

Georgia Case Study
Part I: Context of the Territory and Conflict

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A. Description of the Territory

The country of Georgia comprises 69,700 km² (26,911 mi²), slightly larger than West Virginia (EIU 2009, 4; USDOSBPA 2009, par. 2; USCB 2009, par. 8), as recognized by all but three of 192 UN Member States. Russia, Nicaragua, and Venezuela recognize two regions representing 14% of Georgia's territory, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as independent republics (Schwartz 2009, par. 1-2; USDOSBPA 2009, par. 2; MEDG 2007, 6; Zverev 1996, part I par.1). Georgia borders Russia to the north, the Black Sea to its west, Turkey to the southwest, Armenia to the south, and Azerbaijan to the southeast; Abkhazia, at 8,700 km² (5,405 mi²), is the northwest part of Georgia (EIU 2009, 2; ICGAT 2006, 1).

Situated in the Caucasus, Georgia has only 11.51% arable land and 3.79% for permanent crops; hills and mountains make up 80% of the country (FAO 2009, par. 1, 7; GG 2008 par. 3). Western Georgia is "sub-tropical," while in the mountains and the north, a colder alpine climate prevails; in the east, the plains are "hotter and drier" and the climate of the east of the country is overall described as "more Mediterranean" (Habib 2005, 2; Kaeter 2004, 105). Georgia is "dominated" by one major river called the Mtkvari (Kura), flowing west to east through Tbilisi, Georgia's capital. (Kaeter 2004, 106).

The World Bank (2009) describes Georgia as being "resource rich" (WBCB 2009, par. 3). "Fertile land and a favorable climate enable diverse agricultural production, including "remarkable" viticulture, and there has been a recent discovery of "oil and gas potential" (WBCB 2009, par. 2; FAO 2009, par. 3). "Dense forests" are on one-third of its territory, it has a variety of mineral resources, and "numerous fast-flowing rivers offer good hydropower potential" (WBCB 2009, par. 2). Kaeter (2004) also emphasizes Georgia's water resources and notes the presence of glaciers (Kaeter 2004, 105-106). It has even turned its location into a resource as King (2004) notes it has "leverage[d] its strategic location... to become a major player in discussions about routes for Eurasian oil and gas exports" (King 2004, 15).

The people who would become Georgians settled in modern Georgia c. the ninth century B.C.E.; they had absorbed some Greek culture by then and spoke a very unique language unrelated to virtually all other modern languages; in the western area of Georgia they formed a "kingdom" (Sunny 1994, 4-8). During the 500-400's B.C.E., other Georgian-speaking tribes came to the Mtkvari valley and "formed the nucleus" of an east Georgian kingdom," mixing with locals "to form the Georgian people;" both states became heavily influenced by Persian culture, combining with Greek and local culture to create a "Georgian" culture (Ibid., 8-11). The origins of the Abkhaz people have become politicized; depending on who is being consulted, the Abkhaz arrived thousands of years ago or centuries ago (Nodia 1998, 14; EURII 2009,66; Hewitt 2009; ICGAT 2006, 2; Zverev 1996, part I par.7).

The country's population, measured at 4.63 million in July 2008, is overwhelmingly Georgian ethnically (83.8% from a 2002 census) with fairly small Azeri (6.5%) and Armenian (5.7%) minorities and a smaller group of Russians (1.5%), Greeks and others (USDOSBPA 2009, par. 3; GG 2008 par. 6; EIU 2009, 4). The vast majority of the population is Orthodox Christian (USDOSBPA 2009, par. 3). In 1989, 1.77% of Georgia's population, including Abkhazia, was identified as Abkhaz by the last Soviet census; this represented 95,853 people (EURII 2009, 64-65). The same census shows that within Abkhazia Georgians were 45.68% of the population; Abkhaz were 17.76% of the population and Armenians and Russians were close to 15% each, out of a total of 525,061 people (Ibid.). Several wars caused massive shifts, as a census from 2003 conducted by Abkhaz officials placed just 215,972 people in Abkhazia; 44% were Abkhaz, 21% were Georgian, 21% were Armenian; and 11% were Russian (UNPO 2009, 1,8; Clogg 2008, 307-308). This number is disputed by Georgia, and other estimates range from 157,000-220,000 people (UNPO 2009, 8; Phillips 2008; Francis 2008, 3; ICGAT 2006, 9).

Georgia has only been a democracy since late 1995, having left the USSR a few years earlier (USDOSBPA 2009, par. 9). Progress was not steady, and there was a "Rose Revolution" in response to

evidence of governmental electoral fraud by the government; “[s]ince 2004... Georgia has turned a nearly failed state into a rapidly maturing market democracy;” the World Bank credits Georgia with increasing its “accountability and transparency” (USDOSBPA 2009, par. 10, 17; WBCB 2009, par. 7). While acknowledging progress, noting the strength of political parties and freedom of expression, and calling elections “generally free and fair,” Freedom House (2008) writes that the presidency “dominates other state agencies,” and along with the “weak” nature of the opposition, creates an “unbalanced character” in the government; the independence of the judiciary is also questioned (FH 2008, par. 3, 5-6, 11, 14, 27). The country is broken up into twelve administrative areas: nine regions, one capital district for Tbilisi, and two autonomous republics: Abkhazia and Adjara; all of these elect 235 seats in a unicameral parliament, and local elections were instituted several years ago (EIU 2009, 5; USDOSBPA 2009, par. 4, 11; GG 2008, par. 4.). Unlike Abkhazia, Adjara (Achara/Ajara) recently became reintegrated (BBC RTAb 2009, par 1-11; EURII 2009, 11-12). In both Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Georgia has no official control (BBC RTAb 2009, par 1-11, 21). Georgia has an exile Abkhazian government that has no real authority in its Abkhazia, and uses it to work with Georgian IDP’s from there (Lynch 2002, 843-844).

B. Description of the Conflict

Sources of the Conflict

Socio-Political Structure: Pre-Russian Influences

“The creation legend of Abkhazia and Georgia is identical, a sad fact that has not led to unity and fraternity between these two peoples,” writes Goltz (2009), “but rather to a disputation of basic history and the denial of the very humanity of the other group” (Goltz 2009, 21). For most of its history, Georgia had a stronger eastern kingdom which dominated a weaker western Georgian kingdom, and Abkhazia (then called Abkhazeti) was often ruled by a local prince who might submit to another prince or one of the Georgian kings, or might not, and managed to stay free, eventually grew in power into its own kingdom, supplanting the west Georgian state and rivaling the east Georgian kingdom for several centuries until the latter unified both into a single Georgian kingdom in 1008 C.E. (Suny 1994, 11-33; Braund 1994, 152-313; Rapp 2000, 576; Gvosdev 2000,1). This kingdom would be a “decidedly decentralized state,” where local rulers often flouted the authority of the “kings” and reached out to foreign powers independently for leverage against them, some trying to take the throne (Suny 1994, 33-38). Through the eleventh and twelfth centuries Georgia “remained... primarily rural” and its “towns... were largely inhabited by Muslims, Armenians, and other foreigners” until the nineteenth century (Ibid., 38-39). Mongols and plague fragmented Georgia, and Abkhazeti was one of three western regions “ruled as semi-independent” principalities; Georgia would not see reunification “until the annexation by Russia in the nineteenth century” (Suny 1994, 38-59; Gvosdev 2000, 2-5).

“Because, arguably, interests are tied to identities,” writes Suny (1999), “self-understandings... must be investigated as prerequisite to analyzing the security requirements of states” (Suny 1999, 139-140). Georgia is among certain former Soviet states where “uncertainty about current politics and future possibilities are deeply embedded in more general confusion about who ‘we’ are and where ‘our’ interests lie” and he writes that “[n]ational identity is a particular form of political identification” in a world where “nation is not natural or given but must be worked for, taught, and instilled, largely through the efforts of intellectuals, politicians, and activists who make the identification with the ‘imagined political community’ of the nation a palpable and potent source of emotional and intellectual commitment” (Ibid., 140, 144-145). For Suny, “[m]odern nations are those political communities made up of people who believe they share characteristics... that give them the right to self-determination... they can be thought of as arenas in which people dispute who they are, argue about boundaries, who is in or who is out of the group, where the ‘homeland’ begins and ends, what the ‘true’ history of the nation is” (Suny 1999, 145;

Suny 2001, 866) He argues that many wars in the modern era are fought over such issues, and that “long-lived ‘nations,’ [like]...Georgians... who have written traditions that go back millennia, have in modern times reconstructed and made consistent the varied and changing identities and ways of conceiving themselves that existed in the past;” “earlier identities” have been molded into “frame[s] of later templates, particularly that of the nation” (Suny 1999, 146). He describes Georgia as one of several former Soviet Republics where “the problems of ethnicity, identity, and the appropriate political forms to sustain the new state in the future were at the base of the devastating and violent crises that fractured” them (Suny 1999, 154). For Suny (1994) Georgia is “reinventing its past;” and “[t]he key to the future lies in what a people selects from its past, how it imagines itself as a community and continues to remake itself as a nation” (Suny 1994, 334-335).

Several authors besides Suny articulate a similar position, that the intensely-felt ancient identities of the Georgians and the Abkhaz are important components to understanding their modern struggles conflicts with each other. Grant (2009) comments that these ancient Abkhaz and Georgian identities were so strongly felt that Russia “never entirely convinced...[these people] that they were full partners alongside the rest” of the Russian Empire and the USSR, and Georgia’s current President, Mikheil Saakashvili, “took a holy oath” as part of his presidential inauguration ceremony at Gelati, where the “greatest Georgian king of the eleventh century...is buried. By receiving the blessing at Gelati, Saakashvili, who wants a strong Georgian state, was symbolically alluding to a period of history when Georgia had such a state” (Grant 2009, ix-x; Nodia 2005, 78).

