

**“Soft Power” – the New Concept of the Russian
Foreign Policy Toward Georgia
(August 2008 postwar period)**

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From the Editor

***"When your enemy seems stronger than you,
do something that defies his understanding."***

Bernard Werber

"Soft Power", a new trend of contemporary international politics emerged at the end of the twentieth century. This term was first used by an American scientist, professor of the Harvard University, Joseph Nye. In his books, "Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power", New York: Basic Books, 1990 and "Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics", Public Affairs, 2004, Nye fully presented the aforementioned concept.

In contrast to the "Hard Power" theory that uses levers of coercion and intimidation, "Soft Power" is based on mechanisms of cooperation and attractiveness to achieve the desired and prefers intellectual resources. Classic Soft Power consists of three components: values, culture and diplomacy.

Joseph Nye's ideas became popular right away and soon were widely used in foreign politics of USA and other leading Western countries. To a significant point, it was the classic Soft Power that led to the popularization of democratic values and principles in the post-soviet states and caused dramatic changes in the societies of the post-communist countries.

While the West was promoting the values, Vladimir Putin, at that time president of the Russian Federation, proclaimed the collapse of the USSR the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century and declared the strengthening of Moscow's influence on neighbor countries as a main priority of his foreign policy. The doctrine of "Liberal Empire" ment to influence post soviet countries by means of "energy weapons" appeared during the first years oh Vladimir Putin's

administration. A little later, in 2004, president Putin challenged the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation to improve Russia's image on the international level: "On the whole, it is necessary to broaden further the horizons of Russian foreign policy, to seek new opportunities for cooperation, never forgetting preservation and development of positions where in the past we have invested considerable resources...They remember and know us there!"¹

As a result, Russian politicians got a new concern – to build a new image of their own country, acceptable for the West and at the same time strengthen the mechanisms of influence on the neighbor countries. To accomplish this, Kremlin made some changes in its political arsenal. First of all it refers to the introduction of "Soft Power" to the Russian foreign policy. This weapon has a specific "target". As stated in the report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the struggle "for cultural influence in the world calls for more effective efforts by all ministries, agencies and organizations involved in carrying out the external cultural policy of Russia and for mobilizing available resources",² to ensure Moscow's success in this "struggle" and strengthen Russia's informational and cultural impact on the world.

In 2007 "The Humanitarian Dimension of Foreign Policy" was first mentioned in Russian political survey. The document prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia explicitly indicated that culture, education and science, protection of interests of compatriots abroad, consular issues and Russian media are Russian foreign policy implementation instruments.

Moscow continuously applies them to strengthen its influence on neighbor states. For example, "compatriot protection" – that's what allegedly motivated Russia to deploy its armed forces in Georgia. "Concern for compatriots" was the pretext of illegal passportization, artificial change of population structure in Abkhazian and South Osetia as well as occupation and annexation of part of Georgia's territory.

Governmental organizations as well as state budget of the Russian Federation are used for purposes of Foreign Policy "Humanitarian Dimension". Russian media along with seemingly public organizations such as "Russkiy Mir" foundation are also engaged in the implementation of "Soft

¹ http://archive.kremlin.ru/appears/2004/07/12/0000_type63374type63378_74399.shtml

² The Foreign Policy and Diplomatic Activities of the Russian Federation in 2008 – page 121
http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/itogi/B286E140E4B7E48AC325752E002DEF65

Power”. Such organizations are financed by federal budget and therefore are commissioned by the state. The goals and objectives of their work are reflected in the basic documents of Russia's foreign policy, such as directions in foreign policy, annual reports of the foreign ministry, compatriot protection state program etc.

In one of his articles Vladimir Mukomel, head of division at Institute of Sociology at Russian Academy of Sciences, Director of Centre for ethno political and regional researches, writes that “Immigrants are an important resource of foreign policy pressure on their country of origin. Introduction (or the threat of introduction) of visa requirements, naturalization of citizens of the unrecognized states, the initiation of negotiations on readmission, holding conventions of the citizens of other States on the eve of elections in their countries, the persecution of indigenous peoples of neighboring states on the territory of Russia (including their own citizens) has become commonplace tools of Russian foreign policy in post soviet space.”³

The mechanism of “Soft Power” is well developed in Russian research centers. Moreover, as a worthy successor of the USSR, Putin’s Russia uses achievements of former Soviet propaganda machine to a full scope and exploits full arsenal of “Soft Power” enriched by this experience in neighboring countries such as Baltics, Moldova, Ukraine and others. Lately it is practiced more and more actively in Georgia.

On September 25, 2008 (In a few weeks after the occupation of the Georgian territory) Prime Minister Putin gave a “green light” to exercise Soft Power in Georgia. “We should develop good relationships with the cities in Georgia. It would do no good to leave Georgia to nationalists and irresponsible people”.⁴ After the war Russian President, Prime Minister and other high ranked officials repeatedly expressed their “warm feelings” toward Georgian, Abkhaz and Ossetian people, but taking into consideration actual results of the Kremlin policy, this “sentimentalism” radically differs from the true desire of future cooperation.

What is Kremlin “Soft Power”? How is it different from traditional version of Soft Power? How is it used by Moscow officials to their advantage and is this “export of values” or not?

³ http://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_10942

⁴ <http://www.premier.gov.ru/eng/visits/ru/6068/events/1975/>

This book will cover the Kremlin “soft Power” interpretation. We’ll discuss every trend of Russian “SoftPower” used in regard to Georgia; describe their mechanisms of action, results of their influence and future threats.

Forthright we assert that the authors of this paper are against any manifestation of xenophobia and respect any nation or nationality. Especially this work is not aimed against any people of peoples. Our objective is to tell the difference between values and actions against the State interests of Georgia, expose the risks that might be carefully “wrapped” but in perspective seriously dangerous not only for the peoples living in Georgia including Abkhazs and Ossetians but in general for the statehood of Georgia as well.

We would like to express our gratitude to the Konrad Adenauer Foundation for providing greatest support in this research. This project was published with direct support and assistance of this Foundation.

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The Main Vectors of Russia's Caucasian Policy

“There are regions in which Russia has privileged interests. These regions are home to countries with which we share special historical relations and are bound together as friends and good neighbours. We will pay particular attention to our work in these regions and build friendly ties with these countries, our close neighbours”.⁵ This is an excerpt from Dmitry Medvedev's interview of August 31, 2008. South Caucasus and therefore Georgia is on the most important place in this list of “privileged interests”. Gaining control over this region is one of the main objectives for the official Moscow. Kremlin is still “healing” over the “easy loss” of Baltics and makes every effort to prevent the recurrence of similar precedent. Especially so with regards to Georgia which due to its geopolitical location is a “key to Caucasus”. Therefore any move in that direction beyond the framework of Russian “privileged interests” is considered as a direct threat to Russia's national security.

“This was the only response available to us. Otherwise, we would have no longer respected ourselves; we would have lost the Caucasus, and, ultimately, would have lost Russia itself. I think I do not need to prove to you this simple truth: Russia can either be big and strong, or it will cease to exist. This morsel will prove too tasty to resist, our lands and our natural resources will attract too many envious glances, all our capacities will be sought after. The world has not become any easier, but another force has emerged that is capable of maintaining order in the world. And perhaps that

⁵ http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/08/31/1850_type82912type82916_206003.shtml

is the principal lesson of the Caucasian War”.⁶ These words of Dmitry Medvedev give the clear view of Russia’s genuine “exclusive interests” in Georgia and Caucasian region.

Regrettably the strategy of national security of the Russian Federation clearly demonstrates that to Moscow security is primarily defined by establishing influence on neighboring former Soviet countries.

In the initial period of the USSR’s collapse it was obvious that Russia would oppose all attempts of North-Atlantic Alliance to expend its infrastructure further East with all available resources and would have to fight with the West and primarily with the USA for the Caucasus region. Even in the 90-es of the last century it was clear that Moscow was striving to drive out so called “non-regional players” from Caucasus. Although Russia was short of “positive” levers from both ideological and economic point of view, it had its “negative” advantage – provoking of confrontation. This advantage above all triggered armed conflicts in South Caucasus and particularly in Georgia.

Georgia did not turn into a strong ally for Russia. For that reason Russia facilitated problems in Tskhinvali (1991) and Abkhazia (1992) regions. After ethnic wars Russia ascertained itself there through the peacekeeping forces and after 2008 August war occupied the abovementioned regions.

Today Russia maintains control in Caucasus by means of the mentioned mechanisms. According to many analysts, the August war was one of the episodes of the USA-Russia rivalry.

