concerned with a possible flood of Kosovo Albanian refugees; Greece has religious ties to Serbia and the majority of the population in Greece was against an armed intervention; Spain, with its Basque separatists, was wary of NATO’s supporting a

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<sup>103</sup> Bellamy, Alex J. Kosovo and International Society. Palgrave Macmillan, 2002. 13-15.

secessionist movement; France and Germany were mainly concerned about the legitimacy of a military intervention. The other group, which included the US and the UK, was more inclined to use military force, although they considered it a last resort. Both countries feared that violence in Kosovo might spread within the Balkans and undermine implementation of the Dayton Agreement.

Even UN Security Council Resolution 1160, adopted on 31 March 1998, on the imposition of an arms embargo and a call for an end to the violence in Kosovo, did not identify the violence in Kosovo as a threat to international peace and security as per Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Moreover, the resolution legitimized Serbia's two main claims: the first considering Kosovo to be a part of Serbia, and the second being the recognition of the KLA as a terrorist organization.<sup>104</sup> However, the following UNSCR 1199 (23 September 1998) affirmed that the deterioration of the situation in Kosovo constituted a threat to international peace and security emanating from the Serb side. In addition, UNSCR 1199 demanded that all parties cease hostilities and maintain a ceasefire, that the Serbs withdraw their forces from Kosovo, and that the issue of the political settlement of Kosovo be solved only by peaceful means. The Security Council demanded that the Serbian and Kosovo Albanian leaderships take steps in order to improve the humanitarian situation. The UNHCR estimates that about 230,000 people were displaced and among them 50,000 people were without shelter and access to basic necessities.<sup>105</sup>

Russia's position, as well as that of China, was quite opposite the position of the US, the UK, and other pro-force NATO countries. As permanent members of the UN Security

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<sup>104</sup> Bellamy, Alex J. Kosovo and International Society. Palgrave Macmillan, 2002. 76.

<sup>105</sup> Weymouth, Anthony and Henig, Stanley. The Kosovo Crisis: The last American War in Europe? Reuters: Pearson Education: London, 2001. 252.

Council, Russia and China clearly stated that they would veto any UN Security Council Resolutions authorizing the use of force against sovereign FRY. Russia was of the deep conviction that the Kosovo conflict was Yugoslavia's internal matter and therefore should be solved by the Yugoslav government.

Russia supported UNSCR 1199 only on the condition that the resolution would not authorize the use of force against Yugoslavia. This opposition by Russia was based on regret over the loss of its great power status and the anti-western disposition of the Russian political elite. In their inability or unwillingness to solve domestic economic and political crises, together with their dependence on international funds, led the Russian elite to blame (as the former 'cold war' enemy) the West for Russian problems (enormous external debt, unsuccessful economic reforms, and declining Russian status in international arena).<sup>106</sup> Yuri Davydov points out that US involvement in the Kosovo crisis was perceived by Russia as eagerness to exclude Russia from a region in which Russia had influence. In this regard, Davydov states that the Kremlin's approaches during the Kosovo crisis were oriented not to solving Kosovo's problems, but to counter the decisions of the American model.<sup>107</sup> Domestic political forces highly criticized Yeltsin's policy and inability to stand up for Russia's interests in the Balkans and support "pan-Slavic unity" in the face of an 'aggressive West', in particular the US. The firm position of Russia and China convinced some Western countries in doubt to take rapid and aggressive actions. Thus, some NATO countries justified their agreement to use force by considering the desperate humanitarian situation in Kosovo and the inability of the UN Security Council to step in and decisively solve the crisis.

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<sup>106</sup> Davydov, Yuri. "Problema Kosovo v Rossiiskom vnutripoliticheskom kontekste." Kosovo: International Aspects of the Crisis. Ed. Trenin, Dmitrii I Stepanova, Ekaterina. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999. 247-279.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

The unarmed intervention began with sending Richard Holbrook, chief Balkan diplomat, as a special US envoy to negotiate with Belgrade in early October 1998. Holbrook had two main goals for this mission. The first goal was to demonstrate commitment to the searching for peace in order to ensure domestic political support in NATO countries. The second goal was to present six demands requiring implementation by Serbian leadership, namely Milošević, in order to meet the UN's request. The list of things to do was repeated by Contact Group as well. Notably, the demands included an end to offensive operations; the withdrawal of Serb security forces and heavy weapons and a return to their positions before March; free access for humanitarian agencies; cooperation with the International War Crimes Tribunal in order to bring to justice those who committed atrocities; the facilitation of return of refugees without fear; and the start of negotiations on a proposal drafted by Christopher Hill, US Ambassador to Macedonia, after consultations with both warring parties. One major purpose for Holbrook was to put in place a verification system in order to monitor the fulfillment of UN demands.<sup>108</sup> Another purpose was to discuss the nature of a possible dialogue between the warring parties.<sup>109</sup>

As a result, Holbrook attained three important agreements. The first agreement was to give free access to the area for humanitarian aid agencies and international organizations to assist displaced persons in returning home or finding temporary shelter. The second was Milošević's agreement to negotiate with the Kosovo Albanians and discuss the future political settlement of Kosovo with US assistance. The third was the FRY President's agreement to dispatch the Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission (KDOM) under the

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<sup>108</sup> Daalder, Ivo H. and O'Hanlon Michael E. Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo. Brookings Institution Press: Washington D.C., 2000. 46.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

protection of the OSCE to monitor and assess the security situation and well-being of the people in Kosovo.<sup>110</sup> In addition, it was agreed to establish an unarmed NATO air verification mission to ensure that Serb military and security forces would be withdrawn to the agreed-upon stations. UNSC Resolution 1203 (24 October 1998) endorsed the decision to introduce the NATO air verification mission and the OSCE's monitoring missions over Kosovo.

However, the Holbrook - Milošević negotiation also had shortfalls. It failed to spell out the details of the agreement; for instance, it did not specify the number of Serb forces that had to be withdrawn from Kosovo. Furthermore, the verification system did not have the capability to enforce Serb compliance, which "... undermined NATO's ability to threaten or use force in case of Serb noncompliance."<sup>111</sup> Finally, the opinion of the Albanian side was not considered in the agreement, which resulted in a lack of specific details on the prevention of the taking of revenge by Kosovo Albanians on the retreating Serbian army. Besides all these shortfalls, the situation on the ground deteriorated and war atrocities continued. The Serbian government failed to meet the requirements indicated by resolution 1199; in particular, the Serbs kept their troop numbers over the required limit in the Kosovo province. Meanwhile the Kosovo Liberation Army was taking advantage and seizing territory, especially in rural areas.

In September 1998 NATO allies started discussing the appropriateness of using military force in order to persuade Belgrade to fulfill UNSC demands. The NATO alliance discussed two possible options: air force only or a ground option. The first informal meeting

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<sup>110</sup> Bellamy, Alex J. Kosovo and International Society. Palgrave Macmillan, 2002. 79.

<sup>111</sup> Daalder, Ivo H. and O'Hanlon Michael E. Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo. Brookings Institution Press: Washington D.C., 2000. 50.

of NATO on the level of defense ministries was conducted on September 23-24, 1998. At that time Secretary-General Javier Solana highlighted the fact that the credibility of NATO was at stake after several warnings to the Serbian government about the possibility of the use of force. He stressed that Serbian forces kept their offensive at a low level in order to prevent a NATO verdict to use military force. The Secretary-General cited the joke of Serbian diplomats that “a village a day keeps NATO away.”<sup>112</sup> His argument convinced NATO allies and the decision to issue an “activation warning” (ACTWARN) was approved on September 24, 1998. The activation warning was a sign of recognition by the NATO alliance that the situation in Kosovo was increases in importance and urgency. ACTWARN did not mean that the alliance had decided to use force or threaten it explicitly, but it put NATO in a position of readiness to act quickly.<sup>113</sup>

All negotiation efforts were considered unsuccessful since the Yugoslavian government demonstrated a limited admission to provide autonomy to the Kosovo province. Moreover, Serbian leaders continued their policy of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. Such persistence resulted in the consolidation and consensus among Western countries to take decisive and quick action to stop ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. The Russian government positioned itself as the better negotiator by inviting Milošević to Moscow and concluding an agreement in June 1998. According to the agreement Milošević pledged to start talks on a whole range of Kosovo problems, stop violence against the civilian population, and give free access for humanitarian organizations to assist people. Still, Yeltsin could not convince Milošević to agree on the withdrawal of Serbian police and military forces from Kosovo.