On the use of history in this debate, Zverev (1996) notes that it is a “salient factor” in understanding “why conflicts break out,” that “in Abkhaz literature, one finds references to the Abkhazian kingdom which existed in the 9th and 10th centuries. This is instrumental to the Abkhazian claim for sovereignty over the region even though the same kingdom could equally be described as a common Georgian-Abkhazian state, with a predominance of Georgian language and culture;” he points out that on the other side, Georgians “stress the allegedly non-Abkhaz character” of the historical Abkhazia, and that some even think of Georgians as “hosts” and that everyone else, including Abkhaz, are “guests” in Georgian territory (Zverev 1996, part I par.7). This debate, for Zverev as it was for Suny, is about presenting a case for who has the right to govern where and over whom, and this representation of the debate is also corroborated by the recent EU report on the August 2008 war (2009), by Khazanov (1996), by the International Crisis Group (ICG) (2006) and by Nodia (1998) (EURII 2009, 66-69; Khazanov 1996, 6; ICG 2006, 3-4; Nodia 1998, 14). Nodia sums up Georgian views: “Abkhazia is Georgia, because it has always been part of Georgia when it was united. Georgians cannot see Abkhazia as a ‘foreign’ land which was once conquered by them, and the accusation of imperialism usually makes them furious” (Nodia 1998, 19). Jans (1998) sums up the intersection of Georgian and Abkhazian thought, in that after the Cold War they were engaged in a quest for identity since “[d]emocracy, understood as the rule of the people by the people, begs the question of what is to be understood as ‘We, the people.’” (Jans 1998, 109) He further argues that “Ethnonational identities base their credibility and legitimacy on an interpretation of the historical past;” so for Georgians and Abkhazians, the past is of very present relevance to them (Ibid., 110). Lynch (2002) says that Abkhaz claims to the right of self determination are, among other things, “based” on the idea that modern Abkhazia can claim to be the latest incarnation of “a long historical tradition; he then quotes Abkhazia’s foreign minister as saying “Abkhazia has a thousand-year history of statehood since the formation in the 8th century of the Kingdom of Abkhazia. Even within the framework of empires, Abkhazia kept this history of stateness. No matter the form, Abkhaz statehood remained intact” (Lynch 2002, 837). Departing from the more neutral posture of others, Chirikba (1998), writing as an Abkhaz government official, argues that Abkhaz history shows more independence from Georgians than not, and thus provides its people with “legitimate grounds for their claims to statehood and sovereignty” (Chirikba 1998, 48).

Socio-Political-Economic Structure: Imperial Russian Influence

With increasing threats from a surging Ottoman Empire and the Persians, Georgia's main leader threw himself at fellow Christian nation Russia for protection, and his successor would offering his lands up for formal annexation by Russia, which occurred at the end of 1800, the kingdom abolished by decree shortly after, and within a few years, most of the other Georgian principalities were formally absorbed by Russia as Russian troops pushed out Turkish and Persian armies; Abkhazeti's prince formally put his realm "under protection" of the tsar in 1809 avoiding annexation (Suny 1994, 46-59, 63-64; Gvosdev 2000, 26-76, 135; Habib 2000). Russia wasted no time consolidating its power; no longer the playground of competing empires, Georgia was now dominated only by Russia, which immediately would see to it that "the princes steadily lost ground," noble and serf alike becoming regulated by Russian "norms" (Suny 1994, 64-68). The old Georgian noble exemplified a rural character, a fighting spirit, and independence; the new one was evolving to serve the Russian Imperial state apparatus and focused on European education, Russian language, and becoming an urban elite; some went along with this, others formed the backbone of several rebellions and "the first generation of Georgian oppositional intelligentsia" in the 1820's (Ibid., 64-70). Suny (1994) asserts that Russian corruption and misgovernment created a "long[ing] for a return to the imperfect independence" of Georgia, and a failed 1832 plot to restore an independent Georgian monarchy led to an era of increasingly harsh Russian control and cultural impositions (Suny 1994, 68-72; Jones 1987, 53-76). When this provoked massive resistance a new approach involved more Georgians and allowed more cultural autonomy, making "a significant part of...[the nobility] loyal servants of tsarism" and "Georgians of all classes rallied to the Russian banner" during the Crimean War (1853-1856) (Suny 1994, 72-77). Georgian towns became centers of Russian administration and culture, and Armenians retained their urban economic dominance, prospering under the Russians (Ibid., 86-95). Suny (1994) notes the long term consequences as "significant segments" of both the "Georgian nobility and Armenian bourgeoisie... identifi[ed] their security, economic well-being, prestige, and political status with the Russian connection," but this would also "set" the "stage" for new ethnic tension between them (Suny 1994, 95)

Meanwhile, the Georgian peasants found in themselves "smoldering resentments" as a result of their increased regulation by and responsibilities to Russian practices and officials, that "peasants periodically exploded into rebellion" (Ibid., 82-86). When the tsar brought up peasant emancipation for Georgia, "a nobility united in opposition" to this delayed and weakened the way Russian officials implemented it in Georgia; some peasants ended up in socialist democratic villages, others became a massive, mobile proletariat, and the stage would be set for politics well into the twentieth century, uniting "the resentment of peasant and nobles alike... against the state" (Ibid. 96-112). Still, Suny (1994) remarks that "the Georgians under Russian rule began a gradual resurgence," and that Russian reforms and Georgian reactions to them "contributed to the formation of a "a new sense of nationality, a national consciousness, and the first manifestations of political ideology," so that even as many nobles "became denationalized servants of tsarism, dissident voices could always be heard" (Suny 1994, 114). This force supplanted regionalism and "for many... was intimately tied to an overtly socialist worldview" (Ibid.) The Georgian post-emancipation nobility, weaker economically without serfs and losing power to the urban Armenian merchants, no longer "led" Georgia, yet as "a westernizing liberalism, a nostalgic nationalism, peasant socialism, and in the end, Marxism" took root as dominant forces so that by the 1890's, "a national leadership and an incipient mass movement for liberation" had emerged, it was elements of this nobility, educated by Russian reforms in western tradition and ideas, that "provided the only leadership to a radicalized peasantry and the new working class" (Ibid.).

Another important reason for the development of national and ethnic consciousness was the increased interaction between different ethnicities in this period; for centuries, Armenians dominated the urban centers, Georgians the countryside, but with masses of landless peasants and many poorer nobles moving into towns and cities, "[o]ne's 'Georgianness' had to be affirmed more consciously." (Ibid., 114-

115). For the first time, Georgians were coming into contact with a secure, distinctly different Armenian urban merchant class that had power over them, and all of a sudden, ethnicity became a factor in relations, identity, and power structures; as Georgians flooded once predominantly-Armenian cities, they came to compete with a well-entrenched, wholly different cultural group, and even at the end of the century, Armenians, Russians, and foreigners dominated 90% of Georgia's industry; a sense that all Georgians were united in one "Georgian nation," dominated politically by Russians and economically by Armenians, emerged (Ibid., 115-122). Thus, "Russian colonial domination...had fostered conditions for both national reformation and ethnic confrontation...awaken[ing] consciousness of Georgia's unique culture and fears that Georgia would be overwhelmed by foreign values" (Ibid., 122)

After the Crimean War, the Russian army "engaged in demographic warfare that would today be considered mass ethnic cleansing" against the Muslim people living on and north of the north Black Sea coast; "well over a million" of these people were forced to flee in multiple waves to the Ottoman Empire, with hundreds of thousands perishing in the process (Williams 2000, 93). Most Abkhaz had converted to Islam under centuries of Ottoman control before Russian rule, and the people being driven out by Russians were their ethnic and linguistic kin; roughly 110,000 Muslim Abkhazians voluntarily fled and/or were forced from Abkhazeti join the flight, "leaving a small, largely Orthodox population" (Williams 2000, 94; EURII 2009, 66; MAR 2007; Phillips 2008, 2; ICGAT 2006, 4). This "depopulation of much of Abkhazia of Abkhaz and their replacement by Slavs, Germans, Armenians, and...Georgians" would drastically change the makeup of Abkhazia; the Russian census from 1897 counted 58,697 ethnic Abkhaz (now mostly Christians), or 55.3% of Abkhazia's total population; this is down from an estimate of 130,000-150,000 before the shifts (Goltz 2009, 21; Chirikba 1998, 48; EURII 2009, 68). Ethnic Georgians were 24.4% overall in the same census (Chirikba 1998, 48; EURII 2009, 68).

In the context of the turmoil to the north, in 1864 Russia terminated the independent principality in Abkhazeti and directly incorporated it into the Russian Empire; during this period, and in 1870 enacted emancipation even though most Abkhaz owned their own land; Abkhaz were sporadically rebelling against Russian authorities in these year (Suny 1994, 108-109; EURII 2009, 66). Abkhaz scholars today maintain that thousands of Georgians, Armenians, and others settled into Abkhazia in this period on much of the empty land, while some Georgian scholars contest this and claim Georgians lived there in large numbers before that time, with or without these settlers (Suny 1994, 108-109; EURII 2009, 66; Nodia 1998, 20). Nodia stresses that a key part of understanding the Abkhaz today is through the prism—what Nodia termed the "emotional cornerstone of the Abkhaz national project"—of the Abkhaz seeing their kinsmen wiped out of Russia and brutally forced to flee, and the Abkhaz not wanting to share their fate; thus, a key "feature of Abkhaz nationalism was that the national project of the Abkhaz was less about political independence than about survival as a distinct ethnic group;" the Abkhaz, "being few in absolute numbers, not protected by traditions of literacy, and gradually becoming minority in their own land...faced the obvious danger of sweeping assimilation" (Nodia 1998, 20; Lak'oba 1998a, 88).

Suny (1994) notes that the forces already discussed also took part in the creation of and flowering of intellectual, literary, cultural, and artistic developments which celebrated Georgian nationalism and Georgian ethnic identity; such activity of prominent "patriots" of the "Georgian intelligentsia" evolved from an "initial revival of the Georgian past and attention to the language in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries...[to] the journalistic activity of the 1860s and 1870s to the active political nationalisms of the turn of the century" (Suny 1994, 122-123). Writing later (1999), he also notes that "in the nineteenth century...national intellectuals emphasized the differences among the Caucasian [region] peoples and downplayed the similarities" (Suny 1999, 155). Some of the Georgians that benefited from the tsarist education reforms, studied abroad in Russia and Europe, became exposed to the radical ideas of socialism and Marxism, and brought these strains of thought back with them to Georgia; Georgian-language newspapers emerged, financed and written by Georgia's new intelligentsia, and spread these

ideas to an even larger audience (Ibid., 125-131). The new ideas would take root in secret circles and seminaries, especially the Tiflis Theological Seminary, a “center of populist activity” (Ibid, 133-137).

Russia’s policies in Georgia in the last two decades of the 1800’s were characterized by increasing “Russian chauvinism,” the repression of radicals, containment of nationalism, and a policy of “diverting Georgian hostilities away from the government and toward the Armenians;” the Russian word for “Georgia” was banned in print, Georgian language studies were “further discouraged,” and a “harsh Russianizing regime” was put in place in the Tiflis seminary (Suny 1994, 140; Conquest 1991, 16-17). The man who would become Stalin would attend this seminary, would be inspired by this atmosphere of emerging Georgian nationalism and increased Russian repression to speak out against Russification, (Suny 1994, 140-141; Conquest 1991, 16-17; Thompson 1996, 238).