Besides military policy factors Russia’s policy is concentrated on the issue of controlling energy resources and transit routs. Russian economy depends mainly on sale of natural resources, but raw materials are much more than merely a component of economy for Russia. This factor is of a strategic meaning for Russia for advantageous political relations with the rest of the world. As anticipated, attaching such a great importance to the issue of energy resources had a crucial impact on Russia’s policy toward Georgia.

It must be also taken into consideration that Russia has serious problems in its Southern part (North Caucasus). Since mid 90-es practically nonstop fighting goes on between federal forces and the rebels. Only the Autonomous Republic of North Ossetia is more or less positively minded

⁶ http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/09/30/1359_type82912type82913_207068.shtml

toward Russia. Despite the brutal violence, especially in the Chechen Republic, the Western countries are not loyal to the North Caucasian fighters because of the latter's obvious ties with the radical Islamic movements and active use of terrorist methods. Russia succeeded in creating marionette regimes in Caucasian republics including Chechnya (Ramzan Kadyrov).

Therefore Russia's policy toward Georgia is not limited only by preventing the opposing military block coming closer to its borders or by interest in controlling alternative corridor of transit of the energy resources. It's principally important to control the rear of the military actions taking place on its territory (North Caucasus).

This was the reason why Russia started to make its way actively into Georgia in the beginning of the 19th century. First it incorporated Georgia into the Russian Empire (1801) and after a short period of independence (1918-1921) Georgia, along with Azerbaijan and Armenia was occupied by Soviet Russia and incorporated into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). From that same time Russia's interests in controlling the energy-rich Caspian Sea region and transit routes became determined.

Practically, after the August 2008 war with Georgia, by de facto annexation of the territories, Russia managed to forcefully implement certain provisions of the National Security Strategy: created unresolvable problem to the prospect for Georgia to become an independent player in global systems of energy resource transportation; Georgia encountered problems with the membership in North-Atlantic Alliance and European Union.

Russia also has effective levers of influence on Armenia and Azerbaijan. Following the occupation of Nagorny Karabach and surrounding areas, Armenia is isolated from the outer world by Azerbaijan and Turkey; it's cut off from all regional energy projects and in permanent expectation of revenge from Azerbaijan; the only way for cargo to make through is via Georgia. Armenia receives Russian gas through the transit gas pipeline running through Georgia. Significant part of its state budget is filled by prosperous citizens living abroad, but in spite of the active lobbying of the latter, Armenia is unable to resolve security issues. Relations with Iran are underdeveloped and economically insignificant. Therefore Armenia is completely dependent on Russia. Armenia, as well

as Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Belarus is a member of Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). This military-political treaty was initiated by Russia and alongside the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is one more mechanism of influence on post-soviet space.

Taking into account political situation and energy-dependent economy, Azerbaijan treasures loyal relationship with Russia. Russian companies are involved in Azerbaijan based International energy corporations. At the same time Russia is Azeri energy resources transit partner. Most importantly, together with US and France, Russia is a powerful member of Minsk Group, created for Nagorny Karabach conflict resolution. Russia is also a military “patron” of Armenia (Gyumri base); this is one more factor for Azerbaijan to keep steady relations with Russia. In case Moscow’s influence expends in Georgia, it will be Azerbaijan’s turn to become a hostage of Russian isolation. After that Caspian basin and Central Asia regions will actually turn from theoretical into actual zones of Russian “privileged interests”.

Tengiz Pkhaladze

The Concept of Russian “Soft Power” and Main Objectives in Georgia

In one of the articles Dmitri Trenin, director of the Carnegie Moscow Center writes that anction policy toward Georgia failed and as a result Georgia moved further away from Russia - not only politically but also culturally. The expectation that a few years later Georgians will "Come to their senses" and, like Ukrainians will elect a government that will go toward Moscow, might be erroneous. It is time to change the approach to the Georgian issue. Instead of making Georgians unwitting hostages of of the Russian leadership relations with Mr Saakashvili, it is necessary to

increase Russia's attractiveness in the eyes of Georgian society. In other words, "Hard Power" should be changed to "Soft Power".⁷

Russian experts were not the only ones trying to shape an image of goodwill. Kremlin leaders were trying as well. On September 16, 2009 Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin wished happy birthday to Yevgeny Primakov and surprised everyone by ordering Primakov to consolidate Georgia. There are no matters that we can not solve – said Putin – so deal with this matter. Russian Premier made this statement publicly and added that he understands very well that all this will go beyond this room. Moreover, he counts on this.⁸

The environment where these words were spoken is also very important. Many renowned Moscow-based Georgians attended that party. After Putin's speech the hall was filled with tunes of Revaz Lagidze's "Tbiliso"! However it must be said that such statements are never made "by accident" and Yevgeny Primakov is not a person who takes assignments merely for "PR" and publicity, especially on his birthday party!

Putin's abovementioned statement on "consolidating Georgia" is a clear illustration of Soft Power's "Russian interpretation". On one hand Russian Prime Minister lets everyone, including the West, to hear that he has "constructively" motivated toward Georgia and is ready for the dialog and on the other hand he stresses his "omnipotence" – "there are no matters we can not solve" and we'll take away or give back your territories whenever we please.

Following August 2008, Russian officials often talk about "new relations" with Georgia. Russia strives to create an image of constructive partner and to convince international community of its humanity and willingness of good neighborly relations. Obviously there are far-reaching goals. More than once Russian Federation has openly asserted its ambition to become main artist and architect of the new European security system. President Medvedev has presented his concept on this topic in 2009. However this initiative has not yield desired response as yet. The West can not accept a country that has annexed a territory of the neighboring country as an architect of the new European security system.

⁷ <http://www.carnegie.ru/publications/?fa=41353>

⁸ <http://www.gazeta.ru/column/rynska/3287611.shtml>

So, changing its image in regard to Georgia is an important tactical objective for Kremlin that will facilitate accomplishment of strategic goals.

What are the mechanisms of Kremlin “Soft Power” implementation toward Georgia today and what might they be in the nearest future? Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation singles out several mechanisms of humanitarian Foreign-Policy Orientation⁹:

- Protecting the Interests of Overseas Compatriots;
- Consular Issues;
- Human Rights Issues;
- Cooperation in Culture, education and Science.

All the abovementioned along with information support are brought together in the Moscow foreign policy diplomatic arsenal. Consequently, Foreign Ministry, as well as “Rossotrudnichestvo” (Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation), state institutions of education, science and culture, research centers and public organizations controlled by Kremlin (for example “Russkiy Mir” Foundation, “Moskovskiy Dom Sootchestvennitsa” etc.) and media resources are actively involved in implementation of set objectives.

Ideological platform from which Russia attempts to create a new image is very interesting. First of all it is the idea of “Russian world”. This formulation was first voiced in 2007 at the annual message of the president to the Russian Federal Assembly: “This year, Russian Language Year, is a good time for us to remember once again that Russian is the language of a historical fraternity of peoples, a true language of international communication. The Russian language not only preserves an entire layer of truly global achievements but is also the living space for the many millions of people in the Russian-speaking world, a community that goes far beyond Russia itself”¹⁰. Within two months from this statement on June 21, 2007 by decree of Vladimir Putin a new foundation was set up – “Russkiy Mir” – the official founders of which are the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Culture of

⁹ http://www.mid.ru/Brp_4.nsf/arh/5837BBE2727D8C3DC32576E9003AD888?OpenDocument

¹⁰ http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2007/04/26/1209_type70029type82912_125670.shtml

the Russian Federation. The main objectives of this organization are “formation of favorable public opinion for Russia”, and popularization of “Soft Power” in general.¹¹

Several theoretical schools were established to identify the nature of “Russian World”. Ph.D in History, Executive Director of the “Russkiy Mir” Foundation, Mr. Vyacheslav Nikonov singles out three directions¹²:

- Geopolitical, represented by Alexander Dugin and Vadim Tsymbursky. They developed a concept called the "Island of Russia." It suggests isolation from the world, an alliance of post-Soviet states that will provide Russia with security and sovereign position in Eurasia. This concept emphasised civilizational identity of Russia in opposition to the policies of Peter the Great with his desire to merge Russia with the western world.
- Geoeconomic represented by Peter Shchedrovitskii and Alexander Neklessa. They talk about "Russian geo-economic world, which consists of a huge number of Russian Diasporas, including those working in the field of high technologies. Reliance on these Diasporas will help Russia to connect to the technological, financial resources of the West, to integrate with political and cultural core of Western civilization, which will strengthen country's position in the global economy and politics. Ideological characteristics of this direction can be express by the formula: **Speak Russian=Think Russian=Act Russian.**
- The third school - geo-cultural paradigm, represented by the works of Sergei Gradirovsky and Boris Mezhev. According to this direction, the goal of the Russian world - Russia's integration with the “source countries” of migration flows, located mainly in the former Soviet Union. In this sense, Russia must create a community on the principle of the British Commonwealth of Nations or the Association of Ibero-American States, or Francophone Community of Nations.