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<sup>112</sup> Daalder, Ivo H. and O’Hanlon Michael E. Winning Ugly: NATO’s War to Save Kosovo. Brookings Institution Press: Washington D.C., 2000. 43.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

Despite signing the agreement to stop violence against civilians, as soon as Milošević arrived home he intensified military forces and directed them against villages. Such actions by Milošević resulted in a change in Russian policy and tone regarding Resolution 1199. However, despite Milošević's failure to adhere to the agreement, Russia's government still did not support a NATO use of force due to domestic concerns. Russia's unsuccessful initiative brought even greater solidarity among western countries to use force to stop human rights abuses and to preserve stability in Europe.<sup>114</sup> However, western countries needed a "trigger" for rapid response. The killing of a group of Albanians in Račak village in January 1999 by Serbian paramilitary groups pushed NATO, with Russian agreement, to approve coercive diplomacy. This murder occurred in the middle of the ceasefire agreement brokered by US envoy Richard Holbrook in October 1998.

The members of the Contact Group, NATO, and the UN made coordinated statements regarding the situation in Kosovo. In January 1999 UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan visited NATO and in an important meeting he urged NATO to build on the lessons of Bosnia. He affirmed that the difficulties in halting bloody internal conflicts left no illusions about the use of force when all other measures had failed, and stressed that that limit was being approached in the former Yugoslavia.<sup>115</sup> Thus, the speech of the UN Secretary-General implicitly approved the threat or use of force against a sovereign state. However, the UN Security Council never authorized such actions, as they were sure that Russia would veto any use of force against the FRY. Within hours of Kofi Annan's statement NATO confirmed its readiness to act and NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana called Kosovo Albanians and

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<sup>114</sup> Bellamy, Alex J. Kosovo and International Society. Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

<sup>115</sup> Daalder, Ivo H. and O'Hanlon Michael E. Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo. Brookings Institution Press: Washington D.C., 2000. 75.

the Serb leadership to agree with the proposal prepared by the Contact Group to establish an interim political settlement.<sup>116</sup> In turn, the Contact Group called the warring parties to negotiate a political settlement and stop violence.

The negotiation was planned for February 1999 in Rambouillet. Robin Cook, the British Foreign Secretary, presented twenty-six principles to the Serbian and Kosovo parties on January 30, 1999. Upon receiving these principles, the warring parties agreed to participate in the conference. The first week of the Rambouillet conference, under chairmanship of the British and French foreign ministers, began on February 6, 1999. There were three negotiators: one from the US, another from the European Union, and third from Russia. The goal of the conference was to proceed on the basis of the draft of an agreement for the political settlement of the conflict. The Serbian delegation was represented by relatively low-level delegates, the Kosovo Albanian delegation was fragmented and, unexpectedly for the organizers of the conference, the head of the delegation was KLA representative Hašim Thaçi, rather than Rugova. The Serbian delegation refused to accept a basic political framework for self-governance for Kosovo, and they did not agree to a foreign security presence in the region. Kosovo representatives were divided on the issue of demobilization of the KLA, because they worried about provisions on security and demanded that the final status of the province be decided by popular referendum.

During the Rambouillet conference, Holbrook visited Milošević in Belgrade twice, trying to convince the Serbian delegation to be more serious and introduce their comments on the document. The first time, his visit was more or less successful because it immediately affected the work of the Serbian government; however, the second time Milošević refused to

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<sup>116</sup> Daalder, Ivo H. and O'Hanlon Michael E. Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo. Brookings Institution Press: Washington D.C., 2000. 75.



meet. This conference failed to bring agreement between the Yugoslav government and Kosovo Albanians, even though the Kosovo delegation signed an interim accord. The results of the conference led to a consensus in Washington that force would have to be used. The Clinton administration succeeded in convincing its NATO allies that diplomacy without the use of force would not work and that the Kosovo crisis would not end.<sup>117</sup>

Milošević demonstrated an unwillingness to seriously negotiate and use diplomatic means to solve the Kosovo crisis, which led NATO to allege the moral right to intervene. In addition, at the end of March 1999, new rounds of ethnic cleansing were undertaken by Serbia, resulting in thousands of ethnic Albanians killed.<sup>118</sup> Hereby, despite the warnings of the international community to stop the violence and expulsion of the ethnic Albanian population from Kosovo, the Yugoslav authorities continued to undertake a repressive policy that resulted in the launching of airstrikes. Thus, on March 24, 1999, NATO, backed by the US, launched a military intervention under an Activation Warning that had been issued by NATO's governing body, the North Atlantic Council, on 24 September 1998.<sup>119</sup> The main goal of the military intervention was to preserve peace and security in the region, which was threatened by the Yugoslav government in the province of Kosovo.

#### *Reaction of the Russian Federation*

Russia was plagued by internal dilemmas during the military campaign in Serbia. The Russian leadership sharply criticized the action undertaken by NATO members,

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<sup>117</sup> Daalder, Ivo H. and O'Hanlon Michael E. Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo. Brookings Institution Press: Washington D.C., 2000. 85.

<sup>118</sup> Bellamy, Alex J. "Geopolitics and Solidarity on the Borders of Europe: The Yugoslav Wars of Succession." National Interest and International Solidarity: Particular and Universal Ethics in International Life. Eds. Jean-Marc Coicaud and Nicholas J. Wheeler. United Nations University Press, 2008. 230-261.

<sup>119</sup> Bellamy, Alex J. Kosovo and International Society. Palgrave Macmillan, 2002. 13-15.

specifically the US. The Russian domestic political elite even had a hysterical reaction. The communists and leaders of nationalistic political parties were ready to send in the army to support the Serbs due to a sense of pan-Slavic unity. However, as Davydov argues, Russian foreign policy was made for internal use and was mainly oriented towards the interests of domestic political elites rather than towards Russian national interests.<sup>120</sup> The outbreak of anti-NATO and anti-US emotions was a direct advertisement of the political elite rather than an expression of real concern over the situation in Kosovo or relations between Russia and the West. Such a readiness to openly confront NATO and the US might be described as a populist act that was oriented towards the consolidation of domestic political elites and the population of the Russian Federation. In addition to rhetorical condemnation, Russia undertook action in the form of disturbing military maneuvers, such as sending its fleet to the Aegean and suspending NATO-Russia links. In addition, Moscow prepared a draft of the UNSC resolution requesting an end to NATO military action in the FRY, which was supported only by three out of twelve countries.<sup>121</sup>

President Yeltsin demonstrated an ambivalent reaction. On the one hand being pro-western, he did not want to bring hostility to relations with the West since the financial well-being of the country depended on western financial institutions. On the other hand, in order to keep power and appease the opposition he condemned NATO's military intervention into Yugoslavia and declared it an illegal action. Apparently, the Russian leadership by such

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<sup>120</sup> Davydov, Yuri. "Problema Kosovo v Rosiiskom vnutripoliticheskom kontekste." Kosovo: International Aspects of the Crisis. Ed. Trenin, Dmitrii I Stepanova, Ekaterina. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999. 247-279.

<sup>121</sup> Daalder, Ivo H. and O'Hanlon Michael E. Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo. Brookings Institution Press: Washington D.C., 2000. 142.

rhetoric aimed to demonstrate that Russia was still a great power and could protect its national interests in the Balkans.