The 1890’s saw ethnic Georgians challenge Armenian urban supremacy, convincing the Russians that the Armenians were subversive; the tsarist authorities started to place restrictions on and take action against numerous types of Armenian institutions (Suny 1994, 141-142). “Social revolutionary and ethnic concerns were gradually merging,” writes Suny (1994), and “[e]thnic friction, so long dormant or contained within the confines of the city *duma*, exploded into the streets, just as the social conflicts between workers and bosses, intellectuals and the state, coalesced into a broad revolutionary assault on the autocracy;” as other movements failed to address the discontent, the stage was set for social democracy/Marxism to take hold (Ibid., 141-143). A group of young Russian-educated Georgians had become exposed to Marxism and social democracy while studying in Warsaw after they had been students at the Tbilisi seminary school, and arrived back in Georgia in the 1890’s, Noe Zhordania and Pilip Makharadze among them; by 1905 they were followers of the “Menshevik wing of social democracy,” and were the “de facto leaders of a massive national liberation movement, the dimensions of which had not been seen elsewhere in the Russian empire;” they would find many willing followers in the cities, filled with Georgians post emancipation who were largely the bottom of the urban socio-economic structure with little access to political power (Suny 1994, 144-145, 157-159). Marxism appealed to this new class of Georgians, and though it was a “non nationalist ideology,” its aim was a “revolution that eliminated the dual dominion of Russian bureaucracy and Armenian industrialists” so “Georgia could be returned to Georgians;” most emancipated peasants were struggling and receptive for change too, still in a “temporary obligated” status to their nobles; the new groups of “Georgian Marxists” vowed “to struggle for the ‘representatives of physical and mental labor’ against the ‘bourgeois capitalist parasites,” this had “a great impact in Georgia” (Ibid., 145-149, 159). Stalin would become part of the radical wing of this movement (Ibid., 160-161).

After 1900, worker’s strikes, with antitsarist overtones, became much more common as the efforts of the Marxists began to bear fruit; when the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks split, Zhordania stayed with the Mensheviks, Makharadze and Stalin with the Bolsheviks; with Zhordania at the helm the Georgian Marxists went Menshevik, drove the Bolsheviks out of Georgia, and get involved in an longstanding peasant rebellion that consumed almost all of Guria province, effectively adapting the Marxist program to peasant concerns; soon this “blended with” the “broader” disturbances of the 1905 Russian Revolution, after which the Mensheviks dominated all the elections in Georgia for the Russian Empire-wide *duma*; 1906 saw persecution of more active revolutionary movements and the Mensheviks took a step back until WWI but stayed “openly active in the new legal institutions,” finally abolishing the “temporary obligated” status of Georgian peasants in 1912 (Suny 1994, 161-175; Thompson 1996, 66). By this time, Zhordania advocated national and cultural autonomy; Stalin responded in 1913 at Lenin’s request, beginning a debate that would affect Georgia’s future, and claimed that regional, and not cultural, autonomy should be granted, since the former would “promote the seemingly natural historical process of assimilation of smaller nationalities into larger ones,” where the latter, “with its emphasis on preserving cultural differences, would hinder this process; it would artificially maintain distinctions that, left to themselves, would disappear in time” (Suny 1994 176-178; Thompson 1996, 130-131)

Early in 1917, as Russia teetered fighting WWI, “a secret meeting of social democrats agree[d] that if the Russians pulled out of Caucasia, Georgia should be declared independent” (Ibid., 179-180). Suny (1994) notes that with unification, economic reform, improved communication, and “the intellectual awakening stirred by the noble intelligentsia, [through Russian rule] Georgia had acquired many of the attributes of nationhood. The Mensheviks provided a confident and articulate national leadership with support in almost all classes of society” (Ibid. 180-181) Jones (2006) argues that “the influence of a Russian modernizing state” in “the second half of the nineteenth century” “spread” “a modern sense of nationhood” to Georgian elites, a sense centered around “ethnicity” (Jones 2006, 253-254).

Socio-Political-Economic Structure: Communist-Era Influence

With the end of Tsarist rule in Russia in February 1917, Zhordania’s Georgian workers’ councils (soviets) established their dominance, eclipsing Armenian-filled local *dumas* (Suny 1994, 186-189). After the Bolshevik October Revolution “the overt expression of nationalist feelings began to dominate the political scene in Transcaucasia” (Ibid., 190-191). Early in 1918 Georgian soviets voted to join a Caucasian regional bodies, then “voted to declare independence” from Russia and form the Transcaucasian Democratic Federal Republic in April, 1918 (Lak’oba 1998b, 90; Suny 1994, 191-192). As Turkish troops advanced, the Republic’s unity crumbled and the Georgian leadership declared Georgia to be its own independent state in May of 1918 (Suny 1994, 192-193; Thompson 171, 172). Meanwhile, Abkhazia had entered the Union of United Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus shortly after the fall of the tsar, and had even set up its own soviet in November of 1917; a few weeks before Georgia formed its independent state, the Abkhaz had joined a number of regions to its north in forming the North Caucasian Republic (Lak’oba 1999b, 89). Initially, the Abkhaz offered support for Menshevik Georgia, but during the second half of June, 1918, Georgian Menshevik troops occupied Abkhazia, declaring it to be part of Georgia, and the Abkhaz violently rose to try to drive them out; the Georgians disbanded the Abkhaz soviet (twice) after its vociferous opposition, and had its members imprisoned in Tbilisi, replacing it with a pro-Georgian soviet (Lak’oba., 90-91; Jones 2006, 254). Thompson argues that the Georgians’ “harsh treatment of other minorities in Georgia, particularly the Ossetians, Abkhazis...created a legacy of mistrust that would plague independent Georgia in the 1990s” (Thompson 1996, 172). In May of 1919 a British general observed that “[t]he Abkhazians are dissatisfied with Georgian rule and declare that, if they are given weapons, they will...[drive the Georgians out, who are] behaving worse than the Bolsheviks: they are seizing homes and land, and they are conducting a policy of socialization and nationalization of property...a wish to unite with Georgia does not reflect the will of the population,” and Georgia repressed its Armenians during a short war with Armenia (Lak’oba 1998b, 91; Suny 1994, 202).

Peasants were clamoring for land reform and this the Mensheviks did enact, in stages; overall, they eventually succeeded in giving the land, which the peasants were usually already living on and farming, to them “as private property with the right to buy and sell” while still allowing the nobles reduced holdings; “the last vestiges” of Georgia’s medieval system “had been removed (Suny 1994, 195-200; Thompson 1996, 172). The major world powers gave the Menshevik government in Georgia diplomatic recognition in January of 1920, at the post-WWI talks in Paris (Suny 1994, 204). The Allies, already fighting the Bolsheviks, Georgia sent aid, but by early December 1920, they had largely pulled out of Russia and the Azerbaijani and then the Armenian republics had come under Bolshevik dominion as Soviet Socialist Republics (SSR’s); soon Menshevik “Georgia was now nearly surrounded by the Soviets, and the Red Army was poised for a final assault on the Menshevik capital” (Suny 1994, 204-206). Throughout February 1921, the Mensheviks were driven out of most of Georgia by the Bolsheviks and a new government under Makharadze was established “despite raging Georgian resistance” (Suny 1994, 206-207, 209-210; Thompson 1996, 204-205). For Lak’oba (1998b), “[t]he aggressive policies of Georgia towards Abkhazia occasioned extreme displeasure among the local Abkhazian, Armenian, Russian, Greek...people, which actually helped to facilitate the establishment of Soviet power in the

region;” Bolsheviks and their policies were “welcomed by the peoples of Abkhazia as a deliverance from the repression and meddling of the Georgian Republic” (Lak’oba 1998b, 92-93). The ICG (2006) notes, too, that “Abkhaz say they were again the victims of repression...from the Georgian Menshevik revolutionary government” (ICGAT 2006, 4). The Bolsheviks actually let the Abkhaz declare their own SSR in the spring of 1921, “and for about a year [it] was independent of both Soviet Russia and Soviet Georgia;” the Adjars were also given their own Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) within the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia, and the South Ossetians were given their own Autonomous Region (*oblast*, which was another level down from the Adjar ASSR and two down from both the Georgian and Abkhaz SSR’s) within Georgia (Lak’oba 1998b, 93; Jones 1988, 617; UNPO 2009, 4). The EU report states that “Georgian historians see this decision as an unwarranted “gift” by the...Bolsheviks...to the Abkhaz for their pro-Bolshevik political sentiments and as a punishment for Georgia” (EURII 2009, 67).

From this point on until December of 1922, a series of complex political Manuevers between Stalin and his wing on one end, and Lenin and Makharadze on another, fought over the level of autonomy to be enjoyed by SSR’s, especially Georgia; Lenin’s and his supporters favored giving Georgia more autonomy, while Stalin and his group wanted to strong arm and dominate the minorities of the Russian Empire, and “pressure[d]” Abkhazia to enter a “special union treaty” with Georgia, forming one federated republic between the two of them; Lak’oba maintains that this treaty reflected an “equality of status of the two republics,” that “Abkhazia did not then enter into the makeup of Georgia but was in union with it” (Suny 1994, 212-213; Lak’oba 1998b). Georgia (with Abkhazia as part of it) would soon enter a regional union of republics; when Stalin tried to mesh this into a single republic, Lenin proposed the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and tried to “demote” Stalin for his aggressiveness in Georgia, but Lenin was incapacitated by a series of strokes and Stalin emerged as the leader of the USSR; he would finally put Georgia into a single Transcaucasian Federated Soviet Socialist Republic with its neighbors, which was incorporated into the USSR at the end of 1922 (Suny 1994, 214, 216-217; Thompson 204-205; Jones 1988, 631; Conquest 1991, 98-104; EURII 2009, 67; Zverev 1996, part III par. 2).