As stated by Vyacheslav Novikov, “Russkiy Mir” Foundation exercises pieces of guidelines from all these theoretical schools alongside generating personal concept of the “Russian World”. According to this concept, if within the country “Russian” most often means the ethnic and cultural identity, beyond country borders the notion of "Russian" takes a new meaning of above-ethnicity,

¹¹ <http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/ru/fund/about>

¹² <http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/ru/analytics/article/news0013.html>

superethnicity and in a certain sense of civilization. And Russian world is “Russia plus Russians abroad” it “is a civilization and as a civilization it is larger than ethnic groups and nations and territories, religions, political systems and ideological biases¹³”.

As seen from the abovementioned these concepts are aimed at implementation of objectives set in strategic documents of Kremlin, in particular, they are more doctrines of power strengthening in the post Soviet space than theories of common values. These concepts were developed for the implementation of “real policy” of Moscow. For Russia to “once again begin to smile politely, not mockingly” (Sergey Karaganov)¹⁴ Russia is deficient of main system of values, so characteristic for the Soft Power concept by Joseph Nye. Novikov himself says with regret that they have no ideology that they could offer the world.¹⁵

So, Russian “Soft Power” is one of the official Moscow’s state policy tools aimed to serve interests of Kremlin and Russian ruling elite, rather than to spread values in general. Once again we’ll borrow the words of Vladimir Putin: “Leadership should always be backed with effective action and effective policy. The prime task still remains to protect the rights and interests of our co-citizens and our fellow-countrymen in CIS and the Baltic countries. It is also time to start establishing in Commonwealth countries large information and cultural centres for work with expatriates.”¹⁶

Thus, speaking about the new image of Russia, Russian “Soft Power” and its individual components, we must always bear in mind main objectives of the main creators of the aforementioned ideology.

¹³ <http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/ru/analytics/article/news0013.htm> |

¹⁴ http://www.svip.ru/live/news.asp?n_id=24659

¹⁵ <http://www.russ.ru/Mirovaya-povestka/Komponentov-myagkoj-sily-u-Rossii-nemnogo>

¹⁶ http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2004/07/12/1323_type82912type82913type84779_74425.shtml

Chapter I. Diplomatic Activities of the Russian Federation with Reference to Georgia

Occupied Territories

After August 2008 war the key objective of the Russian Foreign Policy turned out to be the validation of the necessity of Russian military aggression in Georgia, legalization of their actions on the occupied territories, “settling” on those territories, winning of international support in recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and Ossetia and to present Georgia to the international community in the image of unstable and aggressor country. Moscow began the “Settling” of the occupied territories by “setting” a legal framework. On August 26, 2008 Moscow recognized independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, thus roughly breaching previous international obligations. Among them Saakashvili-Sarkozy-Medvedev six point agreement, signed by Russia itself two weeks prior to the fact of recognition (August 12, 2008). On September 9, 2008 Moscow established “diplomatic relations” with Sukhumi and Tskhinvali by exchanging Diplomatic Notes and on September 9, 2008 signed with them an agreement on “friendship and cooperation”. After that state border protection and military sphere agreements were signed. In official Moscow’s true belief those agreements would have “contributed to strengthen the safety of not only these

republics, but the safety of the whole region”. Overall in 2008-2010 Moscow and so called Abkhaz and South Ossetian “independent states” have signed roughly 30-30 “intergovernmental, interstate and inter-departmental documents”.¹⁷ The main point of this “legal framework” was to justify the occupation and annexation of the Georgian territories by Russia and to legalize further colonization of those territories.

Russia and de facto authorities of the occupied territories even exchanged “diplomatic missions”. “Embassy” of Russia to Abkhazia was opened on May 1, 2009,¹⁸ “Embassy” of Abkhazia to Russia was open in Moscow on May 17, 2010¹⁹ and “Embassy of South Ossetia” to Russia was opened in 2009.²⁰ As for the Russian “diplomatic mission” to Tskhinvali it is also functioning²¹ but to create a better working environment, by Vladimir Putin’s instruction, a new diplomatic complex is being built for the Russian “Embassy”. This compound will consist of three story office and six story residential buildings. Construction of the complex is scheduled for completion by mid-2012.²²

At the same time “bilateral diplomatic relations” is developing with great intensiveness. Visits of Eduard Kokoity and Sergei Bagapsh to Kremlin are, in fact, taking place on a regular basis. The main meetings are held in the Russian Foreign Ministry, Administration of the President, Cabinet of Ministers and other Russian Government structures as well as in Moscow Institute of International Relations, Russian Patriarchate and rarely they have meetings with Dimitri Medvedev and Vladimir Putin.²³ There is no need to talk about trips to Russia of other members of “Government” of the occupied regions. If we study these “visits” more closely (and this is a topic for a different research) it becomes apparent that their contents and character are more like visits of regional-level “chinovniks” to the Soviet Union Central Committee of the Communist Party rather than diplomatic relations of independent countries.

¹⁷ http://www.mid.ru/Brp_4.nsf/arh/5837BBE2727D8C3DC32576E9003AD888?OpenDocument

¹⁸ <http://www.interfax.ru/society/news.asp?id=77530>

¹⁹ <http://www.newsru.com/russia/17may2010/abhazposol.html>

²⁰ <http://osembassy.ru/ru/>

²¹ <http://www.rfsosetia.mid.ru/>

²² <http://cominf.org/node/1166484231>

²³ To learn more about the chronology of the visits visit. <http://www.mfaabkhazia.net/ru/russia> ; <http://www.mid.ru/ns-reuro.nsf/strana?OpenView&Start=1&Count=30&Expand=1#1> and <http://presidentrso.ru/>

Sukhumi and Tskhinvali are as well visited by high and senior-rank delegations of the Russian Federation. For example, Dmitri Medvedev's visits to Abkhazia (August 8, 2010)²⁴ and South Ossetia (July 13, 2009);²⁵ Vladimir Putin's visit to Abkhazia (August 12, 2009).²⁶ We must also mention the activity of the Russian Patriarchate. Eduard Kokoity participated in several events held by the Russian Patriarchate and had several meetings with the high rank representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church.²⁷ As for Sergey Bagapsh, he had a personal meeting with Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. Apparently Russian Orthodox Church pays special attention to Abkhazia and information on the Russian Patriarchate site speaks for itself.²⁸

Visits of other Russian officials, well-known government and public figures to occupied regions have become routine. In fact, the numbers of these visits turned into statistical data.

Moscow's efforts in international recognition of independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia must be also mentioned. International community immediately took a principal position regarding occupied territories of Georgia and repeatedly addressed Moscow with appeals for deoccupation of the territory. Despite the pressure and blackmail Moscow failed. Occupied regions were not recognized as independent countries. But instead Kremlin achieved "tremendous diplomatic success" with assistance of Nicaragua, Venezuela and Nauru. Nicaragua was the first after Russia to recognize the "independence" of South Ossetia and Abkhazia on September 3, 2008.²⁹ One year later, on September 10, 2009 it was joined by Venezuela.³⁰

As for the Republic of Nauru, it recognized the "independence" of occupied territories in December 2009. It is noteworthy that this event was preceded by Nauru government appeal to Moscow for 50 million credit in exchange for Abkhazia and South Ossetia "recognition". After several months of discussion Kremlin considered requested amount priceworthy and closed the deal.³¹

We think that given examples clearly demonstrate actual objectives of Russian diplomacy and Kremlin policy regarding Georgia. The only kind of international relations Moscow accepts are

²⁴ <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/744>

²⁵ <http://news.kremlin.ru/news/4778>

²⁶ <http://premier.gov.ru/eng/visits/world/6125/events/4736/>

²⁷ <http://www.patriarchia.ru/search/?text=%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B9%D1%82&x=0&y=0>

²⁸ <http://www.patriarchia.ru/search/?text=%D0%B1%D0%B0%D0%B3%D0%B0%D0%BF%D1%88&x=0&y=0>

²⁹ <http://www.regnum.ru/news/1050253.html>

³⁰ <http://www.newsru.com/russia/10sep2009/chavez.html>

³¹ <http://www.runewsweek.ru/country/31746/>

those that do not contradict with its imperial desires and do not interfere with “setting” on the occupied Georgian territories. Given these circumstances, international missions with mandate to access and operate on those territories only caused discomfort to Kremlin. Hence the efforts to block mandates of OSCE and UN Missions.