However, seeming to realize that his opposition was failing and not affecting NATO's actions, Yeltsin decided to change tactics and appointed Viktor Chernomyrdin as a special envoy to the Balkans. In turn, the Clinton administration also sought to bring Russia on board to endorse NATO's core demand and convince Milošević to withdraw Serb forces from Kosovo and accept international peacekeeping forces.<sup>122</sup>

Chernomyrdin, unlike Primakov, was interested in finding a compromise that would end NATO bombing of Serbia and he played one of the key roles in conducting an intense seven weeks of diplomacy, which brought about eventual success. Thus, Chernomyrdin played a channeling role in keeping up the dialogue between Serbia and Europe and succeeded, together with Finnish President Ahtisaari, in signing an agreement with Milosevic in Belgrade on 3 June 1999. Milošević agreed to withdraw Yugoslav forces from the province in exchange for a halt to NATO bombing. It was agreed that international peacekeeping forces (including Russian) would be deployed, with Kosovo remaining part of Yugoslavia.<sup>123</sup>

To conclude, the US had two main motives for their engagement in the Kosovo crisis. These were closely linked to America's strategic interest of maintaining a leadership role in Europe and the vital interest of ensuring NATO's credibility and its new role in European security. Examination of the US engagement in the crisis demonstrates wide the involvement of multilateral institutions in a lengthy peace-mediation process, even though use of force

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<sup>122</sup> Daalder, Ivo H. and O'Hanlon Michael E. Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo. Brookings Institution Press: Washington D.C., 2000. 141.

<sup>123</sup> Weymouth, Anthony and Henig, Stanley. The Kosovo Crisis: The last American War in Europe? Reuters: Pearson Education: London, 2001. 217.

was not comprehensively authorized by the United Nations Security Council resolution due to Russia's veto. Despite Moscow's strong opposition to interference by the international community into the internal affairs of the former Yugoslavia, US and NATO leadership did not isolate Russia in the peace-mediation process either before using force nor during the bombing. This approach differed from Russian monopolized peace-mediation initiatives in Georgia, which led to the unilateral use of force against a sovereign state, which we will examine in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### “COERCION OF GEORGIA TO PEACE”: DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS AND MILITARY INTERVENTION BY RUSSIA

The international community was stunned by Russia's military intervention into the territory of a sovereign state. Russia's disproportionate counter-offensive to Georgia's miscalculated actions resulted in the widespread bombing of military points of strategic importance, threatening energy corridors which are significant for European states. The US and European countries harshly accused Moscow of an aggressive attack on the territory of a sovereign state, thereby violating international law and threatening the territorial integrity of Georgia. In particular, George Bush, then President of the United States, sharply criticized Russia's attack on Georgia by calling it “bullying and intimidating”<sup>124</sup> and stressing that Russia's response was disproportionate.<sup>125</sup>

The Russian leadership argued that military intervention was a “defensive” action and portrayed it as the “coercion of Georgia to peace,” preventing the threat of aggression, ethnic cleansing and “genocide” against Ossetians by Georgia.<sup>126</sup> The protection of the citizens of Russian Federation and peacekeeping forces in South Ossetia was cited as a main reason for taking decisive military actions in Georgia. Dmitri Medvedev, President of Russia,

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<sup>124</sup> Barry, Ellen and Bowley, Graham. “Bush condemns Russian 'bullying and intimidation'.” International Herald Tribune. 15 Aug. 2008. 5 Jan. 2009 <<http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/08/15/europe/ties.php>>.

<sup>125</sup> “Bush Condemns Russia's Attack On Georgia.” CBS News. 11 Aug. 2008. 5 Jan. 2009 <<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/08/10/world/printable4336544.shtml>>.

<sup>126</sup> “Putin: Proishodyachee v Jujnoi Ossetii – eto genocide osetinskogo naroda.” Interfax. 9 Aug. 2008. 5 Jan. 2009 <<http://www.interfax.ru/news.asp?id=26152>>.

emphasized that Russia will “... protect the interests of our citizens wherever they may be, and this in no way goes against international laws. This is the duty of any country and any leader.”<sup>127</sup> The international law argument was used by Sergei Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, as justification. He pointed out that the illegal use of force by Georgia and the violation of all existing agreements “... forced Russia to act independently, but within international law, including the right to self-defense in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.”<sup>128</sup> Lavrov characterized Russian actions as timely, effective and proportionate and highly emphasized that “no one can tell us what a proportionate use of force means in this particular situation.”<sup>129</sup>

Despite the humanitarian and international law arguments given by the Russian leadership, this study exposes the critical geopolitical motives, intertwined with local, regional and global interests, behind them.

#### *Russia's motives for military intervention in Georgia*

The Russian military intervention into Georgian territory in August 2008 was motivated mainly by geostrategic interests. These interests include maintaining protectorates such as South Ossetia and Abkhazia, exercising a predominant position in the region by having military, political, and economic influence, and sending a message to the West about Russia's growing status as a great power and counterweight to the presence of the US and NATO in the post-Soviet space.

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<sup>127</sup> “Medvedev's Interview with Russian Television Channels.” [Kremlin.ru](http://Kremlin.ru), 24 Dec. 2008. Johnson's Russia List #233. 26 Dec. 2008.

<sup>128</sup> Lavrov, Sergey. “Face to Face with America: Between Non-Confrontation and Convergence.” [Magazine Profile](http://MagazineProfile) 38. October 2008. Johnson's Russia List #190. 17 Oct. 2008.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

The preservation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as protectorates was needed for securing Russia's strategic economic and military interests. The protectorates secure Russia's access to the Black Sea and allow Russia to maintain its naval base on the coast and thereby secure the southern frontline from regional powers like Turkey and Iran, as well as from the US as global power. Another benefit of naval base presence in the region is the path to the Mediterranean Sea through the Black Sea that provides opportunities for the promotion of economic, political, and cultural national interests. In addition, there is the threat that Moscow will lose its naval base in the Crimea by 2017, due to deteriorating relations with Ukraine.<sup>130</sup> Russia inherited military bases on Georgian and Transcaucasian territory. After defeat in the civil war with Abkhaz separatists (supported by Russian military), Georgia raised the issue of the withdrawal of Russian military bases from its territory.<sup>131</sup> The process of negotiation was long and finally the last two bases of Akhalkalaki and Batumi were closed at the end of 2007.<sup>132</sup> The fact that Russia did not want to withdraw its military resources from the territory of Georgia might serve as one of the main reasons for Russia's willingness to restore its military presence in Georgia.

Restoration and strengthening of military bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia is strategically important for Russia to secure its presence and thereby exercise its political influence by opposing the possible location of US or NATO military forces in the region. After the 'Rose Revolution' Georgia has conducted a pro-Western, and specifically pro-

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<sup>130</sup> Allison, Roy. "Russia resurgent? Moscow's campaign to 'coerce Georgia to peace.'" International Affairs. 84.6 (2008): 1145-1171.

<sup>131</sup> Kakachia, Kornely K. "An End to Russian Military Bases in Georgia? The Implications of Past Withdrawals." Eurasian Strategy Project PONARS. Eurasia Policy Memo 24. August 2008. 11 Feb. 2009 <<http://ceres.georgetown.edu/esp/ponarsmemos/page/55918.html>>.

<sup>132</sup> Kakachia, Kornely K. "An End to Russian Military Bases in Georgia? The Implications of Past Withdrawals." Eurasian Strategy Project PONARS. Eurasia Policy Memo 24. August 2008. 11 Feb. 2009 <<http://ceres.georgetown.edu/esp/ponarsmemos/page/55918.html>>.

American, policy and has expressed the desire to join NATO and the EU. In this regard, America has been assisting in the training of Georgia's graduate infantry units within the framework of the Georgian Train and Equip Program (GTEP). In addition, the US supports the reformation and restructuring of the Georgian defense system in order to meet Western military standards.<sup>133</sup> In return, Georgia has become the third largest contributor to peacekeeping operations in Iraq under 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' with 2,000 Georgian troops.<sup>134</sup> It is important to note that in July, amidst growing tensions on both sides of the Caucasus Mountains both the United State and Russia were conducting military exercises. The two-week military training "Immediate Response 2008," with 1,000 US and 600 Georgian forces, was held on the formerly Russian-controlled *Vaziani* military base.<sup>135</sup> On the other side of the mountains from July 14 to August 4, Russia conducted the anti-terrorist military exercise "Kavkaz 2008" with 8,000 troops.<sup>136</sup>

For Russia, presence in the region is also beneficial for keeping economic influence by controlling energy transportation, thus undermining European attempts to build an alternative energy pipeline. The geographic location of Georgia serves as bridge between the Caspian and Black Seas, which allows the easy transport of oil and gas from Central Asia and the Caspian Sea to Europe and beyond. The destabilization of Georgia and control over its territory gives Russia an advantageous position in regards to the West's access to and use

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<sup>133</sup> Gularidze, Tea. "U.S. Boosts Successful Military Cooperation with Georgia." *Civil Georgia*. 5 Aug. 2004. 24 Feb. 2009 <<http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=7556>>.