For Jones (1988), Bolshevik Soviet policy in 1920’s Georgia “was an attempt to integrate the nationalities into a new multi-national state by accommodating national cultural aspirations” but also “encouraged the process of modern nation building that had begun under the Russian Empire,” as “[t]he deliberate acceleration of modernising forces (mass education, urbanisation, improved communications and economic development) in the 1920s, combined with policies of 'affirmative action' and wide opportunities for national self-expression, resulted in a new confidence among” Georgians and Abkhaz (Jones 1988, 616). The Soviets allowed the Abkhaz the right to educate their people in the Abkhaz language and allowed them much autonomy, so that membership in the Abkhaz communist party increased significantly (Jones 1988, 617). As the economy recovered under the Bolsheviks, Suny (1994) likewise argues that “[a]t least as important as the economic recovery to the stabilization of Soviet rule in Georgia were the measures taken to promote ethnic Georgian culture—building schools, promoting publications in Georgian, encouraging opera, theater, and film (Suny 1994, 233). Writers were persuaded to support the Bolshevik government, but some, like Konstantine Gamsakhurdia, did not (Suny 1994, 233). Both Jones (1988) and Suny (1994) comment that Soviet policy in Georgian continued the Menshevik “process” of “Georgianisation” whereby Georgians were heavily favored over other ethnicities for powerful positions; Armenians and Azerbaijanis migrating to their respective republics, where they enjoyed similar rights, and increased the percentage of Georgia that was ethnically Georgian; the same process occurred in Abkhazia for the Abkhaz (Jones 1988, 617-618; Suny 1994, 233)

Thompson would note that the Bolshevik’s program in this period ironically

contained the seeds of destruction of the [USSR by allowing so much cultural autonomy and helping them delvelop cultural institution]... Soviet nationality guidelines fostered a sense of separateness in some ethnic groups who had experienced little national feeling

before 1917...[during *glasnost* and *perestroika*] national pride and self-assertion would explode and destroy the structure erected sixty-five years earlier. (Thompson 1996, 210)

The way Jones (1988) sees it, in terms of political independence, Georgia saw a net loss of “political and economic autonomy,” while the Abkhaz and Ossetians saw a net gain as the “1920s witnessed ‘national losses’ for the Georgians such as forfeiture of their political and economic autonomy...repression of their national church, [and] increased competition with” Abkhazian and Ossetians who “benefited from from the *korenizatsiya* [indigenisation] programme,” and the ICG report states that “Abkhaz see the 1921-1931 period as the source of their modern day statehood” (Jones 1988, 634; ICG 2009, 4).

Things would be much worse in the 1930’s; in the beginning, Lak’oba (1998b) notes that Abkhazia’s leader successfully, resisted implementing disastrous collectivization programs in his region; Stalin finally gave Abkhazia a choice: implement the reforms or accept ASSR status within the Georgian SSR as the new form of autonomy; the Abkhazian leader accepted the demotion and Abkhazia became part of the Georgian SSR in 1931 (Lak’oba 1998b, 94; UNPO 2009, 4; EURII 2009; ICGAT 2006, 4). The EU report takes care to mention that “Abkhaz historians see this gradual process of downgrading the status of their republic primarily as a Georgian rather than a Soviet policy. Some of them also see it as a ‘gift’ by the Soviet leader Iosif Stalin to Georgia, his native country” (EURII 2009, 67). Cultural autonomy was also a casualty of this era; “Russians and Russian language” began to be promoted at the expense of other ethnicities and languages, and in 1938, all Soviet schools had to teach Russian; even “[a]s Georgia became culturally more Georgian in the Stalin period, the non-Georgian minorities paid a price” (Suny 1994, 258, 282). Furthermore, “promotion of Russian language and culture throughout the ...[USSR] set the limits for the development of national cultures. In each union republic the titular nationality used its position to develop its own version of great-power chauvinism, limiting where it was able the expression of its minorities;” Georgians benefited at the expense of Abkhaz and Ossetians (Suny 1994, 290). Extremely “repressive measures against Abkhaz culture” were enacted beginning in this period (EURII 2009, 67-68). By 1953, Abkhaz as a language was banned from being taught to children, Soviet authorities closed “[a]ll Abkhaz schools and institutions,” “Georgianization” of the Abkhaz language was attempted, and that Abkhaz were forced to accept passports with “Georgian” listed as their nationality (UNPO 2009, 4-5). In addition, “[t]he entire demographic make-up” of Abkhazia shifted: “tens of thousands” of ethnic Georgians, Russians, and others settled in Abkhazia, part of what Abkhaz see as a policy of “Georgianisation” (EURII 2009, 67-68; ICGAT 2006, 4; UNPO 2009, 4-5). At the end of the Stalin era, plans were formed to deport the Abkhaz from their homeland but were never carried out (Suny 1994, 289). Armenians also suffered from discrimination in Georgia during this period (Ibid.).

Suny (1994) notes that “[i]n the quarter-century between 1928 and 1953 Georgia was transformed more fundamentally than in any comparable period in its three-thousand-year history” (Ibid., 269-278, 180). He furthermore points out that

Georgia’s ethnic uniqueness was enhanced by the legacy of the *korenizatsiia* policies. By the early 1950s more people spoke, read, and were educated in the Georgian language than ever before. Georgian national culture was institutionalized in state-sponsored folk dance companies, operas, Georgian-language films, and officially sanctioned literature...The nativization of...institutions gave Georgians the dominant role in a republic that still possessed significant non-Georgian minorities. (Ibid., 281)

By the end of the Stalin era, “[a]ll real political autonomy for the union republics had long since been eliminated in favor of centralized decision-making” (Ibid., 283-284, 289-290).

Suny (1994) looks at the post-Stalin decades as not a product of those times, but of “long-term, underlying dynamics that began in the Stalin years and even earlier,” that “one can describe the last 150

years as the period of ‘re-formation’ of the Georgian nation;” after Stalin, local elites had their own followings and diverged from the Kremlin in a more permissive atmosphere, and “a new nationalism with oppositional overtones was being articulated more and more openly” (Ibid., 294, 296, 301). Vasili Mzhavanadze, a friend of Nikita Khrushchev, took over Georgia after Stalin’s death (Ibid., 301). The Abkhaz and others had schools opened for them and media produced in their languages (Suny 1994, 301-302; Parson 1982, 558). When in 1956 when Khrushchev let the third anniversary of Stalin’s death pass by without ceremony, a crowd of mainly students gathered around the Stalin statue in Tbilisi, spontaneously praising Stalin, but eventually got more riotous; the authorities at first allowing the protests, but then cracked down on the crowd with force, killing several (Ibid., 302-303). Jones (2006) and Areshidze (2007) mark this as a milestone for Georgian nationalism (Jones 2006, 255; Areshidze 2007, 18). Suny (1994) remarks that though a “new society had been imposed on Georgians,” those responsible had also “revitalized” “Georgian national culture;” Georgians as a whole were “cohesive” and well-versed in their “language and history;” their “national awareness” and fears “about the loss of unique ethnicity” bred from past Russian cultural impositions and “modernization...led to a strong resurgence among young people of a commitment to Georgian ethnic identity;” for this new generation of Georgians, ignorant of the extremes of the Stalin era, “his memory was still sacred, and his career represented a great achievement by one of their nation;” de-Stalinization was seen as an insult to Georgians representative of a general pattern and erupted in this protest. (Suny 1994, 303-304)

The years after that incident saw Moscow make further “concessions” to Georgian nationalist desires, but this led to more “Georgianizing;” ethnic Georgians became overrepresented for their overall population in Georgian universities; non-Georgian minorities were underrepresented in proportion to their population, so “[c]learly Georgian control of the local party and republican institutions was not resulting in egalitarian application of Leninist nationality policy, but in officially sanctioned discrimination against minorities within the republic;” consequently, the Abkhaz have a history of petitions and protest rallies, going back through the Stalin era and up until the breakup of the Soviet Union (Suny 1994, 304-305, 314; UNPO 2009, 5; ICGAT 2006, 4). As the years went on after Khrushchev had fallen from power, Mzhavanadze’s regime in Georgia operated with “corruption, inefficiency, and discrimination against minorities” as norms; others noticed, and in the words of Parsons (1982), “Mzhavanadze was able to run Georgia like a personal fiefdom for 19 years from 1953 to 1972” (Suny 1994, 305; Parsons 1982, 554). It was in this period when modern Georgian “dissident” nationalism began in the 1970’s and had as “[i]ts most articulate and active advocates...a small group of students and professional people stimulated by their aversion to the all encompassing corruption around them” (Suny 1994, 308). Prominent in this group was Zviad Gamsakhurdia, a university professor and Konstatine Gamsakhurdia’s son; he and those in his circle realized that Georgian historic treasures were being mal-treated and in 1972 became aware some objects were being pilfered; they raised this to the attention of the minister of interior affairs, Eduard Shevardnadze; the ensuing “investigation led to the wife of First Secretary Mzhavanadze” (Suny 1994, 308-309). Though this scandal was kept from the public, on top of the corruption Moscow had had enough, and after 19 years in power Mzhavanadze was replaced that year by Moscow with Shevardnadze (Suny 1994, 305-309; Thompson 1996, 453). Besides reducing corruption, Shevardnadze’s regime began promoting Abkhaz where before they had excluded (Parsons 1982, 554).

Areshidze, Jones, Suny and Thompson all emphasize 1978 protests against constitutional reform proposals authored by the Kremlin which would have elevated Russian and restricted Georgian in official use were another major step in developing national consciousness, that “for the first time the Georgian public saw and experienced the power of their free action against Soviet totalitarianism” in “protecting their national language through a minor ‘rebellion’” (Areshidze 2007, 18; Jones 2006, 255; Suny 1994, 307-309; Thompson 1996, 451-452). Still, Abkhaz saw the surge of nationalism in ethnic Georgians as a threat, so they asked Moscow for permission to secede from the Georgian SSR and join the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, but this was rejected; in a dramatic scene, Shevardnadze confronted a crowd of 20,000 people in Abkhazia’s main city, Sukhumi, and engaged in a dialogue; as a result,

Moscow eventually started to do more to help the Abkhaz, building a university in their ASSR, starting up an Abkhaz TV station, and sending subsidies that went directly to the population; the Abkhaz also “were granted substantial overrepresentation in the government and in the administration of the autonomous republic;” this, in turn, made the ethnic Georgians living in Abkhazia feel they were being discriminated against; in their view they felt they should “be blamed for misguided Soviet policies,” as “Georgia was a country occupied by a foreign power (Soviet Russia); the fact that ethnic Georgians happened to be at its helm did not make the entire Georgian nation responsible for their errors” (UNPO 2009, 4; EURII 2009, 68; ICGAT 2006, 4; Goltz 2006, 59). Still, by 1988 Abkhaz leaders were again calling for secession, but this would spark a massive reaction from ethnic Georgians, discussed later, that would begin an era of bloodshed for Georgia (Sunny 1994, 321).