Tornike Sharashenidze

Russia’s Policy in the OSCE

OSCE Observer Mission has been operating in Georgia since 1992 with the main objective to facilitate peaceful resolution of conflict in Tskhinvali region. After the events following the war of 2008, and in particular after Russia’s recognition of so called “independence” of South Ossetia and Abkhazia it became clear that Kremlin did not need international organization on its occupied territories, the more so because after the war the West had all reasons to extend the mission on the territory of South Ossetia (before the war there were only nine OSCE observers and they could not prevent the beginning of the conflict).

Russia could tolerate international organizations on occupied Georgian territories only if they somehow acknowledged “new realities” – independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This attitude has been clearly reflected in Russian policy toward OSCE Mission in Georgia and as a result the Mission was terminated. It should be noted that Russia had already had similar experience.

In 2005 Russia blocked the extension of OSCE Georgian-Russian Border Observer Mission to Georgia (Chechnia segment) regardless of the fact that this Mission clearly has played a positive role in defusing tensions between Georgia and Russia during the massive flow of Chechen refugees at the time of Russia’s second military campaign. Russia accused Georgia of sheltering not only civilian refugees but armed Chechen “boeviks” as well in Pankisi Gorge.

The conflict between Russia and OSCE continued with expulsion of ODIHR (OSCE election observation body) before the December 2007 Parliamentary and April 2008 Presidential elections in Russia. The climax of expulsion was speech by Putin, when he advised OSCE “to teach their wives to cook cabbage soup”.³²

Russia’s dissatisfaction and irritation started on OSCE Istanbul Summit back in 1999 when Russia was compelled to sign the treaty under which it was obliged to withdraw military bases from Georgia and Moldova. From that time on Russia has practically withdrawn all bases from Georgia if we do not count Gudauta (Abkhazia) base, which was never fully accessible for international observers. Obviously, after “new realities” emerged, accessing Abkhazia and South Ossetia has become much more impossible for the observers.

The process of OSCE blocking in South Ossetia region started back at that time, when Moscow refused to allow OSCE monitors access to the conflict zone after they temporarily left the region. However, Russia allowed twenty additional observers into Georgia, but then again, these observers still remained outside South Ossetia in order to control Georgian side (on every international forum Russia periodically expressed concern that Georgia was “arming again”).

The mandate of OSCE Mission to Georgia was to expire January 1, 2009 and Russia drafted its own version of extension of the Mission, which, as it was clear beforehand, would be unacceptable to Georgia.

According to the Russian version, along with the Mission to Georgia, the Mission to South Ossetia was to be open as well – “Draft Decision Mandate of OSCE Mission in Tskhinvali”. Under Russia’s proposal, the OSCE had to officially “take into account the substantial political changes in the region since August 2008” in establishing a new mission to South Ossetia. The extension-blocking of this Mission should not have been prerogative of Tbilisi and in general this Mission should have been completely separate from the OSCE Mission to Georgia.

Russian version mentioned South Ossetia as “the host country” and introduced the notion of a “border between Georgia and South Ossetia.” The mandate required the OSCE’s Mission to conduct “all activities in coordination with the host country” and to “maintain contacts with the

³² <http://www.zavtra.com.ua/news/mir/62644/>

Russian military contingent.” The latter, in case of fulfillment would have legitimized the presence of Russian military presence in South Ossetia under provisions of OSCE. Legalization of de-facto authorities has been also thought through: the Mission had to assist South Ossetian authorities in handling interethnic relations.

Besides that, it was South Ossetian authorities (and not the OSCE) that had to choose mission’s staff (nine members including the chief of Mission). South Ossetian authorities were also entitled to cap the number of the mission’s locally hired auxiliary personnel. Moreover, the mission’s detailed organizational provisions were to be specified in a separate agreement between the OSCE and the de-facto authorities of South Ossetia. The mandate itself would be subject to prolongation at six-month intervals upon the consent of the same “host country”. As a result, besides its veto power within the OSCE Moscow was acquiring a new lever of impact on the OSCE – marionette government of South Ossetia.

At time of this proposal Russia brought up cases of Macedonia and Kosovo. Russian Representative to OSCE Anvar Azymov noted that it would not be the first time the organization opened offices in countries (besides South Ossetia Russia demanded to send the Mission to Abkhazia as well) that are not recognized by all its participating states.³³

It must be noted that Russia also has showed a gesture of goodwill authorizing the new mission to “facilitate the establishment of favorable conditions for safe and dignified return of refugees.” However it was obvious that such a return was doomed to failure after destruction of ethnic Georgian villages. In addition, Moscow uses the word “refugees,” in order to avoid the term “internally displaced persons,” thus once again emphasizing the “new reality” – birth of a new country – where the refugees had to return from another country (Georgia).

Since that version turned out to be unacceptable, OSCE started to work on a status-neutral Mission. Until that time (June 30, 2009) Russia agreed to leave a twenty-member Mission on the Georgia-controlled territory. Eventually OSCE chair country – Greece – developed a version of status-neutral mandate according to which there should have been twenty two observers on the

³³ <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav122208a.shtml>

Georgian side and eight observers on South Ossetian side with the right to cross administrative borders.

In response to that Russia stated that such movements needed to be approved by the “host country”. Yet again, Greek version did not reflect “new realities”. Azimov called Greece to work more actively with South Ossetian authorities” on the mandate issue and warned that “if the mission issue was not settled by June 30 and “If Russia’s concerns remained unheeded”,³⁴ Russia would terminate the OSCE presence in Georgia as a whole, which was exactly what happened. Though, it did not stop Russia from accusing Georgia and Georgia’s Western partners in the termination of the OSCE Mission.

At the same time Russia was once again criticizing the West for arming Georgia and raising the alarm at the restrengthening of the “Georgian military regime”. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Karasyn noted at that time that rallies of Georgian opposition indicated on “systemic failure of current Georgian state mechanism”.³⁵ So, Russia clearly indicated that the West should not go up against Russia and in general, it was not worth it to bother about Georgia with the government that “did not deserve support” of its people.

Apart from that, Russia tried to use the war with Georgia for further discrediting OSCE and for reconsideration of post Cold War status quo in general. Russian officials openly criticized OSCE because that latter failed to prevent “Georgian aggression in South Ossetia”.

On the OSCE Ministerial Lavrov criticized the organization of 1999 Yugoslavia bombing (OSCE could not prevent that either). He also criticized ODIHR³⁶ for dividing member states into “first and second rate” countries³⁷ thus underlining their inequality. Lavrov also noted that Russia truly does not want OSCE to get weaker and brought up meetings between the President of Azerbaijan and Armenia arranged by Russia, as a step toward conflict resolution.

Despite criticizing the OSCE, Russia took every effort to use this organization against Georgia. In January 2009 Russia demanded to inspect units of Georgian Armed Forces under the provisions of

³⁴ <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav022309a.shtml>

³⁵ <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav022309a.shtml>

³⁶ www.osce.org/item/40834.html

³⁷ http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/2fee282eb6df40e643256999005e6e8c/09e3fadbb7882a2bc32573a2006b45f8?OpenDocument

confidence and security-building measures document signed in Vienna in 1999. Georgia used a force majeure right substantiating it with the reason that Russia was failing to fulfill Sarkozy-Medvedev agreement and denied Russia access to the units.

And finally, the most important and radical post 2008 war proposal of Russia – to build a new architecture of European security - still involved OSCE. According to this project, countries are prohibited to use force against each other. In addition, one country is not allowed to increase security at the expense of other countries (this provision can be used to block the expansion of NATO).

No state or group of states should have an exclusive right to security guarantees in Euro-Atlantic space (again, NATO limitation). Other topics of this project are fight against transnational crime and terrorism and prevention of conflicts. This proposal of Russia can be summarized as follows:

- Russia has told the rest of the world that it is “satisfied” by 2008 territorial acquisition and now offers everyone peace;
- Russia believes that since it has won the war with Georgia and therefore has blocked the expansion of NATO, the post Cold War status quo must be revised and the role of NATO must be limited.
- Russia is taking a role of Europe’s new peacekeeper and consequently has an ambition of leadership in Europe.

Termination of UN Observer Mission

Russia was not speeding up the termination of the mandate of UN Observer Mission. On September 8, 2008, under solicitation of the French President, Russia and Georgia agreed on a number of regulations on implementation of the Plan for resolving the situation, adopted on August 12 of the same year.