<sup>134</sup> Toal, Gerard. "Russia's Kosovo: A Critical Geopolitics of the August 2008 War over South Ossetia." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 49.6 (2008): 670-705.

<sup>135</sup> Engdahl, F. William. "Nuclear War by Miscalculation: The Geopolitics of Georgia part 2." *The Real News* 14 Aug. 2008. 9 Dec. 2008 <[http://therealnews.com/t/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=2047](http://therealnews.com/t/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=2047)>.

<sup>136</sup> Toal, Gerard. "Russia's Kosovo: A Critical Geopolitics of the August 2008 War over South Ossetia." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 49.6 (2008): 670-705.



of ports and the energy transportation system that connects the Caspian Sea with the world market. This transit infrastructure has become a geostrategic object for energy resource competition and access to the energy resources of the Caspian Sea and Central Asia. For Putin's Russia, the monopolization of energy has become a goal and energy supply a tool for promotion of its geopolitical and economic interests in relations with other countries.

Increasing US presence in the region, NATO's plans to expand by implementing the Membership Action Plan in Ukraine and Georgia, and tensions over planned US anti-missile deployment in Poland and the Czech Republic have resulted in the deterioration of Russo-Euro-Atlantic relations. Russia considers NATO expansion a direct threat to its national security and unity; Putin called the extension of NATO to Russia's borders a "direct threat to the security of our country."<sup>137</sup> Toal points out that Russian leadership made the decision to attack Georgia after the Bucharest NATO summit when it became clear that Georgia would eventually get NATO membership.<sup>138</sup> The Russian leadership might have concluded that their position and concerns on this issue were ignored by the West. Such a perception resulted in establishing a formal relationship with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which was opposed by Georgia.

#### *History of conflict and peacekeeping operation*

The conflict between South Ossetia, Russia and Georgia cannot be described as new or hidden. The actions and behavior of the involved parties, such as Georgia's discriminative policies and provocative rhetoric toward ethnic minorities and Moscow's interference and

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<sup>137</sup> Toal, Gerard. "Russia's Kosovo: A Critical Geopolitics of the August 2008 War over South Ossetia." Eurasian Geography and Economics 49.6 (2008): 670-705.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

support of separatist movements in Georgia's breakaway regions led to the outbreak of the military conflict and resulted in the destabilization of the region. On an international level the five day war became a turning point in relations between Russia, European countries, and the United States.

Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the first President (1991-1992) of independent Georgia, played a brief but vital role in establishing extremely nationalistic, ethnically isolationist policies and propagating "Georgia for Georgians." Robert English depicts Gamsakhurdia's reign as a main cause of today's Russian-Georgian military conflict.<sup>139</sup> Gamsakhurdia, like Milošević, came to power by using chauvinistic rhetoric and manipulative tactics to justify grievances and prejudices that resulted in violent conflicts. English refers to Gamsakhurdia in order "... to explain Yugoslavia's collapse and Kosovo secession from Serbia while ignoring nationalist policies of Slobodan Milošević."<sup>140</sup>

The first signs of violent conflict between South Ossetia and Georgia started with the beginning of perestroika when the nationalist movements of both sides began to activate. On November 10, 1989 the South Ossetian members of Parliament decided to turn the autonomous oblast into an autonomous republic inside of the Georgian SSR. With that decision the South Ossetian leadership appealed to the Supreme Council of Georgia to grant them the status of autonomous republic. However, the Georgian Supreme Council denied granting republic status to South Ossetia. On November 23, 1989 the Georgian nationalist movement attempted to conduct a meeting in South Ossetia's capital Tskhinvali that resulted

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<sup>139</sup> English, Robert. "Georgia: The Ignored History." *The New York review of Books* 55.17. 6 Nov. 2008 <<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/22011>>.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

in a violent conflict between Ossetian and Georgian armed forces. The forces of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR stopped that conflict.

A year later in September 1990, South Ossetia declared the establishment of the Republic South Ossetia and later in December South Ossetians conducted the first elections to the Supreme Council of the Republic. The Georgian Parliament did not recognize the elections and instead decided to cancel South Ossetia's status as autonomous oblast and declared a state of emergency in the region. That decision deepened polarization even more.

During 1991-1992, criminally-run militia forces respectively loyal to Tbilisi and Tskhinvali were engaged in brutal clashes on the territory of South Ossetia. The fighting left one thousand dead and resulted in thousands of displaced people.<sup>141</sup> The fighting was stopped with the signing of the Sochi agreement on June 24, 1992 by President of the Russian Federation Boris Yeltsin and Eduard Shevardnadze (Gamsakhurdia's successor). From the Sochi agreement on, Russia started to conduct peacekeeping operations in the near abroad and pledged to be neutral, serving sustainable peace and stability in the region, without having experience in a peacekeeping role.

The Sochi agreement consisted of two elements. The first was the establishment of a Joint Control Commission (JCC) consisting of Russian, Georgian, and North and South Ossetian representatives. The purpose of the JCC "... was to guarantee a cease-fire, withdraw armed forces, disband self-defense units, and ensure security regime in the conflict zone."<sup>142</sup> In general the JCC was responsible for maintaining peace, returning refugees and displaced people, economic rehabilitation, and coming up with a political settlement for the

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<sup>141</sup> International Crisis Group. "Russia vs. Georgia: The Fallout." ICG Europe Report N°195. 22 Aug. 2008.

<sup>142</sup> Mackinlay, John and Sharov, Evgenii. "Russian Peacekeeping operations in Georgia." Regional Peacekeepers: The paradox of Russian Peacekeeping. Eds. Mackinlay, John and Cross, Peter. United Nations University Press: Tokyo-New York-Paris, 2003. 63-110.

breakaway region.<sup>143</sup> The second element of the Sochi agreement was the deployment of the tripartite Joint Peacekeeping Force (JKF) with Georgian, Russian, and North Ossetian units, operating under command of the JCC. Protocol following the Sochi agreement defined the conflict zone as having a radius of 15 km from the center of the South Ossetian capital Tskhinvali. In addition, a security corridor was established within 7 km on both sides of the administrative border of South Ossetia.<sup>144</sup> Thereby Russian peacekeeping forces could easily establish checkpoints within Georgian territory as well. That Georgian, Russian, and Ossetian national contingents patrolled separately might explain the Georgian perception that the Russian forces selectively extended protection to Ossetian civilians, while ignoring Ossetian retaliation against the Georgian population in the unrecognized republic.

After the Russian deployment of peacekeeping forces, Georgia's government asked the OSCE (at the time the CSCE) to send observers to the conflict area.<sup>145</sup> On 6 November 1992, based on the agreement of all parties, the OSCE established its mission with eight diplomats and eight officers.<sup>146</sup> The OSCE's objective was mainly to observe implementation of the Sochi agreement and undertake conflict resolution actions, including

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<sup>143</sup> Reeve, Roy. "The OSCE Mission to Georgia and the Georgian-Ossetian conflict: An overview of activities." Helsinki Monitor no. 1, 2006.

Roy Reeve CMG, Head of the OSCE Mission to Georgia since August 2003.

<sup>144</sup> Mackinlay, John and Sharov, Evgenii. "Russian Peacekeeping operations in Georgia." Regional Peacekeepers: The Paradox of Russian Peacekeeping. Eds. Mackinlay, John and Cross, Peter. United Nations University Press: Tokyo-New York-Paris, 2003.

<sup>145</sup> In 1973 the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) was created to serve as a multilateral forum for dialogue and negotiation between East and West. Until 1990, the CSCE functioned mainly as a series of meetings and conferences that built on and extended the participating States' commitments, while periodically reviewing their implementation. With the end of the Cold War, the Paris Summit of November 1990 set the CSCE on a new course. As part of this institutionalization process, the name was changed from the CSCE to the OSCE by a decision of the Budapest Summit of Heads of State or Government in December 1994.