Areshidze posits the theory of that the Soviet “system of ethnic autonomies was...in reality...a time bomb that Moscow could blow up at its leisure by pushing the ‘protected’ minorities towards separatism. Thus, this situation gave Moscow a means to weaken and destabilize” Georgia;” Zürcher (2005) echoes this analysis (Areshidze 2007, 22; Zürcher 2005, 99). Castells (1996) claims that “the strong development of nationalism in the post-communist period can be related...to the cultural emptiness created by 70 years of imposition of an exclusionary ideological entity, coupled with the return to primary, historical identity (Russian, Georgian), as the only source of meaning after the crumbling of the historically fragile *sovietskii narod* (Soviet people) (Castells 1996, 24). Eventually all these trends culminated on the Georgian side with the idea that “their further evolution was hindered by the restraints placed on them by the Russians. An attitude arose that, left to themselves, the Georgians could more quickly realize their historical potential;” “the erosion of Marxist ideology within the Soviet Union cleared the way for its replacement” by the forces already pent up even before Stalin and released after him. Released, they “produced an increasingly potent nationalist mood in all parts of Georgian society—and counternationalism among the ethnic minorities within the republic;” this in turn “stimulated a rapid escalation of ethnic politics in Georgia;” “[t]he specific goals of Soviet nationality policy, the rapprochement and eventual merging of nationalities, were further from realization in the 1980s than they had been at any time in Soviet history (Sunny 1994, 313-316, 320-321; Remington 1989, 145).

Sunny (2001) claims that Soviet policy created a tendency for ethnic groups like Georgians and Abkhaz to invent imaginary histories that can bolster “the legitimacy of the nation and particular claims to territory and statehood” while at the same time becoming become “exclusivist” and encouraging “desperate policies of deportation and ethnic cleansing” (Sunny 2001, 895-896). The EU report concludes that in the atmosphere discussed, “no political framework that would have been strong enough to integrate the conflicting national demands” (EURII 2009, 63). Violence, war, and revolution would soon erupt.

Arms (see Parties to the Conflict: Russia, United States)

C. **Parties to the Conflict**

Government of Georgia/Ethnic Georgians

As has already been discussed, as the USSR stagnated towards its collapse, and Georgian nationalism was on a fervent rise; Georgia’s nationalism “was most heavily influenced by the Georgian Orthodox Church...the center of the anti-Soviet movement in Georgia;” Patriarch Ilia II was for Georgian Orthodox what John Paul II was for Polish Catholics (Areshidze 2007, 17-18; Nodia 2005, 45-56). The character of Georgian “liberal nationalism” contained “a belief that Georgians were first and foremost Georgian and not Soviet, that its people were ‘Western’ and had the right to live in an independent country” (Ibid.). Nodia (2005) agrees with Sunny that “Georgians...have defined belonging to a nation in an ethnically exclusivist way. Therefore, Georgian political nationalism was also ethnic” and “left open the question about the status of ethnic minorities within Georgia” (Nodia 2005, 45-56). He continues that

as long as other minorities were not “exclusivist” with their nationalism, such forces were tolerable, but if they were, “violent conflict” could result (Ibid., 46).

Many Georgian nationalists are apprehensive of minorities like Ossetians and Abkhaz having too much autonomy and see this as a threat to Georgia; it was ethnic Georgian protests *against* the Abkhaz request for separation from Georgia in 1989 which sparked the rapid acceleration of Zviad Gamsakhurdia’s nationalist, anti-ethnic minority agenda and “radicalized” Georgian nationalism; it became more belligerent towards perceived threats from minorities, especially Ossetians and Abkhaz (Suny 1994, 317-323; Zürcher 2005, 90). For Devdariani (2005) Gamsakhurdia and his movement “perceived Abkhazia and South Ossetia as simply tools for Russian pressure directed against Georgian independence...concerns of [their] local elites...[were ignored and]...tensions spiraled into violent clashes...[and failed] to see how its own quest for independence challenged the identities of the Abkhazians and Ossetians” (Devdariani 2005, 161).

Jones (2006), seeking to downplay ethnic tensions in favor of economic ones, disagrees that the protests were about Abkhazia and argues they were more about “Georgian independence,” but Jones still describes Gamsakhurdia as “using nationalist slogans to gain authority” and “manipulat[ing] a formerly moderate Georgian populace into a chauvinistic mob; Zürcher maintains with others that the Abkhazian call for secession “led” to the protest (Jones 2006, 257; Zürcher 2005, 89), (Jones 2006, 257). The EU report and Zürcher take care to mention Georgians, especially those in Abkhazia, saw concessions to minorities as too generous, and that this explains the rise of leaders like Zviad Gamsakhurdia (EURII 2009, 69; Zürcher 2005, 89) Clogg (2008) also discusses the concerns of the non-Abkhaz living in Abkhazia, writing that “[t]he predominant fears expressed by the non-Abkhaz population were of being excluded from life in Abkhazia, or of being forced into exile in the event of resumption of hostilities [especially Georgians];” she also noted that the non-Abkhaz “expressed the feeling that while they are considered to be citizens of Abkhazia when outside the region, they are not always treated as such within Abkhazia” (Clogg 2008, 317). Suny (1994) echoes Zverev’s description of Georgian nationalism viewing Abkhaz and others as “guests,” and Georgians also thought that “the Abkhazians has been put up to...[secession] by Moscow” (Suny 1994, 324-326; Nasmyth 2006, 15). Francis describes the Russian dimension in the minds of Georgians in general, saying they “always felt insecure” in terms of Russia, and blamed Russia for the stifling Georgian nationalism; Russia’s activities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia “awoke fears of annexation” after independence (Francis 2008, 3)

Soon after being elected the leader of Georgia in the fall of 1990 within the USSR and seeing Georgia through to full independence, Gamsakhurdia “went steadily toward a more dictatorial posture” and dragged Georgia into ethnic violence; he was deposed in a violent coup by some of his fellow nationalists in December 1991-January 1992 (Suny 1994, 326-328; Areshidze 2007, 20-26; Jones 2006, 256-259). The prolific former Communist leader of Georgia and former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze tried to mediate; he quickly became the next leader, though he was soon brought into a war with the Abkhaz, the results of which would plague him throughout his presidency; still, leading his Citizens’ Union of Georgia party, he was comfortably in power with only weak opposition for years (Areshidze 2007, 26-29; Nodia and Scholtbach 2006, 8-14; Suny 1994, 328-335; Phillips 2008). Shevardnadze is regarded by some as a transitional leader, who staunchly oriented Georgia with, and increased ties to, the West and the U.S.; while increasing Georgian democracy, ensuing Georgia’s survival for the foreseeable future as an independent nation, and keeping together a fragile state after a several wars, he was also the key obstacle to its further democratic development because of corruption and electoral fraud (Areshidze 2007, 26-27, 33, 50; Nodia and Scholtbach 2006, 12-18, 35, 77).

1995 saw the rise of a group of “young reformers” of Zurab Zvania, who was a key ally of Shevardnadze in the election of that year; they included Mikheil Saakashvili and made major gains in developing civil-society through the promotion of NGO’s, tapping into local civil and business elite; these

communities had become dissatisfied with the pace and scope of democratic reform and grew impatient for their own day in power; Saakashvili turned on Shevardnadze and within a few years, swept to power in the Rose Revolution of November 2003, in which blatant vote manipulation and massive protests caused Shevardnadze to resign and Saakashvili's United National Movement party came to power; Saakashvili's charismatic personality emerged as the dominant one after playing an active role in the protests, and in January 2004 he assumed the Georgian Presidency (Nodia and Scholtbach 2006, 15-21; Areshidze 2007, 51-195; Jones 2000, 42-73). "What had appeared as delusionary ideas of crazy NGO activists," writes Areshidze, "had now become a reality (Areshidze 2007, 185). Saakashvili increased his predecessor's Western orientation and "sees 'reunification' [of Abkhazia and South Ossetia] as one of the key priorities of his presidency;" on this issue there was "an unquestionable national consensus" (Nilsson 2009, 98-101; Antonenko 2005, 206; UNPO 2009, 6; Francis 2008, 2; EURII 2009, 7-8, 107-109). At the 2004 UN General Assembly, Saakashvili called South Ossetia and Abkhazia "black holes that breed crime, drug trafficking, arms trading and, most notably, terrorism," framing them as an international threat that must be addressed (EURII 2009, 108)

Saakashvili brought Adjara fully back under Georgian control in 2004 (Nodia and Scholtbach 2006, 22; Nodia, 2005 53-56; Kaeter 2005, 111; EUR II 2009, 11-12). Nodia and Scholtbach state that the "spectacular success" of the Adjara situation "encouraged" Saakashvili to move on the South Ossetian separatists soon after, with far less satisfying results (Nodia and Scholtbach 2006, 22). Regaining control of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are still central to the Georgian government's agenda; Saakashvili is in an unfamiliarly precarious position domestically now after the war with Russia in August of 2008, and what his opponents say are increasingly "authoritarian" measures have come under criticism, but the opposition remains disunited and ineffective:

Areshidze criticized Ghia Nodia, cited elsewhere in this paper, as being biased towards Saakashvili (Areshidze 2007, 165). One report states that "the new Georgian leadership under Saakashvili has demonstrated a willingness to engage in brinkmanship to re-unite the fragmented country" (MAR 2006, par 1). Thomas Friedman (2008), writing for *The New York Times* during the Olympics and the 2008 war, wrote "If the conflict in Georgia were an Olympic event... The silver medal for bone-headed recklessness would go to... Mikheil Saakashvili" (Friedman 2008, par. 1). *The Economist* (2008) calls him "an impetuous nationalist... [who] has led his country in a broadly democratic direction, curbed corruption and presided over rapid economic" and adds that "Mr Putin...dislikes the puckish Mr Saakashvili intensely" (Economist 2008, par. 6-7). Opposition party protests against "his authoritarian tendency" are discussed but the opposition in general is noted as being fragmented and losing its energy, and even they fully support his efforts at reintegrating the breakaway regions (EIU 2009, 15-17; EURII 2009, 8).

Abkhaz Government/Ethnic Abkhaz

Abkhazian nationalism was led by "parts of the intelligentsia (and some high-ranking Communist Party functionaries" and their efforts got the nearly 18% of Abkhazian residents that were actually Abkhaz guaranteed "67 percent of government and party positions" even though ethnic Georgians there were more than double the Abkhaz, and Abkhaz felt their gains were threatened by the surge in Georgian nationalism (Zürcher 2005, 86-89; Areshidze 2007, 27). Antonenko (2005) characterizes the Abkhazians as seeing the struggle against Georgians as "a struggle for national survival and [about] the imperative of preserving their national identity;" but also saw an "historic opportunity to build first a nation and then a state for themselves" (Antonenko 2005, 206). These elites were the Abkhaz governing from the Abkhaz Supreme Soviet, and late in 1990 Vladislav Ardzinba rose to become its leader; under his direction, Abkhazia overwhelmingly voted to stay within the USSR in 1991 even as Georgia boycotted the same vote (Zverev 1996, part III par. 11-16). Gamsakhurdia's movement would drive Abkhaz calls for more minority rights into an independence and secessionist movement (Nygren 2008, 119; Francis 2008, 2).