At the same time Russia has agreed to maintain mandate of UN Mission in Abkhazia with the same number of personnel and with the deployment scheme as of August 7, 2008. Moreover, with far-reaching purposes, Russia has agreed on adoption of UN Security Council resolution (09.10.08 #1839)³⁸ that was based on the UN all previous relevant resolutions and in particular on April 15, 2008 resolution # 1808,³⁹ that underlined international support for the territorial integrity of Georgia. According to the aforementioned #1839 resolution, the mandate of UN Observer Mission has been extended till February 15, 2009.⁴⁰

At that time, during debates on the issue of extension of mandate of the UN Observer Mission in Abkhazia, Russia deliberately did not use the UN Security Council Permanent Member right of veto, because political propaganda of the official Moscow wanted to present Georgia as unconstructive side. Besides, the mandate of OSCE Mission in Georgia was to expire in December. The main

³⁸ <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N08/544/25/PDF/N0854425.pdf?OpenElement>

³⁹ <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N08/306/29/PDF/N0830629.pdf?OpenElement>

⁴⁰ <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N08/544/25/PDF/N0854425.pdf?OpenElement>

objective for Russia was the gaining of full control over the main arena of August military action, in other words, over the occupied Tskhinvali region. Therefore, it was necessary for Russia to withdraw OSCE from the ongoing process. Russia would inevitably have to use the right of veto for this purpose by the end of the year and did not want to engage prematurely into many-sided confrontation.

Russia has waited for the CIS Executive Council's decision on appeal of the Georgian Government regarding withdrawal from CIS⁴¹ and termination of the CIS Peacekeeping Operation in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict zone.⁴² The mandate of the UN Observer Mission in Abkhazia was directly connected with this decision. Termination of the CIS Peacekeeping Operation would have caused the suspension of the current mandate of the UN mission and would have led to the necessity of deliberations on its adjustment.

On October 15, 2008 the decision on termination of the CIS Peacekeeping Operation in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict zone taken by the Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) Session of CIS Foreign Ministers entered into force.⁴³ Despite that, the UN Mission continued to operate in active mode, including the patrolling of Kodori Gorge, even though the fact of final halt of the peace process was evident.

Russia's another political decision was related to the objective of maintaining authority on international level. Russia has easily agreed to the proposal to engage in the Geneva Talks. The first round of Talks was held under the chairmanship of the UN Secretary General's Special Representative, European Union and OSCE on October 15, 2008. Russian, Georgian and the US delegations, as well as the representatives of Abkhazia and South Ossetia attended this meeting.⁴⁴

On October 31, 2008 the President of Georgia (Mikheil Saakashvili) signed a law adopted by the Georgian Parliament formally declaring Abkhazia and South Ossetia Russian-occupied territories, and announcing Russian troops, occupying forces. The Law specified the regulations and

⁴¹ <http://www.cis.minsk.by/webnpa/text.aspx?RN=N90900553>

⁴² <http://www.cis.minsk.by/webnpa/text.aspx?RN=N90800581>

⁴³ <http://www.cis.minsk.by/webnpa/text.aspx?RN=N90800581>

⁴⁴ http://mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=59&info_id=8250

restrictions on the occupied territories. By that time Russia already was one of the main involved parties of the Geneva Talks format.

Along with the partial accomplishment of including the representatives of Sukhumi and Tskhinvali into international negotiations Russia has implemented the first phase of the plan: because of its December 22, 2008 “veto” OSCE Member States failed to pass the decision on extending the mandate of the OSCE Mission in Georgia. The proposal of acting OSCE Chairman suggested establishing of the institution of Special Representation with the headquarters in Vienna and two divisions – in Tbilisi and Tskhinvali. As anticipated, Russia’s proposal to open two different missions in Tskhinvali and Tbilisi did not pass either.

Meanwhile, subdivisions of the Russian standing army took positions of the CIS Peacekeeping Forces on the Abkhazian Territory. Practically, May 14, 1994 Moscow Agreement on Ceasefire and Separation of Forces has been revoked and consequently the status of UN Observer Mission has changed as well. Secretary General of the UN proposed (S/2009/69, paragraphs 67, 68)⁴⁵ that before comprehensive mechanisms are set, the UN Observer Mission would bare certain functions in the previously marked “conflict zone”. These functions involved prevention of violation of rights of the local population, prevention of incidents between the parties and improvement of the humanitarian situation.

It is important that in the same report Secretary General proposed to consider security regime based on elements August 12 and September 8 agreements on Ceasefire (paragraph 66)⁴⁶. Proposed regime involved: strict observation of the ceasefire, security zone along both sides of Inguri River both coastlines, no heavy military equipment in the said security zone, a ban on aircrafts, limitation of law enforcement personnel, advance notification of any changes in the deployment of armed personnel and designation of authorized representatives by each party.

UN Secretary General demanded Security Council to give strong support in creating the relevant mechanisms and to ensure that the parties come to an agreement regarding this issue.

⁴⁵ <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/223/52/PDF/N0922352.pdf?OpenElement>

⁴⁶ <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/223/52/PDF/N0922352.pdf?OpenElement>

Even at this stage Russia has not disagreed with the position of the rest of the members of the Security Council, even has co-authored February 13, 2009 #1866 resolution⁴⁷ and has supported the extension of the UN Mission mandate till June 15, 2009. Russia has supported the temporary security regime proposed by the Secretary General as well and for that purpose has agreed to keep paragraph 2(a) of the Moscow May 14, 1994 agreement and has concurred on the formulation of the importance of Geneva Talks. With Russia's consent, the reference to the April 15, 2008 # 1808 resolution⁴⁸ has remained intact in the said document, resolute part of which referred to the support of Georgia's territorial integrity. However, as soon as Russia used its authority of a veto right having member, first time in the history of discussion of this matter, Russia opposed the use of such wording in the resolute part of the new document.

Next session of the Security Council was planned for June 15, 2009. The objective of this session was to define aspects of engagement of the Observer Mission in accordance with the proposals of the UN Secretary-General. Secretary General was to present relevant proposals by May 15.

At the same time, UN negotiations on establishing reliable security regime and further engagement of the UN Mission were held with Russian (Moscow, March 26-27, 2009) and Georgian (New York, April 16, 2009) sides. The sides expressed their readiness to support the establishment of such regime.

According to the provisions of Geneva Agreement, the mechanisms of incident prevention and response were put to work. Along with Georgian and Ossetian sides, the representatives of Russian Ministry of Defence, EU and OSCE attended the first meeting.

Let us discuss how the proposed format of the UN Mission in Abkhazia corresponded to the interests of Georgia and Russia.

First of all, it must be taken into consideration that preparation of UN Secretary General's Report (May 18, 2009) and consultations with the involved sides were taking place against the background of Georgia's defeat in the unequal fight with Russia and the factual occupation of the region.

⁴⁷ <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/238/26/PDF/N0923826.pdf?OpenElement>

⁴⁸ <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N08/306/29/PDF/N0830629.pdf?OpenElement>

The precedent of #1866 resolution came up: neither the title nor the text of the Secretary General's Report mentioned Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia region as parts of Georgia (Abkhazia, Georgia; South Ossetia/Georgia), though the title still held the reference to the April 15, 2008 resolution # 1808. At the same time Secretary General proposed a neutral title of the mission – UN Mission for Stabilisation.

As further developments have showed, Russia has deliberately waited for Georgian reaction on the “balanced” language of the Report, even though keeping International Observer Mission in Abkhazia, even with neutral name, would have been unacceptable for Russia. Russia was merely interested in the existence of Geneva Talks format, in providing Abkhazian and Ossetian delegations with international platform and in limiting the topics of discussion to local security, social and other depoliticized issues.

Giving a neutral name to the Mission could not have been considered as a political victory by Russia. This was just a formal aspect. Other countries, at least the rest of the Security Council members, as well as any international forum would effortlessly confirm their support for the territorial integrity of Georgia.

Russia's actual problem was the existence of international format that would have controlled the implementation of agreements to stop military actions, adopted under the solicitation of EU Chair country. At the same time, discussions of the issue would have continued in proper ways, among those – in the Security Council format. And proposals of the Secretary General implied a set up of those very mechanisms. The language of the paragraph 67 of the Report was as follows:

- UN Mission would cooperate with other international partners in the region, such as the European Union monitoring mission and OSCE
- It would also contribute, through the efforts of Secretary General's Special Representative, to joint mediation efforts by the European Union, OSCE and the United Nations in the framework of the implementation of the agreement of 12 August 2008 and the implementing measures of 8 September 2008.

Balancing of Russian exclusive influence in Gali Region and the regime of control on the protection of human rights of Georgian population was not acceptable to Russia as well. For the

implementation of this objective Secretary General has requested the following authority (mandate) for the Observer Mission:

- To monitor and verify the implementation of the security regime;
- To maintain contact with the parties and other relevant actors, with a view to preventing tensions and resolving incidents;
- To contribute to the cooperation between the parties including through the joint incident prevention and response mechanism;
- To facilitate the freedom of movement of the local population across the ceasefire line, including through monitoring at crossing points;
- To contribute to the provision of humanitarian assistance and the creation of conditions for the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees, including through promoting their basic rights and facilitation of efforts by United Nations funds and agencies;
- To strengthen UN bodies and activities related to the improved law enforcement and respect and protection of human rights of the local and returnee population, especially in the zone of conflict;
- To facilitate contacts between the parties, with a view to promoting cooperation on practical issues, confidence-building and dialogue.