"Facts and figures: About the OSCE." OSCE. 6 Apr. 2009 <http://www.osce.org/about/19298.html>.

<sup>146</sup> Mackinlay, John and Sharov, Evgenii. "Russian Peacekeeping operations in Georgia." Regional Peacekeepers: The Paradox of Russian Peacekeeping. Eds. Mackinlay, John and Cross, Peter. United Nations University Press: Tokyo-New York-Paris, 2003.

the promotion of nation-building, respect for human rights, and improved relations between the parties of the conflict. Russia has successfully restricted international involvement in the South Ossetian as well as in the Abkhazian conflicts which allow to influence and dominate in the region and therefore pursue its interests. The Kremlin ensuring its “special powers and responsibilities as a guarantor of peace and stability,” compared with the UN’s rather limited observation mandate in Abkhazia and the mandate of the OSCE in South Ossetia.<sup>147</sup>

Mackinlay and Sharov point out that Russia at that time had a strong motive to manipulate the South Ossetian conflict in order to deploy military units. These were needed for the resurgence of Chechnya and to maintain a strategic frontier on the Armenian-Turkish border.<sup>148</sup> Therefore, the South Ossetian conflict was a good base for Russia to resolve its own problems. The peacekeeping forces and JCC power were under obvious domination by Russian command with limited involvement of international organizations, which is not equivalent to United Nations peacekeepers in other conflict zones, for instance in Bosnia or Kosovo.

JCC was not the ideal instrument for solving the South Ossetian conflict. War atrocities were not investigated, giving perpetrators the green light for future war crimes.<sup>149</sup> The Joint Control Commission failed to intensify talks and define the political status of South

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<sup>147</sup> The United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNMOIG) was originally established on 24 August 1993 by Security Council resolution 858 (1993) to verify compliance with the 27 July 1993 ceasefire agreement between the government of Georgia and the Abkhaz authorities in Georgia, with special attention to the situation in the city of Sukhumi. UNMOIG has 147 total uniformed personnel, including 131 military observers and 16 police; it is supported by 107 international civilian personnel, 201 local civilian staff, and 1 UN volunteer.

UNOMIG homepage. 21 March 2009 < <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unomig/index.html>>.

<sup>148</sup> Mackinlay, John and Sharov, Evgenii. “Russian Peacekeeping operations in Georgia.” Regional Peacekeepers: The paradox of Russian Peacekeeping. Eds. Mackinlay, John and Cross, Peter. United Nations University Press: Tokyo-New York-Paris, 2003. 63-110.

<sup>149</sup> Toal, Gerard. “Russia’s Kosovo: A Critical Geopolitics of the August 2008 War over South Ossetia.” Eurasian Geography and Economics 49.6 (2008): 670-705.

Ossetia. As a result, the conflict became “frozen” until 2004, when it was reactivated by the Georgian initiative to shut down contraband commerce in the border areas. The processes of returning refugees and displaced people, as well as disarming the local population on both sides also failed. However, Mackinlay and Sharov highlight that in real terms the Russian intervention was successful in the way that it “... succeeded in stabilizing the area and fostering a gradual return to normality.”<sup>150</sup> At the same time the authors question “... the sincerity of Russian behavior on the ground,” pointing out that Russia’s involvement in the conflict was motivated only by Russia’s geostrategic interest. Even though the Russian Federation provided support for South Ossetians with salaries and pension, infrastructure such as gas, heat, and water was tied to Georgia.

Consequently, since 1992 South Ossetia has been *de-facto* independent, but *de jure* part of Georgian territory. In January 1992 a referendum was conducted on the territory of the autonomous oblast and as a result 98% of the population voted for independence from Georgia.<sup>151</sup> Nonetheless, Georgia did not recognize the referendum as legitimate and still considered South Ossetia a part of Georgian territory. In 2001 and 2006 South Ossetia conducted unrecognized presidential elections. The elected leader propagated reunification with North Ossetia within the Russian Federation.

In 2003 Georgia experienced the “Rose Revolution” wherein pro-Western Mikheil Saakashvili successfully ousted Eduard Shevardnadze. The revolution was widely seen as a sign of change in the country. In 2004 Saakashvili was elected as the third President of

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<sup>150</sup> Mackinlay, John and Sharov, Evgenii. “Russian Peacekeeping operations in Georgia.” Regional Peacekeepers: The paradox of Russian Peacekeeping. Eds. Mackinlay, John and Cross, Peter. United Nations University Press: Tokyo-New York-Paris, 2003. 63-110.

<sup>151</sup> “Istoriya Osetinskogo konflikta.” Gazeta.ru 10 Aug. 2008. 11 Sep. 2008  
<[http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2008/08/10\\_a\\_2806921.shtml?incut2](http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2008/08/10_a_2806921.shtml?incut2)>.

Georgia. During his campaign he promised to consolidate the country, build an open democratic state, and obtain membership in NATO and the European Union. The United States, European governments, and international development agencies supported the eagerness of the Georgian government to implement democratic reforms. The US provided considerable assistance in the modernization of the army in order to meet Western standards and obtain NATO membership. Three oil and gas transportation routes have been built with the help of international funds and multiple investors. One of them is Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline, transporting oil and gas from Central Asia and the Caspian Sea to Turkey, and ultimately to Europe and the US, was opened in 2006. In turn, Georgia has actively participated in the “war on terror” proclaimed by the US and has provided troops for peacekeeping operations in Iraq and Kosovo.

However, in reality Saakashvili has followed the nationalistic policies established by Gamsakhurdia, which resulted in the mishandling of relations with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. His political style might be characterized as impatient, hard-lined and uncompromised, with a high desire to achieve goals quickly. His authoritarianism has led to a sharp increase in military spending and has resulted in growing political and civil unrest against his rule. Consequently, major governance problems such as corruption and the unequal treatment of ethnic minorities have remained and resulted in deepening polarization and recurrence of conflict in the region. In summer 2004, the Georgian government launched an “anti-smuggling” campaign in South Ossetia in the broad framework of country strengthening and integration. The campaign resulted in the eruption of violence and a dozen people were killed.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Toal, Gerard. “Russia’s Kosovo: A Critical Geopolitics of the August 2008 War over South Ossetia.” Bellwether Publishing, Ltd. Eurasian Geography and Economics, 2008, 49:6, pp. 670-705.

Georgia's close friendship with the US and Europe, and especially its desire join NATO, have irritated Russia, which has resulted in recent years in increasing political and economic pressure on Georgia as a form of punishment. Specifically, these pressures have included closing borders and imposing trade embargoes on exports of Georgian wine, mineral water, and agricultural products. With Abkhazia and South Ossetia Moscow has undertaken steps toward de facto closer official relations and has lifted previous sanctions against the breakaway regions; it has given financial and military "aid" to separatists groups and offered Russian citizenship to South Ossetians; there has been a buildup of Russian military personnel in the region. By some estimates approximately 90% of the inhabitants of South Ossetia are citizens of the Russian Federation.<sup>153</sup> Prior escalation and reactivation of the conflict between South Ossetia and Georgia, Russian airplanes engaged in a series of provocative flights in the airspace of South Ossetia and Georgia. In July 2008 during the visit of US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in Tbilisi, four Russian airplanes circled over South Ossetia.<sup>154</sup>

### *Use of force*

There are different time lines and there is no clarity on what triggered conflict, but it is a fact that on the night of 7 August 2008, when world was supposed to gather in peace for the start of the Beijing Olympics, Georgian artillery and ground forces attacked South Ossetia's capital Tskhinvali in an attempt to "restore constitutional order" and retake the

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<sup>153</sup> "Istoriya Osetinskogo konflikta." Gazeta.ru 10 Aug. 2008. 11 Sep. 2008  
<[http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2008/08/10\\_a\\_2806921.shtml?incut2](http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2008/08/10_a_2806921.shtml?incut2)>.