Jans further echoes the concern that has long been on the minds of the Abkhaz and surmises that “[t]he rigid Abkhaz bargaining stance seems to be fuelled by a strongly held sense of demographical and cultural insecurity...and fear of extinction,” and Clogg articulates the same concerns (Jans 1998, 124; Clogg 2008, 305). Nodia (1998) suggests that the “crisis in Georgia may have created a mood of ‘now or never’ among the ethnic Abkhaz leadership...[that] they may have been driven to the violent outcome” (Nodia 1998, 32). In these times, Georgians had sought to limit Abkhaz rights and the use of Abkhaz as an official language while the Russians had empowered the ethnic Abkhaz (Zürcher 2005, 90). Jans also notes that the “Ardzinba government mainly focuses on unilateral strategies...in an attempt to consolidate the independent status of Abkhazia; the Abkhaz side seems to view continued coexistence with Georgians within Georgia as the least desirable option,” King claiming that “[a]s soon as Shevardnadze fell, the renegade regions appealed to Russia, their long-time protector, to dissuade the new Georgian leadership from making aggressive moves” after the Rose Revolution (Jans 1998, 123; King 2004, 16).

The Minorities at Risk Project (2006) maintains that there is an economic dimension to how Abkhaz view the Georgians, that “Abkhazia's Black Sea coastline features some of the choicest vacation spots in the former Soviet Union, and during Soviet times the Abkhaz believed that tourist revenues which were their proper due were instead diverted into Tbilisi's coffers by greedy Georgian officials,” and that they have asked for \$13 billion in compensation (MAR 2006, par. 5).

In November of 1996, Abkhazia held parliamentary elections that drew widespread condemnation. Chirikba (1997) elaborates: “[t]his decision caused an angry reaction on the part of” the international community (Chirikba 1997, par. 28; Avebury 2006, 165; UNPO 2009, 6). In response, Georgia held its own vote among Georgian IDP's who had fled Abkhazia, “claim[ing] that over 99% of the refugees” rejected the validity of the Abkhaz elections (Chirikba 1997, par. 31). October of 1999 saw Ardzinba reelected President in an uncontested election (ICGAT 2006, 12). The next election for President of Abkhazia would be in 2004; Russia's supported candidate and candidate of outgoing President Vladislav Ardzinba, Raul Khadjimba (Khadzhimba), was “apparently” beaten by Sergey Bagapsh (described as a “strong advocate for independence”), but: “[t]he tense situation in...[Abkhazia] led to the cancellation of the election results by the Supreme Court. After that, the deal was struck between former rivals to run jointly: Bagapsh as a presidential candidate and Khadjimba as a vice presidential candidate” and they won overwhelmingly (UNPO 2009, 6). The last few years, Ardzinba's health had declined so severely that “the door to corruption and behind-the-scenes-maneuvering by self-seeking Russian politicians and business elites” was “opened” (Antonenko 2005, 259). Khadjimba was seen as a pawn of Russia, while the new businessman Sergei Bagapsh was popular enough with the people to be seen, by virtue his popularity, as being better able to resist pressure from both Tbilisi *and* Moscow (Ibid., 261). Abkhazians saw this election as “a chance to vote on Ardzinba's record,” “not a referendum on policy toward Russia or Georgia;” furthermore, Abkhazians resented the Russians' blatant attempt to pressure the election outcome for Khadjimba. Violence was barely averted in the end as Russia brought about the joint-ticket; still, the whole affair was messy, embarrassing, and took months to resolve (Antonenko 2005, 261-269; UNPO 2009, 6; Nygren 2008, 139-140). Bagapsh today maintains he is against settling any more significant numbers of Georgian refugees in Abkhazia (SO 2009, par. 14-17).

Now Abkhazia has a permanent, veto-wielding member of the UN Security Council recognizing it as an independent state, and the next round of presidential elections is in December of 2009, with a businessman and Bagapsh's own Minister for Foreign Affairs” challenging him; some in the opposition are worried about the level of Russian influence in Abkhazia (UNPO 2009, 6; SO 2009, par. 20). Speaking on Abkhazia's relationship with Russia, Bagapsh says, “At the moment, our connections with Russia suffice to allow us to develop our economy” and that “Liechtenstein is dependent on Switzerland, Luxembourg on France. We are all dependent on one another. Georgia is dependent on America; we are on Russia;” Russian money accounts for two-thirds of the Abkhazian budget (SO 2009, par. 3, 19-20)

Other Minorities in Abkhazia

Ascherson (2004) articulates that Armenians and other non-Georgians in Abkhazia support Abkhaz efforts to gain independence, even to the point of fighting on their behalf, and this is echoed by Clogg, the ICG, Antonenko, and also Chirikba, who writes that “Georgian atrocities against civilians forced all non-Georgian[s] ...[into] armed resistance” (Ascherson 2004, par. 7; Clogg 2008, 317; ICGAT 2006, 5; Antonenko 2007, 206; Chirikba 1997, par 12). Some Armenians even formed their own militia, the Bagramyan Battalion, which engaged in ethnic cleansing against Georgians (START 2008, par. 1).

Russia

Historically, Russia has felt that it has given a lot to Georgia; Grant (2009) muses on the Russian and Soviet perspective, quoting a non-Caucasian former Soviet as saying “We gave them so much, and yet, everywhere you looked, you could see what they had done with what we gave them;” for Grant, “[t]he effective message was, they never really understood what we were offering. Or, perhaps, they took what we gave, but they took inappropriately;” in Russian eyes, Russians came with a civilizing cultural mission, but became the “conquering victim” (Grant 2009, ix-xiv). Russia is by far the most dominant power in this region and has been for over 200 years; looking at all the crises and conflicts in Georgia in the 1990’s, Gordadze argues that, “[w]ithout underestimating the local dimensions of each of these crises, it is not difficult to discern the hand of Russia in all of them”(Gordadze 2009, 47). Already discussed are theories that Russians used the Abkhaz as a countermeasure against Georgian nationalism. Russia also feels a need to have troops in former USSR countries like Georgia in order to “limit, or counter, the growing US presence in the space of the former Soviet Union” (Deyermond 2008, 145-146).

During the wars and skirmishes on Georgian territory, “Russian forces openly fought on behalf of the [Abkhaz and South Ossetian] separatists,” and “it became clear that Georgia was also fighting against shadowy elements of the Russian military who supplied the motley Abkhaz forces with weapons, logistics, and even aviation” (Areshidze 2007, 26; Goltz 2009, 25; Devdariani 2005, 163). Russia’s peacekeepers stayed in Abkhazia and still remain (Deyermond 2008, 149-150). For Francis, “Russia’s priorities were twofold: to stabilize its country, especially its unruly Northern Caucasus, and to keep a say in the development of the South Caucasus;” to this end, Russia undermined “anti-Russian regimes” and stayed active in South Ossetia and Abkhazia; “[t]he Rose Revolution in 2003...[was] felt as a credible threat,” the effort to bring NATO to Georgia “on the Southern flanks of the Russian territory...felt as a deeply hostile move (Francis 2008, 304). Ambrosio (2009) claims that Russia has even had a policy of trying “to damage Georgia economically and undermine its government” since 2006 (Ambrosio 2009, 137). Noting that “Georgia’s Western course and especially its prospects for integration into NATO were utterly incompatible with Russian designs for the region,” Nilsson describes how “Russia by all means available sought to apply pressure on the Saakashvili government to moderate its course. Levers applied have ranged from ones related to energy and trade, to exploiting its dominance over Georgia’s separatist regions;” when these failed, “Russia resorted to military force through bombing Georgian territory, downing Georgian reconnaissance drones over Abkhazia,” and invasion in 2008. (Nilsson 101-102)

Writing after that August 2008 war, *The Economist* comments that “The latest fighting in South Ossetia may have been triggered by the Georgians, but it was largely engineered by the Russians, who have, over the years, fanned the flames of the conflict...This was no sudden response to provocation, but a long-planned move,” and notes NATO expansion and western influence as major factors (Economist 2008, par. Par. 4-6). Antonenko notes “Russia’s geopolitical worries grew with the appearance of U.S. military trainers [whose job it was to equip and train the Georgian military] in Georgia,” and Abkhazia’s President Ardzinba warned that this deployment “could lead to an escalation of the conflict with

unpredictable consequences;” in reaction, Antonenko mentions that Russia’s *Duma* voted 235-1 in favor of a motion “condemning” this U.S. military aid to Georgia, “expressing concern that U.S. trained troops might be used in future military operations against Abkhazia” (Antonenko 2005, 232-233).

Russia also recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent countries, views Kosovo as a legitimate comparison, and the West’s position on Russia’s recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states as hypocritical, dismissing all Western criticism; (Goble 2009, 183; Economist 2007). The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) argues that this “response” to Kosovo is “legitimate” (UNPO 2009, 7). Hitchens (2008) dismisses, in turn, Russia’s argument (Hitchens, par. 1). Though Venezuela and Nicaragua have followed suit with recognition, and Russia may be close to getting a number of other small nations to recognize the two breakaway republics, Russia’s relationship is the only significant one Abkhazia has to rely on for now (Economist 2009 par. 6; News from Armenia 2009).

While the rest of the world looked at the 2004 Abkhazian election as illegitimate, it was Russia which brokered a resolution to that crisis. “Russia’s policy regarding Abkhazian elections,” writes Antonenko, “demonstrated how far it was willing to go in attempts to control Abkhazia, and, at the same time, highlighted the real constraints on its ability to exercise effective influence” (Antonenko 2005, 258-259). Russia was also actively trying to make South Ossetians and Abkhazians “Russians” in a legal sense or at the very least, pry both regions away from Georgia before the 2008 war; “[o]n the Russian side, there was a...consensus [among the whole country] that the majority of non-Georgian residents of both territories—with their anti-Georgian and pro-Russian mood and with Russian passports distributed to them by the Kremlin on a massive scale—were to be protected as ‘Russian citizens’ against possible ‘Georgian aggressions’” (EURII 2009, 8; Devdariani 2005, 177). The EU report continues: “The clearest demonstration of this Russian policy of integrating separatist entities of neighbouring states into its own legal jurisdiction was “passportisation”, the awarding of Russian passports and citizenship of the Russian Federation to residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia,” and that Russia gave Abkhazian residents nearly 600 million rubles in pensions (EURII 2009, 19). Abkhazia claims that over 90% of its people have Russian citizenship (EURII 2009, 409; Illarionov 2009, 63).