The elements for the implementation of the security regime proposed by the Secretary General contradicted with Russia's plan to strengthen the occupational regime in the region. Secretary General's proposal suggested restoration of the security and armament limitation zones both on land and water; strict limitation of military equipment and armed forces with absolutely no presence of such in the 12 km zone with the exception of personal weapons carried by Georgian and Abkhaz side law enforcement and security personnel on each side of the ceasefire line (Inguri River coastline); establishment of the control system on the movement of military personnel and equipment, monitoring of the security and humanitarian situation in the Kodori valley, constant

monitoring of the military bases, full freedom of movement of United Nations personnel, investigation and reporting of violations to the international community.

Instead of confrontation, official Russia has expressed satisfaction with Secretary General's Report. Moscow has welcomed UN approaches. Permanent Representative of Russia to the UN (Vitaly Churkin) has stressed in his statement that the Report "reflects the new political reality in South Caucasus". De facto President of Abkhazia (Sergey Bagapsh) has called the Report "the victory of Abkhaz people". De facto Minister of Foreign Affairs of Abkhazia (Sergei Shamba) stated that he was satisfied with the Report and that Abkhazian side might participate in Geneva Consultations. (RIA "Novosti", May 19, 2009)

Georgian side responded with the principle of what's good for Russia is bad for Georgia. At first the Permanent Representative of Georgia in the United Nations (Alexander Lomaia) stated that "in the text of the Report territorial integrity of Georgia is not called into question and it could not possibly be" and called Russian-side statements, claiming that in the Report Abkhazia was not referred to as a part of Georgia, a part of Russian official propaganda. (Georgian broadcasting company "Rustavi-2", May 19, 2009)

Later, at the press conference, held after the Security Council consultations (27.05.09), A. Lomaia unexpectedly stated that establishing new security zones, as proposed by the Secretary General, will not facilitate protection of security on the occupied territories. Moreover, he underlined that several days delay of the Secretary General Ban Ki Moon's Report created grounds for suspicions that the report has been modified from its original version as a result of Russian blackmail and expressed his regret that Secretary General gave in to Russian blackmail.

The Secretary General was obliged to officially reject Georgia's accusations of the "Russian blackmail".

The consultations of the Security Council members on the new mandate of the UN Mission and security regime started against the background of sharp criticism of the Georgian Government directed toward the respective Report of the UN Secretary General. No doubt, Moscow's opposite approach to the same document contributed to these circumstances.

Russia's true position – negative attitude to the decisions proposed by the Secretary General – became apparent later, during the closed consultations of the Security Council. It is clearly indicated in the protocol of the Security Council meeting of June 15, 2009.

As noted in the statements of the representatives of certain countries---, in the process of consultations Russia insisted to use terms “Abkhazian Republic”, “Abkhazian borders” in the text of the resolution. Fundamental changes of formulations used in the reports of the Secretary General have never been made in the practice of the Security Council and therefore Russia's proposals were not accepted either. Nevertheless, as noted in the statement of the Permanent Representative of France to the UN (Jean-Maurice Ripert) the delegations “were not far from an agreement”.

Taking into consideration the abovementioned, comprehensive draft resolution on the upcoming mandate of the UN Mission and security regime has not been presented to the Security Council for discussion. Instead, Security Council was to discuss a two-paragraph draft resolution on “technically” extending the mandate of the acting UN Mission (with its existing title) until June 30 – that is for the period of time, necessary for completion of consultations that were close to “reaching the agreement”

Precisely during these discussions of the “technical” draft resolution (June 13, 14) Russia voiced its position of not supporting the reference to the famous 1808th, 1839th and 1866th Security Council resolutions. Again, Russia has waited for the reaction of the Georgian Government which did not fail to come. Georgia sharply criticized Russia's attitude and refused the adoption of the document, even technical one, where the aforementioned resolutions were not mentioned. In the light of how Georgia responded, the position of the Security Council member Georgia's partner countries' position on the official meeting of the Security Council on June 15, was adequate.

After the vote and “veto”, the representative of Russia (Churkin) stated that despite disagreements on some formulations of Mission's further mandate, Russian side was not against the extension of the existing mandate for two more weeks for additional consultations. At the same time he presented “neutral” draft resolution proposed to the Security Council on the closed consultations. That draft, instead of referring to the aforementioned three resolutions, read as follows: “Recalling

all its relevant resolutions and considering the report of the Secretary-General of 18 May 2009”

And further on the proposed text:

1. *Decides* to extend the mandate of the United Nations mission for a new period terminating on 30 June 2009;
2. *Decides* to remain actively seized of the matter.

Taking into account the abovementioned, we can come to the following conclusion:

1. Russia has planned and executed strategic objective – expelling of OSCE and UN Missions from the Georgian territory;
2. Taking into account the post war circumstances, the proposals made in the Report of the Secretary General (May 18, 2009) were the only realistic possibilities to sustain the mechanism of international monitoring in the region;
3. Despite “vetoing” the mandate of the OSCE Mission, Russia has not used the “veto “right in reference to the adoption of the new mandate of Abkhazian UN Mission. Things did not go as far as that;
4. It is possible that in case of continued discussion of the extensive draft resolution on the new mandate of the UN Monitoring Mission, Russia would have opposed Secretary General’s suggestions. Russia would not have supported recommended new security regime and monitoring system under the August 12 and September 8 agreements, but no public statements were made in this regard. Moreover, Russian Government, as well as de facto Abkhazian authorities has supported the respective Report of the UN Secretary General along with the extension of the UN Mission’s existing mandate for two week period for further consultations.
5. It can be assumed that in case of additional consultations, Russia would have evaded open confrontation with international community and would have agreed on the extension of the mandate with neutral title. In his statement on the Security Council meeting (June 15, 2009) the Deputy Permanent Representative of the UK to UN, Philip Parham noted that “the

Abkhaz de facto authorities were keen to see the Mission maintained, making Russia the only party to this conflict that has sought to end the role of the United Nations in Georgia”.

6. Georgia’s response regarding the Report of the Secretary General and formulation of “neutral” resolution proposed by Russia was extremely negative, which has led to the termination of the UN Mission and no prospects of the presence of international organizations in the region. Russia adroitly used these circumstances to its own advantage. Georgian side has put itself in the apparently non-constructive position accusing the Secretary General of giving in to “Russian blackmail”;
7. Georgian government has overestimated the ability of the EU Observer Mission with respect to replacing the UN Mission in the separatist regions, thus disregarding the possibility of making reasonable compromise in coordination with partner countries.
8. As noted in the statement of the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the UN, delivered to the Security Council on June 15, 2009, the termination of UN Mission will result in fewer opportunities to provide unbiased information on either the security situation or human rights violations. This also means that it will be more difficult to witness or document any build-up or movement of Russian troops in the region”.
9. It is rather complicated to unambiguously appraise the rightness of the Georgian Government position. With the exception of certain exceptional episodes, the abovementioned topic has not been discussed in detail in Georgian Government, political and experts’ circles. This was mainly caused by the fact that against the background of the severe, large-scale street demonstrations, Georgia was caught up in internal political confrontation; the authorities personally appealed the obviousness of violation of interests and sovereign rights of Georgia fearing that against the background of the lost war the opposition would have used this topic against them. Everybody refrained from publicly discussing complicated diplomatic-political aspects, difficult to understand for the large part of the population.

10. Russia's every further step in diplomatic or economic sphere, as well as political decisions on the international level were directly or significantly related to the strengthening of post war "accomplishments". Russia's constructiveness in political-economical relations with NATO, new US Administration, and EU should be considered as part of such strategy. Russia's new security strategy also echoes the existing realities.
11. Against the background of Russia's activities on the international arena, the new policy toward Georgia, the main outlines of which start to come into sight, deserves special attention.

Tornike Sharashenidze

Russian policy in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

The Parliamentary Assembly of the European Union has become one of the important forums for discussions of Russian-Georgian war consequences. In itself, the EU format is a rather open space by the simple reason that it brings parliamentarians together. And the latter are less limited by bureaucratic protocols and can afford to be more forthright. This explains why the most acute criticism of the Russia's actions has been heard on the Parliamentary Assembly of European Union as well as numerous demands made to Russia in the adopted resolutions.