<sup>154</sup> Toal, Gerard. Russia's Kosovo: A Critical Geopolitics of the August 2008 War over South Ossetia. Bellwether Publishing, Ltd. Eurasian Geography and Economics 49.6 (2008): 670-705.



breakaway region.<sup>155</sup> Thus a decade of confrontation between South Ossetia and Georgia turned into an armed conflict and escalated into open war between Russia and Georgia. According to UNHCR, 192,000 people have been displaced as a result of the war. Of these, 127,000 were displaced within Georgia proper, 30,000 were displaced within South Ossetia, and 35,000 fled to North Ossetia.<sup>156</sup>

Russian response to the military attack was taken unilaterally without any consultations with the CIS member states and began immediately with the movement of heavily-armed troops that entered South Ossetia and went deep into Georgia, hence into Abkhazia. Apparently, Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili, by attacking Tskhinvali, aimed to advance Georgia's own interests, such as using the momentum to take back a breakaway region, as well as demonstrating to the West that Georgia's territorial integrity is under threat (in the case of aggressive Russian actions). Secondly, Saakashvili probably expected that a Russian attack would accelerate the process for obtaining NATO membership. At the NATO Summit in Bucharest in April 2008, NATO leaders agreed that Georgia would become a member of the Alliance, and launched a period of intensive engagement with Georgia to address questions still outstanding pertaining to Georgia's Membership Action Plan (MAP) application. Future decisions on when Georgia will move to the MAP stage and eventually to membership will be based on Georgia's performance in implementing key reforms laid out in the Individual Partnership Action Plan. As agreed at the Bucharest Summit, the application to join MAP would be reviewed by Allied foreign

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<sup>155</sup> See two timeline examples: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia  
<[http://www.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=461&info\\_id=7484p](http://www.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=461&info_id=7484p)>.  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation  
<<http://www.russianembassy.org.za/statements/text/sep08/chronology.html>>.

<sup>156</sup> Toal, Gerard. "Russia's Kosovo: A Critical Geopolitics of the August 2008 War over South Ossetia." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 49.6 (2008):670-705.

ministers in December 2008.<sup>157</sup> On 3 December 2008, NATO member states discussed the matter and conclude that Georgia, as well as Ukraine, would need to continue the reformation process and decided to enhance opportunities for continuing assistance in these efforts.<sup>158</sup> Apparently, their relations with Russia are importance for NATO states (energy dependence), which impacted their decision on postponing MAP for Georgia and Ukraine. But at the same time NATO ministers sharply condemned Russian actions and statements made by the Russian authorities in justification of its aggressive action against Georgia. In turn, Saakashvili's decision to attack was also characterized as a huge miscalculation by the international community. The response of the international community was on the level of condemnation but without punishment for all responsible parties of the conflict, although EU did play a central role in brokering a ceasefire agreement.

The five day Russo-Georgian war become a turning point in Euro-Russian and US relations by threatening the energy corridor that is important for European countries, damaging the infrastructure and economy, and recognizing the independence of two breakaway regions, South Ossetia and Abkhazia.<sup>159</sup> Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin accused the US of staging the Georgian conflict. He speculated that the conflict in Georgia might play a role in US domestic policy in the capacity of support for one of the US presidential candidates.<sup>160</sup> Apparently such an accusation is connected with the US's

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<sup>157</sup> "NATO's relations with Georgia." NATO 4 Feb. 2009. 24 Feb. 2009 <<http://www.nato.int/issues/nato-georgia/index.html>>.

<sup>158</sup> "Allies discuss relations with Ukraine and Georgia and send a signal to Russia." NATO 5 Dec. 2008. 24 Feb. 2009 <<http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2008/12-december/e1203b.html>>.

<sup>159</sup> For today, only Russia and Nicaragua recognized independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

<sup>160</sup> Porter, Gareth. "The US is going to Use a Double Standard to Condemn. Russia Putin accuses US of staging Georgia conflict." The Realnews Network 30 Aug. 2008. 9 Dec. 2008 <[http://therealnews.com/t/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=2156](http://therealnews.com/t/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=2156)>.

increasing role in the region, including Washington's efforts to advance NATO membership for Georgia and its assistance in the promotion of democratic reforms.

US plans to deploy an anti-missile defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic, as well as their recognition of Kosovo's independence, angered the Kremlin and may have been a trigger for Russia to undertake a counter-offensive against Georgia. In fact, at the end of August Moscow recognized South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states and claimed that this was a response to Kosovo's independence. President of Russia Dmitri Medvedev stressed that "Moscow had to recognize the independence of Georgia's breakaway regions because sovereignty cannot be offered to one people and denied to others."<sup>161</sup> The Russian leadership blamed Washington for "opening a Pandora's box" by recognizing the former Serbian province of Kosovo in February; Medvedev accused the US of ignoring Moscow's warnings regarding its support for Priština's move.<sup>162</sup> The recognition by Moscow of South Ossetia and Abkhazia was sharply criticized by the US and European countries. NATO's Secretary General rejected the Russian Federation's decision to extend recognition to two breakaway regions and pointed out that such a decision is a direct violation of numerous UN Security Council resolutions regarding Georgia's territorial integrity, which have been endorsed by Russia itself, and questioned Russia's commitment to peace and security in the Caucasus.<sup>163</sup>

In sum, Georgia's miscalculated attack on Tskhinvali opened up an opportunity for Russia to realize its strategic interests in the South Caucasus and to reestablish the credibility

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<sup>161</sup> Balkan Inside. "West Ignored Us on Kosovo", says Medvedev." 27 Aug. 2008. 20 Feb. 2009 <<http://balkaninsight.com/en/main/news/12661>>.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> "Statement by the NATO Secretary-General on the Russian recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia." NATO, 26 Aug. 2008. 20 Feb. 2009 <<http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2008/p08-107e.html>>.

of the Russian army as a fighting force. It seems that the Kremlin had been waiting for months for an opportunity to act and Georgia's attack provided the perfect excuse.

Apparently, Moscow had estimated that the US and Europe would not respond significantly, because militarily they had no forces in the region ready to respond, economically the Europeans are dependent on Russian energy exports, and politically the US needs Russia on a number of issues, for example on Afghanistan, Iran, and North Korea. The Russian-Georgian conflict seems to herald new approaches in world affairs and demonstrates that the world is entering the next phase in the process of geopolitical division that are a threat to peace and security in Europe. As the International Crisis Group points out, the conflict brought out important issues such as the necessity of reconsideration of European security policy, the role and future of NATO, and Russia's role as a partner in ensuring peace and security in Europe and beyond.<sup>164</sup>

In brief, judging by the Russian leadership's rhetoric, one might think that the main motive for Russia's counter offensive was the protection of Russian and South Ossetian citizens. However, examination of Russia's motives for military intervention shows that Russia has vital geostrategic and economic interests in the Southern Caucasus region. Threats to Russia's strategic interests (e.g. access to the Black Sea) and its national security increased with potential NATO expansion right up to the borders of Russia. In order to protect its interests, Russia monopolized the peace-mediation process with limited involvement of the UN and OSCE, which led to unilateral decision to use force against Georgia.

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<sup>164</sup> International Crisis Group. "Russia vs. Georgia: The Fallout." ICG Europe Report 195, 22 August 2008.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

An examination of the foreign policy interests of the United States and Russia reveals that the promotion of geopolitical and strategic interests, such as securing leadership positions and domination in respective regions, has played a decisive role in their engagement in regional conflicts. However, this study reveals that along with similar motives and using similar arguments for justification of the US/NATO military intervention in Yugoslavia and Russia's incursion into Georgia, there are distinctive differences in the approaches of both countries. This study has exposed that there is a fundamental difference in the level of engagement with multilateral organizations in the peace-mediation and negotiation processes, as well in the decision to use force to intervene.

#### *Similarities in goals*

The study exposed three similar elements, which are (1) the absence of comprehensive authorization to use force; (2) use of the 'humanitarian intervention' argument as justification for military intervention; and (3) the promotion of geostrategic and geopolitical interests as the real reason for using force in the interventions.