Russia is also angry with Georgia because Chechen and other militants have attacked Russian military forces in Chechnya and other border regions of the Russian Federation from the border region of Georgia, and Georgia did not give the Russians permission to pursue them into Georgia (Devdariani 2005, 178-190; EURII 2009, 7, 9). Finally, Russia has vital economic concerns in the area, especially when it comes to energy; Jervalidze takes the position that “Russian regional, foreign, and energy policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia played a decisive role in the developments in Georgia. It created the background for...[an] economic collapse and heightened political and social tensions in the Georgian state” (Jervalidze 2006, 2). Russia sees Western attempts to enter Caucasian gas and oil markets “as an attempt to undermine its own geoeconomic position in the wider Caspian region” (EURII 2009, 6).

United States

Nodia and Scholtbach (2006) remark that “the governments of the US and a number of European countries, as well as some private foundations, have had a considerable impact on the development of Georgian political and civil society institutions,” and that this “[o]rientation...has been one of the notable points of consensus in mainstream Georgian politics” as Georgia eyes NATO and the EU (Nodia and Scholtbach 2006, 6). Georgia has been particularly close to the United States in recent years, making itself a resourceful if small ally, and Nilsson (2009) remarks that “Georgia’s primary asset in its relations with the West, apart from being a transit country for Caspian oil and gas as well as for troops to Iraq and Afghanistan, was its image as a rapidly democratizing country in Europe’s Eastern Neighborhood and the prospect of a success story of Western engagement in the region” (Nilsson 2009 101-102). Blank (2009)

describes U.S. policy towards Georgia as “supporting and strengthening Georgia,” and the EU report takes care to detail a history of growing ties between the both (Blank 2009, 116; EURII 2009 33-48).

Nilsson explains that for the Russians, the Rose Revolution was “seen as a political shift orchestrated by the U.S.,” that “the U.S. simply replaced a CIS government that had fallen out of favor with Washington with a new one that would be more decisively under U.S. control, allowing for the enlargement of NATO into what Russia considered its “near abroad;” the 2004 revolution in Ukraine played into this Russian perception of Western encroachment (Nilsson 2009, 101-102). Nilsson then notes the massive USAID and American NGO aid to “Georgia’s party system and civil society,” that “Russia understood these facts as evidence that the political shift in Georgia had been designed by the U.S.,” that this contradicted Russian interests (Ibid.). As far as USAID, the first sentence on USAID’s profile of Georgia reads “Georgia is a key U.S. ally in the war on terrorism and a gateway for energy resources from the region to Europe and beyond” (USAID 2009, par. 1). For Helly and Gogia (2005), Washington’s efforts to increase Georgia’s role in regional energy markets is more about “geopolitical than commercial calculations” U.S. desires “to reduce Moscow’s influence over its southern neighbors” (Helly and Gogia 2009, 277). Gordadze points out that under Shevardnadze, “Georgia moved from a condition of quasi-domination by Russia to become one of the largest beneficiaries per capita of aid from the United States” (Gordadze 2009, 47).

Writing on a particular chapter of the Georgian- Russian conflict, Sawyer (2006) makes several points about U.S. aid: “[American] fingerprints aren’t obvious, but Washington has helped to fuel this crisis—by showering Georgia with cash and praise, by extending the promise of NATO membership, and by standing silent as Saakashvili and his government made ever rasher attacks on Russia” (Sawyer 2006, par. 3-6). For Sawyer, tens of millions in U.S. military aid has spurred a dramatic increase in Georgian military spending and how “brash” Saakashvili has become, and reasons that while has benefitted him politically “at home,” that “[i]f Saakashvili gets the war with Russia he has sometimes appeared to seek, it is the people of his country who will pay the price. But, far away from the fighting, the United States will bear a large part of the blame” (Sawyer 2006, par. 3-6, 16). Nilsson also points out the strong American military support for Georgia (Nilsson 2009, 93).

Georgia even played a role in the U.S. presidential election in 2008, as John McCain made headlines by saying “Today, we are all Georgians” when Russia was invading; Saakashvili quoted him that night at an outdoor rally in Tbilisi, and the line drew intense applause and roars from a “huge” crowd (Rhee 2008, par. 7) Current U.S. Vice-President Joseph Biden visited Georgia in July of 2009 and said that “support for Georgia is ‘a bipartisan sentiment in my country’” and the U.S. has been clear it will not recognize the independence of Abkhazia or South Ossetia (Rozen 2009, par. 7, 9)

Non-State Actors

Throughout the 1990’s and even more recently, an array of ethnic fighters and mercenaries has entered the Abkhazian-Georgian conflict in support of the Abkhaz against the Georgians; some of these were the Abkhaz people’s kinsmen, both “diaspora” Abkhaz and other related ethnic groups, who had fled the Tsar’s armies in the second half of the nineteenth century; some were from nearby similar ethnic groups across the northern Georgian and Abkhaz borders, especially Chechens; also included in this group were mercenaries, “Cossack freebooters and other Slavic soldiers of fortune” (Goltz 2009, 24-26; EURII 2009, 252). Aves (1996) describes how volunteer fighters were recruited and organized for the Abkhaz by sympathizers in “the volatile north Caucasian republics in the Russian Federation,” and Zverev, too, discussed this (Aves 1996, 27; Zverev 1996, part IV par. 7-11).

D. Milestones of the Conflict

The roughly two decades of the conflict are discussed here by these phases: *Prewar Tensions*, *Georgian-Abkhaz War*, *Sporadic Continuation of Conflict*, and *August 2008 War and its Aftermath*.

Prewar Tensions

As has been stated earlier, the Abkhaz secessionist calls at the end of the Soviet and Georgian actions fed each other until March 1989 saw two massive protests by both the Abkhaz, first, and then the Georgians; the Abkhaz protests were resolved peaceably, but in Tbilisi the Soviet authorities became nervous and eventually called in troops in early April; Soviet troops used force on the crowd and “hundreds were wounded and nineteen people were killed” (Zürcher 2005, 89-90; EURII 2009, 4). This radicalized the Georgian movement as noted before and projected Gamsakhurdia into the center of the political scene, with the overall situation deteriorating rapidly; by July, violence erupted between Georgians and Abkhaz in Abkhazia (Suny 1994, 232; Zürcher 2005, 89-90; EURII 2009, 4)

After Gamsakhurdia came to power, and Ardzinba rose to lead Abkhazia, Georgia began hostilities in South Ossetia that lasted for a year-and-a-half, and Abkhazia makes clear its intent to leave Georgia; Georgia leaves the USSR (ICGAT 2006, 4; EURII 2009, 73-74; Zürcher 2005, 92-93). The Georgian National Guard commander, Tengiz Kitovani, stops following Gamsakhurdia’s orders, and as the Abkhaz hold parliamentary elections that same month, overthrows Gamsakhurdia, who flees Tbilisi for the west of Georgia as civil war erupts and drags on until 1993 (ICGAT 2006, 4; Zürcher 2005, 93-94; Suny 1994, 328-329). Georgia ignores a feeler from Abkhazia to discuss outstanding issues of autonomy, then later Eduard Shevardnadze is named the head of an interim Georgian government in March of 1992, agrees to a cease fire with South Ossetia under military pressure from Russia in July, and that same month, as chaos raged in Georgia, Ardzinba declared Abkhazian independence from Georgia (Zürcher 2005, 94-95; EURII 2009, 75-76; Areshidze 2007, 27; Suny 1994, 329). Also in July, pro-Gamsakhurdia militants reportedly captured several Georgian officials and took them into the Gali district of Abkhazia (Zverev 1996, part IV par. 2; Zürcher 2005, 96; ICGAT 2006, 5).

Georgian-Abkhaz War

Kitovani moved his forces into Abkhazia on August 14, 1992, and the “war” between Georgia and Abkhazia ignites; Russian regular and irregular forces come to the aid of Abkhazia, including Chechens and others from the Russian North Caucasus, and this surprises Kitovani’s Georgian forces; (Areshidze 2007, 27-29; Zürcher 2005, 96-96; EURII 2009, 76; Zverev 1996, part IV par. 2; ICGAT 2006, 5) Zürcher argues that “the National Guard’s move on Abkhazia was to a very large extent the action of a private army out for plunder (Zürcher 2005, 103). By October Abkhaz and allies forces took western Abkhazia, and the war dragged on into 1993 (EURII 2009, 76-77; Suny 1994, 329-33). The Russians negotiated a cease-fire in late July of 1993 (the Sochi Agreement), and the UN a month later authorized a United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) to ensure compliance with the cease-fire by all parties (EURII 2009, 76-77). Only a few weeks later the Abkhaz and their allies began an offensive which ejected the Georgians from Sukhumi and the nearly all of Abkhazia while Gamsakhurdia returned to Georgia, with some Russian support, and attacked Georgian forces, trying to overthrow Shevardnadze’s government, who himself had to “flee” Sukhumi as the Abkhaz secured their capital on September 28th, 1993 (Areshidze 2007, 27-28; Zürcher 2005, 96; Goltz 2009, 25-27).

With chaos and fighting in Moscow as the USSR disintegrates, Boris Yeltsin worked out an agreement with Shevardnadze: Georgia would (reluctantly) join the Russian-dominated CIS and agree to Russian military bases in Georgia in exchange for military aid against Gamsakhurdia, whose forces were defeated with the aid of the Russians by the end of 1993 (Areshidze 2007, 27-28; Zürcher 2005, 96-97;

Suny 1994, 331; EURII 2009, 78). Fighting continued in Abkhazia's Kodori Valley until spring 1994, when a full ceasefire and related agreements were reached under UN and Russian auspices; a Russian peacekeeping force, UN observers, and several layers of demilitarized zones separating the Abkhaz and Georgians were the results (EURII 2009, 78; ICGAT 2006, 6-7). During the fighting, 200,000 to 300,000 people, including virtually all of Abkhazia's ethnic Georgians, fled or were driven out of Abkhazia during this conflict, "the most gruesome act of ethnic cleansing in the former Soviet Union" and "the only case of a plurality nationality being ethnically cleansed by a small minority;" as many as 10,000 people were killed (Areshidze 2007, 27-28; EURII 2009, 78-79; Redmond 1994, par. 10; ICGCHG 2008, par. 7).