It is obvious that from the very beginning Russia has tried to actively defend its points of view, discredit the Georgian side and consequently avoid criticism and unacceptable resolutions. In this respect, on the Parliamentary Assembly sessions of the EU Russian delegation worked in several directions, some of which were appeals on the norms of International Law and the others were based on the Russian interpretation of historical or contemporary realities.

- **Georgia has no rights on South Ossetia (including historical).** According to this argument, South Ossetia has been incorporated to Georgia by “Georgian” Stalin; otherwise this region has never belonged to Georgia. Ossetians have always suffered from Georgian oppression and there are many examples to prove that. Therefore Russia is the only defender and protector of Ossetian people – of this small and oppressed nation. Ossetians did not want to live in Georgian country and as soon as the USSR collapsed proclaimed independence. Ossetian people do not want to be a part of Georgia and if somebody tries otherwise, more blood will be shed and much more Ossetians will be killed.
- **Russia is the defender of small nations.** Taking into consideration all the above mentioned, Russia could never abandon Ossetian people when they were assaulted by Saakashvili regime. Russia has defended the minority oppressed by majority. The military presence of Russia in South Ossetia and Abkhazia is explained only by the will of local population. “Russian attempts to protect national minorities in their neighbourhoods should not always be interpreted, or misinterpreted, as a case of the Russian empire coming back” – stated Konstantin Kosachev, Head of Russian delegation on the Parliamentary Assembly Session.⁴⁹ The fact that it is now quiet in South Ossetia is Russia’s accomplishment. It is also interesting that in the context of proving Russia to be a defender of small nations, one of the distinguished members of the Russian delegation, Sergey Markov even confronted one of the (critically minded against Russia) French delegates, calling the latter the representative of colonial country.⁵⁰
- **Russia has not violated the norms of International Laws.** Although there is a principle of territorial integrity of countries, there is also a principle of the self-determination of nations. Russia has used that latter. Russian delegation was making every effort to put emphasis on the importance of self-determination in resolution texts. However, these attempts have failed.
- **Russia used Kosovo precedent.** Besides the existence of theoretical principle of self-determination, there was a practical example of Kosovo, which has launched the beginning of new reality. Russia just continued to build new reality and it’s time for the whole Europe to keep up. “If these proposals are considered, The Council of Europe will be able to build the

⁴⁹ <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2008/E/0809291500E.htm>

⁵⁰ <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2009/E/0901281500E.htm>

new world order”.⁵¹ The call for “new world order” reverberated with Russian initiative on the architecture of new European security, based on the idea that the old system had outlived itself and proved its inefficiency.

- **Russia is playing a secondary role in this situation and has no responsibility.** Russian delegation has stated number of times that the military conflict was not between Russia and Georgia. It was Georgia who has started the conflict when it attacked South Ossetia. Therefore, it was the war between Georgia and South Ossetia and Russia came into this war later on. South Ossetia was side of the conflict and independent player at the same time. This player should have been given the floor on the Euro Council Parliamentary Assembly for the Assembly to get better picture of the events. For the reason that Parliamentary Assembly has approached the 2008 war incorrectly from the very beginning – calling it the Russia-Georgian war – the discussions went the wrong way and therefore Russia could not possibly agree with the decisions based on such discussions. Pursuant to this logic of the Russian delegation there occurred unsuccessful attempts to remove “Russia” from the passages of the resolution text referring to the responsibility of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, because Russia did not “control” neither South Ossetia nor Abkhazia for the simple reason that they had their own governments.
- **Despite all, Georgian people are loved in Russia.** This traditional tune has been often heard on the Assembly sessions. Russian parliamentarians have been expressing their regrets that despite this love and warm relations Georgian people have turned their backs on Russia and have been getting military assistance from US. Russia has been in Georgia in the status of a peacekeeper but its efforts have not been appreciated.
- **Saakashvili launched the war to cover internal problems.** There is no democracy in Georgia and the majority of population is unhappy with the Government. Therefore, one of the goals of Georgia’s 2008 “aggression” was to shift dissatisfied population’s attention away from internal problems.

⁵¹ <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2008/E/0809301000E.htm>

- **Georgia has to sign the treaty on non-use of force.** As it is known, Russian diplomacy has appealed this topic even before of 2008 so naturally, after the war the efforts in this direction took more intense turn. On one of the sessions Russian delegation unsuccessfully attempted to include this issue into the text of resolution.⁵² Obviously, in response Georgian delegation used the counter argument, pointing out that Medvedev-Sarkozy Agreement that Russia has violated was exactly analogous.

In the end, all these so called “arguments” were invalidated and all relevant resolutions of the European Council Parliamentary Assembly strongly urged Russia to:

- withdraw the recognition of independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia;
- allow access of EU and OSCE mission on both territories;
- facilitate (together with de facto government of Abkhazia and South Ossetia) the movement of Georgian citizens on these territories. Resolution strongly condemned enforced passportization of ethnically Georgian population of Abkhazia and South Ossetia;
- Assembly condemned Russia’s position toward OSCE Missions in Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Moscow succeeded in termination of both Missions);
- The assembly as well condemned ongoing ethnic cleansing of Georgians in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and non-investigation of such matters and held Russia responsible for all the above.
- One more thing is to be noted herein: in resolutions, Assembly expressed their surprise by the fact that Russia was not observing even those demands that were not connected with the status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Russia has not complied with any of the demands. After breaching the administrative borders of South Ossetia in August 2008 military actions and further recognizing independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, implementation of resolutions would have meant that Russia has admitted those actions as a mistake. Therefore Moscow’s policy took the opposite direction: to gain an exclusive control over the separatist region and to impose “new realities” on the rest of the world.

⁵² <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2009/E/0901281500E.htm>

Under conditions of such political course Russia did not need international monitors on the separatist territory as it meant that Russia would have lost exclusive control and more facts of the ethnic cleansing conducted during the war would have been exposed. Furthermore, Russia was determined to end Saakashvili regime in Georgia. Gaining new recognitions of Abkhazian and South Ossetian independence by other countries would have significantly contributed to that endeavor. And again, under such circumstances, there could have been no question of resolution implementation.

On April 29, 2010, Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov addressed Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. After his address, on the question, how much longer was Russia to non-implement the requirements of resolutions, the minister replied that Russia was never going to implement those requirements, because resolutions were “politicized” and “did not acknowledge new realities”.

Lavrov also stated that Russia was not going to recognize the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia even after 2008 war; that Georgia has practically forced Russia into this decision because Georgian post war position clearly indicated that “Georgia was still on the path of war”.⁵³ Therefore the recognition of independence was the only way to prevent further bloodshed. This speech was followed by applause of the Russian delegation and many non-Russian parliamentarians joined in – by his speech Lavrov created the impression that Georgia truly imposed the recognition of Abkhazia’s and South Ossetia’s independence on Russia.

Lavrov’s statement was more notable for another reason. Minister mainly spoke about 65th anniversary of victory in “the Great Patriotic War” and the contribution of Russia in creation of truly Greater Europe by defeating fascism.⁵⁴

Lavrov has stressed the importance of Europe-Russia cooperation and President Putin’s new course aimed on modernization and democratization of the country, thus implying that Russia was pretty important for the West and they should not spoil their relations because of Georgia. The

⁵³ <http://www.inosmi.ru/caucasus/20100430/159656153.html>

⁵⁴ http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/e78a48070f128a7b43256999005bcbb3/287611b67339f087c32577150025efe4?OpenDocument

minister has not mentioned the topics of 2008 conflict and recognition till a member of Georgian delegation posed a question.

It was obvious that in April 2010, after repeatedly refusing to implement the requirements of resolutions, official Moscow has decided that the issue of conflict with Georgia was practically solved and therefore Lavrov should have not mentioned it at all. Or, if it was not solved, by his silence, give to understand that Russia considers it solved and does not intend to go back to this issue; that Georgian-Russian War stage has been long passed through and now was the time for Russia and Europe to find the ways of peaceful and gainful coexistence, especially when after the war, Russia has put forward a new idea of coexistence – Medvedev's initiative of new European Security Architecture, particularly referred to in Lavrov's speech as well.

Long before this landmark speech it was clear for everybody that Russia would never have ceded gains of 2008 war out of fear of Euro Council Parliamentary Assembly criticism. The only thing that has seriously bothered Moscow was deprivation of voting rights in the Parliamentary Assembly. For the great country like Russia it would have been serious decline of prestige. To prevent this menace, starting from September 2008, Russia threatened that reciprocally Russia would leave European Council. This was stated by Kosachev, after part of the Assembly members (Georgia, Baltic States, Poland and Ukraine delegation members) has offered to send the proposal on depriving Russian delegation of the voting right. Kosachev stated that in case of positive decision he himself would advise Russian Government to leave European Council.⁵⁵

The prospect of Russia leaving the European Council meant not only serious deficit in the European Council budget (Russia would obviously have stopped paying its share), but further complication of Russia – West relations. Along with the warning statements of Russian officials, came the concern of a number of European analysts regarding possible deterioration of relations with Russia.