Both US-led NATO and Russia went to war without a United Nations Security Council resolution comprehensively authorizing the use of force. However, in the case of Kosovo, NATO based its action on several UN decisions, essentially UNSC resolution 1199 of September 1998 and UNSC resolution 1203. These resolutions were issued due to the

large involvement of multilateral organizations such as the UN, the Contact Group, the OSCE, the EU and NATO. The resolutions recognized that the Kosovo crisis presented threats to peace and security in the region, imposed restrictions on Serb military actions in Kosovo, and called for full and immediate implementation of negotiated agreements. In addition, by UNSC decision, nonmilitary NATO air verification and OSCE's monitoring missions over Kosovo were introduced in Kosovo prior to forceful intervention. In contrast, in the Georgia-South Ossetia conflict there was no serious UNSC resolution giving Russia the right to use force.

Even though the respective leaderships of the major powers publicly proclaimed that the reasons for both military interventions was the protection of ethnic groups from ethnic cleansing, this analysis reveals that involvement in the conflicts was mainly motivated by the promotion of strategic and geopolitical interests. The humanitarian reason for military intervention was used for gaining public support and international justification.

At first glance it seems that the Balkans is not an arena for American interests, rather it is of greater importance to the nations of the European Union. However, engagement in the Kosovo crisis was equally important for the US's national interests. The United States considers Europe a key region for maintaining the US economy and giving it leverage in other important political forums and actions. The Kosovo crisis underlined once again the collective inability and lack of capacity of the European community to deal with security problems without substantial US support. In this regard, Washington's motive for engagement in the Kosovo crisis was a commitment to its European allies and NATO in the preservation of stability, peace, and security, which was a main concern for the West; hence, Kosovo was about relations between the US and Europe.

The strategic interests for the US were to determine a new role for NATO in Euro-Atlantic political relations and to ensure NATO's credibility. NATO is a tool for the US to project its power and maintain a leadership position in Europe. A strong leadership position in Europe is vital for the promotion of American economic interests and obtaining endorsement from European allies in advancing the US's political interests in Europe and beyond. As a result, the Kosovo case helped NATO transform itself from a defense body into a central peacemaking security institution able to substitute for the UNSC in a crisis situation.<sup>165</sup>

The engagement of the United States in the Kosovo crisis resulted in the achievement of its strategic interests, such as strengthening the partnership with European countries (despite some disagreements), securing its leadership position, and ensuring that NATO remained an instrument in the promotion of its geopolitical interests. Recently, Kosovo gained independence and, with considerable international assistance, is engaged in the process of nation-building, despite some remaining instability on the ground. As for US/NATO and Russian relations, these increasingly deteriorated and represented a source of great tension during the Kosovo crisis. Russia strongly opposed Kosovo's secession from Serbia, claiming respect for Serbian sovereignty and territorial integrity, and considered NATO's military intervention into Yugoslavia illegal.

The Russian involvement in the Georgia-South Ossetia and Georgia-Abkhazia conflicts dates back to the beginning of the 1990s. In the beginning, Russia took a more or less neutral role, fearing that the conflicts could have a spill-over effect onto Russia's southern frontiers and thereby undermine stability in the federation. However, the rise to

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<sup>165</sup> I do not discuss the results and consequences of the NATO operation in Kosovo, because it was not the aim of my study.

power of followers of the statist school of thought redefined national interests towards securing great power status, counterbalancing the US, and promoting a multipolar world. In addition, Russia identifies Caucasus region as part of a 'zone of special responsibility and influence.'

Georgia was always of special interest to Russia, due to its geographic location and proximity to Russian borders. The assertive Russian military intervention into South Ossetia and then deep into Georgia was mainly motivated by geostrategic interests. These interests include obtaining protectorates such as South Ossetia and Abkhazia, exercising the predominant position in the region by having political and economic influence, and sending a message to the West about Russia's growing status as a great power and as a counterweight to the presence of the US and NATO in the post-Soviet space. Preservation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as protectorates was needed in order to secure Russia's strategic economic and military interests. The restoration and strengthening of military bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia is strategically important to secure Russia's presence and thereby exercise its political influence by opposing the possible location of US or NATO military forces in the region. Russia's presence in the region is also beneficial for keeping economic influence by controlling energy transportation, thus undermining European attempts to build an alternative energy pipeline.

As a result of the counter-offensive against Georgia, Russia achieved its self-interests, such as the restoration and strengthening of its military bases in the Georgian breakaway regions, by recognizing the independent status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The recognition of Georgia's breakaway region will challenge other countries in the post-Soviet space with separatist problems, for example Transdnistria and Crimea. The partition of



South Ossetia and Abkhazia from Georgia created the precedent for a new geopolitical division of the world's regions.

However, international recognition of these achievements is under doubt because the international community did not support Russian actions. What is more, the international community was stunned by Russia's military intervention into the territory of a sovereign state. Russia's counter-offensive destabilized Georgia, threatened peace and security in Europe, endangered energy corridors significant for European states, and demonstrated a disregard for international law by intervening in the territory of a sovereign state.

As this examination has illustrated, both the United States and the Russian Federation were driven to pursue national interests. The chart below breaks down the strategic interests of the United States and Russia in Kosovo and Georgia.

| <b>Table 5.1: United States' and Russia's Strategic Interests</b> |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|   | <b>United States</b>  | <b>Russian Federation</b>   |
| Kosovo  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To demonstrate NATO's credibility and transform role of NATO in European security affairs</li> <li>• To secure leadership position in Europe</li> <li>• To preserve regional stability and security in Europe</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To constrain NATO influence in European security affairs</li> <li>• To preserve great power status in Europe</li> </ul>  |
| Georgia   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To prevent great power domination in the region</li> <li>• To support Georgia to join NATO (NATO enlargement)</li> <li>• To secure BTC oil pipeline</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To preserve regional influence and security</li> <li>• To restore military presence and constrain NATO presence</li> <li>• To control transportation of oil and gas</li> </ul> |

### *Differences in approaches*

There is a distinctive difference in the United States' and Russia's level of engagement with multilateral international and regional organizations. The US took a leading role in the peace-mediation process in Kosovo. Thus, the mediation and negotiation process in Kosovo was multistage and involved a range of regional and international institutions such as the UN, the Contact Group, the OSCE, NATO and the EU. All these multilateral international and regional institutions were involved at different stages of the conflict and played a role within a specific set of capacities, such as making UN decisions, establishing negotiation and working groups, drafting interim settlements, peace mediation activities, monitoring missions, resettlement of refugees, and assistance to displaced persons. The decision to use force in the Kosovo case was made based on a consensus of NATO member states. In Kosovo after the war, governmental institutions and mechanisms for human rights protection to meet international norms were developed. In addition, Kosovo's independence was declared after a thorough process of international negotiations, and the declaration of independence was supported by the international community, notably by 56 UN member states.<sup>166</sup>

Russia considers the post-Soviet space a zone of influence and responsibility; this principle is consolidated in the National Security Concept. Russia also declared itself a guarantor of peace and stability in the existing and latent conflicts on its territory and in the 'near abroad,' which are considered the main sources of threats to its stability and security. Based on this concept, Russia has played the dominant role in peace mediation and peacekeeping operations in the Georgian conflict. Russia unilaterally deployed its

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<sup>166</sup> "2008 Kosovo Declaration of Independence." Wikipedia. 6 Apr. 2009  
<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2008\\_Kosovo\\_declaration\\_of\\_independence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2008_Kosovo_declaration_of_independence)>.

peacekeeping forces into South Ossetia, even though the Georgians and South Ossetians were also conducting peace keeping operations in the respective territories. International involvement has been limited to the UN's rather partial observation mandate in Abkhazia and the mandate of the OSCE. Considering the limited involvement of international and regional multilateral institutions, the decision to use force was made unilaterally by the Russian Federation and did not involve any immediate negotiation processes. Russia's unilateral decision to use force as an immediate reaction to Georgia's attack on its breakaway region did not require consensus among its CIS allies. Russian recognition of South Ossetia's and Abkhazia's independence right after the war was not supported by the international community.