Sporadic Continuation of Conflict

Russian peacekeepers entered Abkhazia shortly after the war and the uneasy peace remained in place as over the next few years, Russia, the UN, and others attempted to mediate a breakthrough by holding talks between, but these proved fruitless (EURII 2009, 78, 80-84; Antonenko 2005, 220, 223). Though thousands of Georgian IDP's had started "spontaneously" resettling in the Gali region of Abkhazia during the years after hostilities ceased, the cease-fire broke down in May of 1998 in that very region; two Georgian paramilitary groups, with links at some level to the Georgian government, "cross[ed] the cease-fire line and Abkhazian forces...undertook a security operation against them;" as a result, hundreds were killed, much property destroyed, and 20,000 to 40,000 of the IDP's that had resettled fled, though many would later return (Zürcher 2005, 223-224; EURII 2009, 86).

Soon Vladimir Putin came to power in Russia and would engage in Russia's bloody second Chechen war; amid thousands of refugees streaming into Georgia's Pankisi Gorge in the fall of 1999 were also several hundred Chechen militants and even a few "foreign Islamist combatants;" when Georgia refused to let the Russian military carry out missions in the gorge, "Russia accused Georgia of giving Chechen fighters and their al-Qaeda allies safe haven there," (Ambrosio 2009, 133; EURII 2009, 39; Gordadze 2009, 42; Antonenko 2005, 229). Shortly after terrorist bombings in Moscow, in October of 2001, Chechen militants, possibly coming from that gorge, attack an Abkhaz village in Kodori; an UNOMIG helicopter is shot down and Russia accused Georgia of aiding the Chechens; debate ensues, but UNOMIG later found no evidence that Chechens shot down its helicopter (Wines 2001; BBC 2001; EURII 2009, 88; Nygren 2008, 143-145; INA 2001; Antonenko 2005, 230; Helly and Godia 2005, 293-294; Gordadze 2009, 42). After these events, "Putin moved to step up Russia's relations with Abkhazia. Moscow tacitly endorsed the Presidential elections in Abkhazia and a referendum that led to a declaration of Abkhazian independence in October 1999;" in addition, the "passportisation" by Russia in Abkhazia (and South Ossetia) alluded to earlier in this paper was something "Georgia regarded...as a de facto annexation of Georgian territory" (Antonenko 2005, 230-231; Nygren 2008, 134-136).

Saakashvili and Bagapsh came to power; after the resolving the Adjara situation in 2004, Saakashvili called Putin to thank him for a tension-defusing role he had played and Putin reportedly responded by saying "Now remember, we did not intervene in Adjara, but you won't have any gifts from us in South Ossetia and Abkhazia;" by the dawn of 2006, "Russian deliveries of military equipment to...[both regions], with a combined population of about 250,000, exceeded the total military capacity of Georgia, with a population of 4.5 million... [b]y...2008...[both regions] had received at no cost more than twice the military equipment possessed by Georgia" (Illarionov 2009, 55, 60). In January 2006, Putin publicly asked "if somebody assumes that Kosovo can achieve full state independence, then why should we refuse it to the Abkhaz and South Ossetians?" and Russia began to look into a "legal formula" for formal recognition of both regions as independent states (Ibid., 55, 61). Later that year Putin publicly asserted both areas had a right to self-determination (Ibid., 61). That summer Georgian clears a "renegade [Georgian] militia" from Kodori and reestablishing Georgian installs its Abkhazian government-in-exile there; this exacerbated an already tense situation, and Abkhazia cooled to negotiations as a result (ICGAT 2006, Executive Summary; BBC RTAb 2009, par. 17-18; EURII 2009, 89-90).

As Moscow adopted extremely harsh measures against Georgia and ethnic Georgians in Russia, in October Abkhazia “again petitioned the Russian leadership to recognize its independence and to establish an association agreement between the two countries,” while the leader of Russian Chechnya declared that “Chechens were ready to intervene in Abkhazia and South Ossetia if war should break out there;” towards the end of the year, the Russian State Duma officially asked for Russia’s recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as full, independent states (Illarionov 2009, 62-64; EURII 2009, 19-24). A major speech by Putin in February of 2007, in which he denounced U.S. foreign policy attempts to create a “uni-polar” international order, sparked discussions of a “new Cold War;” “[w]ithin two days Mikheil Saakashvili responded with the promise that Georgia would join NATO in 2009 (Watson 2007; Illarionov 2009, 64; Ambrosio 2009, 151). The next month, Russia launched a helicopter gunship attack on Georgian targets in the Kodori region; Georgia responded with a unanimous vote in its parliament to pursue an attempt to join NATO, and the U.S. Senate voted to support both Georgia and Ukraine’s NATO aspirations (Illarionov 2007, 65-66). Abkhaz and Russian units postured themselves aggressively in Abkhazia as time went on (Illarionov 2009, 66; EURII 2009, 17).

Soon after Saakashvili was reelected early in 2008, the declaration of independence by Kosovo from Russia’s ally Serbia, and almost immediate diplomatic recognition by most leading members of the West (including the U.S., U.K., and France), set off a chain of events that would lead to an eruption of violence in Georgia later in the year; March saw Dmitry Medvedev elected Russia’s new president, and the same month, the Russian *Duma* passed a resolution “endorsing...[both Abkhazia’s and South Ossetia’s] requests for recognition;” Georgia’s NATO membership or an outbreak of war, according to an “anonymous Russian diplomat,” were to be seen as pretexts to recognize Georgia’s breakaway regions (Illarionov 2009, 67-67; ICGGRA 2008, 2-3; Smith 2009, 127-132). The EU report and the ICG (2008) note, too, that the Kosovo situation dramatically inflamed the situation and that Russia publicly said its assistance “will continue to have not a declarative, but a substantive character” (EURII 2009, 123).

Russia “cleared the way for overt Russian arms shipments to the Abkhaz separatists,” with the U.S. Ambassador to the UN identifying this as a concern UN (Smith 2009, 129). After a NATO summit, Russian officials state that they “will do everything...to prevent Georgia from joining NATO,” and Russia’s NATO envoy proclaimed that “As soon as Georgia gets some kind of prospect from Washington on NATO membership...the next day the process of real secession of these two territories from Georgia will begin” (EURII 2009, 25; Illarionov 2009, 68; Smith 2009, 125-126). Furthermore, Putin proposed a relationship between Russia and both of Georgia’s breakaway regions which “was virtually identical” to the relationship between Moscow and the federated republics within Russia, a move condemned by EU countries and the U.S.; Georgia’s foreign ministry responded by saying that Russia “has deprived itself of any political, legal or moral right to claim the role of a neutral and unbiased mediator in the conflict resolution process” (Illarionov 2009, 68; ICGGRA 2-3, 2n10; EURII 2009, 27-28). A series of military buildups, major security incidents, and military exercises made the situation worse, and many assumed at this point that war was inevitable, though that summer there was a flurry of diplomatic activity as Saakashvili, the U.S., Germany, the EU, the OCSE, and Finland all made multiple attempts to negotiate a settlement, but Russian, Abkhaz, and South Ossetian leaders “brushed them all aside” (Illarionov 2009, 70-72; ICGGRA 2008, 4-5; EURII 2009, 30-31, 90-92, 201-203).

Both Georgia and the Abkhazia conducted major military exercises in July, with both U.S. and Russia participating with their respective sides (Illarionov 2009, 71; EURII 2009, 195; EURI 2009, 19; Popjanevski 2009, 148). July saw low level violence begin in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as more troops mobilization; in the second half of July, a massive cyber attack was carried out on Georgia’s computer network infrastructure, including major government offices, and “media, communications and transportation companies;” Georgia blamed Russia for the attacks (Illarionov 2009, 72-75; Popjanevski 2009, 145-150; EURII 2009, 203-208; Markoff 2008; EURII 2009, 217-219). Regarding Abkhazia, both

sides claimed the other was preparing for an offensive (EURII 2009, 211). When Saakashvili wanted to reach Medvedev on the phone, the Russians responded with a brusque statement “The situation is not yet ready for the Presidents to talk to each other. Let the Presidents speak later” (Illarionov 2009, 76).

August 2008 War and its Aftermath

The “war” began on August 7th, as Georgia attacked South Ossetia and the Russians poured troops into the area; Georgia assaulted Tskhinvali, the South Ossetian capital, with heavy artillery support but the next day, Russia pushed most of the Georgian forces from South Ossetia’s capital and conducted air strikes near Georgia’s capital, Tbilisi; that same day, Abkhaz forces violated the cease-fire by moving heavy weapons into a restricted zone and began attacking Georgian forces in Kodori; August 9th would see Russia open a second front, with even more troops than its deployments into South Ossetia sent into Abkhazia, where they engaged Georgian forces in Kodori already fighting Abkhaz units and pushed into Georgian controlled territory outside of Abkhazia; Georgian forces in Abkhazia were overwhelmed and forced to retreat, and the Black Sea Fleet blockaded the Georgian coast, reportedly engaged Georgian naval vessels, and landed more troops into Abkhazia (Popjanevski 2009, 152-153; Felgenhauer 2009, 171-174; ICGRGF 2008, 1-3; EURI 2009, 10-11; EURII 2009, 211-213) All total, the Russians may have deployed 15,000 troops and hundreds of heavy vehicles into Abkhazia during the war, and overall, 40,000 troops (EURII 2009, 212-126).

Finally, on August 12th, 2008, a cease-fire was agreed upon and signed a few days later, largely because of the efforts of French President Nicolas Sarkozy, which was based on a return to prewar positions (ICGRGF 2009, 3; EURI 2009, 10-11; EURII 2009, 219). Over 850 people were killed, thousands wounded, and of the 100,000 people who were displaced by the fighting, 35,000 still have not been able to return home a year after the conflict (EURI 2009, 5; EURII 2009, 223-225). The EU report notes the “failure by Russian forces to prevent and stop violations by South Ossetian forces, armed irregular groups and armed individuals before and after the ceasefire in South Ossetia and the adjacent territories” and “widespread campaigns of looting and destruction of ethnic Georgian settlements by South Ossetians” occurred (EURI 2009, 27). In general, Russians have violated the cease-fire by not allowing international monitors into Abkhazia or South Ossetia, and in both regions the Russians have built “forward bases;” they are keeping their troops in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and some parts of Georgia on the borders of the two breakaway regions, which Russia has recognized as independent states as of August 26th, 2008; this is also incompatible with the cease-fire, and alone among nations Nicaragua (September 5th 2008) and more recently Venezuela (September 10th 2009) have followed Russia in recognizing both breakaway republics as independent nations (EURI 2009, 22; EURII 2009, 219, 440; AP 2009; Schwirtz 2009, par. 1).

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