To conclude, Russia's approach in the peace-mediation process with the involvement of international institutions differs considerably from that of the US. The chart below recaps the differences and similarities in approaches undertaken by the US in its military intervention into the FRY and Russia in its incursion into Georgia.

| <b>Table 5.2: Differences and similarities in approaches</b> |   |   |
|--|---|---|
|  | <b>US/NATO intervention into former Yugoslavia</b>  | <b>Russian intervention into Georgia</b>  |
| Comprehensive UNSC authorization                             | Absent  | Absent  |
| Argument for justification of military intervention          | 'Humanitarian intervention'   | 'Humanitarian intervention'   |
| Motives  | Promotion of self-interests   | Promotion of self-interests   |
| International mediation and negotiation process              | Year-long process with multiple international actors:<br><br>Contact Group<br>United Nations<br>G7/G8<br>OSCE | Negotiation process which "froze" conflict:<br><br>Russian Federation<br>OSCE (limited) |
| Decision to use force  | Multilateral  | Unilateral  |

### *Confrontation of interests*

The United States and the Russian Federation were engaged in both conflicts in Kosovo and Georgia, even though their positions were opposite to each other. The parallel engagement of Russia and the US in Kosovo and Georgia is explained by the existence of Russia's and the US's conflicting geopolitical and economic interests in both regions. Thus, during the Kosovo crisis, there was antagonism between the US and Russia, which resulted in the deterioration of relations. The purpose of Russia's engagement in the Kosovo crisis was mainly to preserve its great power status in European affairs and constrain NATO's influence. To Russia, Kosovo or Serbia in and of themselves did not matter as much as Georgia does. Due to its geographical remoteness, the Kosovo crisis did not present a threat to Russia's vital interests, such as national security.

The Russo-Georgian conflict marks a new era of geopolitical division, a revival of "empire" ambitions, and a reassertion of Russian power. It is likely that the Georgian case represents an open confrontation of interests for geopolitical influence between Russia and the United States. The confrontation was instigated by Russia's old and new grievances, such as a failure to protect its interests in the Balkans; the two stages of NATO's eastward expansion; the desire by Americans to deploy anti-missile defense in Eastern Europe; the US withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty; the control of energy routes in the Transcaucasian region; the US military presence in Central Asia and its increasing influence in the post-Soviet space. In that context of confrontation, the desire of Georgia and Ukraine to join NATO (which was highly supported by the US) and the prospect of deployment of a NATO army in its backyard triggered Russian aggressiveness. Moscow was ready to take any steps in order to keep the region under its influence. Certainly, this is not to say that the

discriminative policy of the Georgian leadership toward ethnic minorities did not also create preconditions for destabilization in the region.

Russia considers a destabilized Georgia to be a vital interest, which led Moscow to promote its geopolitical interests through control over energy resources and undermining European attempts to build alternative energy pipelines. Russia's military intervention serves as a signal to the US and Europe that Russia is an alternative power, promoting the right to create new world order and pursuing its own understanding of liberal democracy. At the same time, Russia sends a strong message to other post-Soviet states, in particular to Ukraine, that insistence on joining NATO or on becoming close friends with the West may lead to war. In Georgian case, Russia demonstrated that "we can do it."

In sum, the Russo-Georgian war represents a new challenge for the West. The war indicates that there is an ongoing process for a new geopolitical division of the world's regions. The Russian-Georgian conflict has transformed the contemporary geopolitical world and created a precedent for Russia's future assertive actions in the post-Soviet space. Considering Russian foreign policy interests and its featured tactics in "solving ethnic conflicts," the aggressive action against Georgia is cause for a high degree of concern about possible future aggressive actions against Ukraine, Moldova, and Azerbaijan. The outcome of the struggle will determine the course of Russia's relations with its neighbors, as well the relationship between the Kremlin and the West, and will critically influence the fate of the Caspian basin of energy supplies.

In this sense, this paper could serve as a model attempting to predict possible Russian actions and approaches in the future toward former Soviet republics. It is likely that Russia will use a combination of 'soft' and 'hard' methods for keeping its influence in the post-

Soviet space. It seems that for those countries who are still hesitant in choosing the “Western camp” or the “Russian camp,” the Kremlin will use ‘soft’ power, such as the granting of financial aid, as it did for Kyrgyzstan in exchange for the US airbase. But for post-Soviet countries with rich natural resources and/or good geo-strategic locations that decisively move toward the “Western camp,” the Kremlin will use hard tactics and methods, such as those used with Georgia. Ignoring analyses of such ‘coercive actions to bring peace’ in certain territories of the former Soviet space could cause serious challenges not only for Europe but also for the international community. It seems that the process of the dissolution of the Soviet Union is still under way and could have important consequences beyond the post-Soviet space.

*Implications for US and Western policies toward Russia and its ‘zone of influence’*

In the contemporary world, interethnic conflicts more often become international problems rather than remaining internal state issues due to discriminative policies toward minorities by the state leadership, as well as to the geostrategic locations that attract particular states in the promotion of strategic interests. The Russo-Georgian war marks a new era of geopolitical division, a revival of “empire” ambitions, and a reassertion of Russian power. The case of Georgia displays the tension between the US and Russia and demonstrates a clash of interests for geopolitical influence. Russia’s military intervention in Georgia is an extremely bold move to reassert Moscow’s dominance in the post-Soviet space and repel US influence in the region. The NATO enlargement process is a proverbial stake in the heart of relations between Russia and the West, in particular the United States. Mistrust and misunderstanding shape US-Russia relations. The Kremlin is suspicious of the

NATO enlargement process and considers it a direct threat to Russia. On the other hand, some NATO member states still fear Russia and consider it an aggressive state.

The evolution of relations between US and Russia will depend on the policies and steps undertaken by the new governments of the US and Russia. Three things might change in the prospective future in US-Russia relations. First of all, with the election of Barack Obama as US President, the level of aggression between Washington and Moscow may be lessened, despite events in Georgia. Secondly, however, the economic crisis and a decline in oil prices will affect Russia's behavior, driving it to less assertive actions to the extent that Russia is more dependent on the world economy. Finally, President Medvedev of the Russian Federation might also play a positive role in improving relations, if he is able to act in spite of the "Putin factor."

It is very important for the US and western countries to maintain a neutral position on NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine in order to not provoke future aggression from Russia. Further, in order to ensure the process of democratic reforms and observance of human rights in post-Soviet countries, there is a need to establish conditions for receiving western financial aid. Conditions will help to keep state elites accountable and prevent them from using financial means for strengthening their power and building quasi-democratic states. This is especially important for countries with limited natural resources such as Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. In addition, there is a need for strengthening bilateral relations between the US and Russia, which will allow for the creation of dialogue that will result in the creation of trust and understanding between the two nations. That is important lessening the threat of NATO to Russia. Finally, it is of vital importance to put in place sustainable collaborative and partnership efforts to solve high-priority, global problems such as

continuing threats by extremist-terrorists and their possible access to weapons of mass destruction, climate change, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons. There is a strong need for cooperation, partnership, and understanding in order to meet and respond to the challenges of the XXI century. The failure to solve these problems could bring catastrophic consequences for security, stability, and peace. It is the responsibility of the world powers to understand the key global priorities and put aside the egocentric ambitions of gaining great-power status, conquering new territories, and/or widening their spheres of influence.



## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Map of Kosovo<sup>167</sup>



<sup>167</sup> Council on Foreign Relations. “Kosovo’s End Game.” Map. Sangam.org 10 Dec. 2007. 21 March 2009 <[www.sangam.org/2007/12/images/0103KosovoMap.jpg](http://www.sangam.org/2007/12/images/0103KosovoMap.jpg)>.

Appendix 2: Map of Georgia<sup>168</sup>



<sup>168</sup> The Economist. "A Scripted War." Map. *Economist.com* 14 Aug. 2008. 21 March 2009  
<[http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=11920992](http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story_id=11920992)>.

Appendix 3: Map of Caucasian Pipelines<sup>169</sup>



<sup>169</sup> The Economist. "The Dangers of the Safe Route." Map. Economist.com 14 Aug. 2008. 21 March 2009 <[http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=11920984](http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story_id=11920984)>.

Appendix 4: Map of South Ossetia war<sup>170</sup>

<sup>170</sup> Wikipedia. “2008 South Ossetia War.” Map. Wikipedia.org. 21 March 2009 <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:2008\\_South\\_Ossetia\\_war\\_en.svg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:2008_South_Ossetia_war_en.svg)>.

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