For example, expert of German Foreign Council Alexander Rahr was stating that in case Russia was deprived of the voting right “regardless the fact that aggression was started by Saakashvili”, then Russia's civilizational choice would have been called into question and Russia would have drifted away from the West. This would have complicated the fight against terrorism and raise a question

⁵⁵ <http://www.rg.ru/2008/09/16/pase.html>

mark over the cooperation in the field of energy. Fight against terrorism and in particular the fate of anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan has been called into question by Russian experts as well. Besides, Russian delegation threatened to execute same procedures in regard to the Georgian delegation in the Assembly (vote right deprivation). It was becoming clear that the attempt to deprive Russia of voting right would have yielded no results.

Assembly session paid particular attention to “Tagliavini Commission” Report. Russian delegation, as anticipated, focused on that part of the Report, where it was stated that the conflict started when Georgian armed forces opened fire on Tskhinvali. Obviously, they omitted passages, noting that this moment was a climax preceded by bilateral shooting.

Obviously Russia did not want to dwell on detailed history of the conflict starting from the 90-es and 2008 post war situation, where Russia was given quite a negative evaluation. One phrase taken out of context was enough for Russia to call Georgia the side that unleashed the war and (as told by Russians) violated international norms and commitments on peaceful resolution of the conflict.

According to this “logic” Russia’s response to Georgia was coerced. Besides, since “two new states” were created after the war, Russia in no way has violated its commitments under Sarkozy-Medvedev agreement – Russia withdrew its armed forces but was compelled to leave them on the territory of South Ossetia and Abkhazia on request of “local governments and population”. To fortify this argument, quite often Russian delegation sounded the alarm bells because Georgia “was getting armed again”, “has conducted military maneuvers near the borders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia”, “has caused provocations near the borders of South Ossetia and Abkhazia”. Russian delegation also criticized those countries that have once armed Georgia thus, to some point, blaming the West for the conflict.

In general, Russian delegations knew well that in such body, as European Council Parliamentary Association they should have been careful and hide their imperial ambitions. There could have been no talks about Russia having more rights than Georgia just because Russia was bigger. This explained the abovementioned speeches stating that the conflict was not between Georgia and Russia, but between Georgia and “two new countries”.

Presenting this issue as a conflict between little Georgia and Great Russia would immediately have put Moscow in losing position. Obviously it was much better to discuss this matter as a conflict between Tbilisi and Tskhinvali or, at the worst, between Tbilisi, Tskhinvali and Moscow.

Precisely for this reason Russian delegation has found statements of Parliamentarian from Hungary, Mateas Iorsh objectionable and has showed strong support to another speaker, UK delegate David Wilshire who has named Tskhinvali as a conflict side. By recognizing South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Russia created a sort of “parallel legal space” and alternative reality and tried to impose it on the rest of the world. Knowing in advance that this would not have worked with the members of Euro Council, Russia stressed that this reality was final and non disputable.

Russian policy in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe can be summed up as follows:

- Russia could not have hoped that Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe would have shared Russia's position and would have accepted the occupation of the Georgian territory. Being aware of this fact, Russia was stressing that the outcome of 2008 war was non- disputable and no matter what Assembly resolutions might be, Russia was not going to implement them. Sooner or later the Assembly would have got bored with reminding Russia of its obligations under the resolutions. Therefore, Russia had to just wait.
- At the same time Russia was trying to avoid impact and criticism using the arguments that it was coerced into the August 2008 war (that “Georgia started”) and nobody should have had any complaints, all the more so after 2008, because it was not about Russia and Georgia, but about Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. As for the recognition of the last two, Russia had a full right to that after the precedent of Kosovo.
- As it became clear that diplomatic war in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe would have been lost, Russia tried to somehow raise the issue of Georgia's responsibility in the resolutions, or to introduce South Ossetia and Abkhazia as new players.
- Russia was trying to discredit Georgia as an aggressor and oppressor, going to commit aggression again since Georgia was not signing a Ceasefire Agreement.

- Paralelle to this was conducted a preventive campaign against depriving Russia of the voting right in the Assembly. Media boomed the campaign and most probably corresponding struggle was taking place in the couloir of the Assembly.

Tengiz Pkhaladze

Tornike Sharashenidze

Russia and the Geneva Talks

October 15, 2008 marked the beginning of international negotiations for safety and stability called: **Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Georgia**⁵⁶ in the city of Geneva as agreed in the August 12 cease-fire agreement. In this regard the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgian made a special statement:

⁵⁶ This formulation, as well as “Abkhazia/Georgia” and “South Ossetia/Georgia” is used in the official international documents. Russian Federation opposes these formulations attempting to present “South Ossetia” and “Abkhazia” as independent parties, without whatsoever connection with Georgia.

For the first time with the joint efforts of the international community, and in particular, the European Union, United Nations and OSCE, an international format was created, by which Russia's self-designated monopoly over the peace process was terminated. Unfortunately, the representatives of the Russian Federation started to obstruct talks from the very outset, by demanding the representatives of the regimes, created by Russian occupation forces, to be included into the talks as official parties on the same level as sovereign states, and at the same time by opposing participation of the representatives of the legitimate authorities of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia.⁵⁷

The format of the plenary session of the Geneva negotiations includes Georgia, Russia and the United States as official participants; and EU, OSCE and UN as mediator parties. Moscow's attempts to have Abkhazia and South Ossetia as official participants were not successful. Therefore Russia did not participate in the plenary session.

Besides the plenary session there is also another unofficial format, considering individuals instead of official country representatives. Representatives of de facto Authorities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia were to participate in this unofficial part of Geneva negotiations. Before the first meeting of Geneva talks, Sergey Lavrov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia, announced that representatives from South Ossetia and Abkhazia should participate in the Geneva talks as equals with all the rest.⁵⁸ Russia knew that Georgia and its partners would have categorically objected to these demands but Moscow probably wanted to use this objection to their advantage when the other side would have brought up its own demands. It was apparent though, that the efforts to raise the status of Sukhumi and South Ossetia would continue.

Twelve rounds of negotiations were held from October 15, 2008 to July 2010. The negotiations were quite difficult. On different stages of the talks Russia habitually brought up the subject of Georgia's rearmament and criticized Western governments for supplying arms to Tbilisi. But Russia's main diplomatic objective on these negotiations was the issue of Georgia signing the non-use of force agreement with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Moscow, brought up this issue on

⁵⁷ http://mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=59&info_id=8250

⁵⁸ <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=19925>

practically every session but naturally Tbilisi always objected since it would have been the first step in acknowledging the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Georgia has declared and reiterates that such non-use of force agreement was signed in August 2008 as a part of the Sarkozy- Medvedev-Saakashvili agreement and Georgia, unlike Russia, still abides by its commitment to the aforementioned Agreement. The United States backs Georgia's position on this issue at the Geneva negotiations. It is apparent that Russia knows that Georgia will not sign this cease-fire agreement but the reason they bring this issue up on every session is to use this against the Georgian side when Tbilisi makes demands of their own.

Georgia has suggested to the Russian Federation on different occasions to create a new "ceasefire agreement" between Tbilisi and Moscow. Russia calls this suggestion a "provocation" and states that Russia will never sign such agreement since Russia is not a direct party of the conflict. Georgia's suggestion to have international peacekeepers enter the conflict zone, was as well declared "provocational" by Gregory Karasin, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia and representative of Russia at the Geneva negotiations. When speaking about the August 12, 2008 "Sarkozy-Saakashvil-Medvedev" document Russia has always referred to the "new realities" and based on those realities Russia has done everything to abide by the document by removing its military from the "territory of Georgia" but the armed forces remain on Abkhazian and South Ossetian territories based on the agreements signed with those "two governments".

The most effective use of Geneva format as a diplomatic weapon was exercised in May 2009 when Secretary General of the UN was to present a Report on Situation in Abkhazia. Before that time, the titles of every such document read "Abkhazia, Georgia" thus underlining Abkhazia being part of Georgian state.

Anticipating the same language in the Report of the Secretary General, Abkhazian representatives walked out of Geneva talks.

Sergey Shamba, the de facto foreign minister of Abkhazia, stated that Sokhumi wanted to see the report before the launch of the fifth round of talks as the wording of the document would have determined the Abkhaz side position over its participation in the Geneva discussions. Sokhumi protested against wording "Abkhazia, Georgia", and stated that UN can no longer use this wording

after two of its member states – Russia and Nicaragua – recognized Abkhazia’s independence. After that Russia decided “to take a pause” and to suspend participation in the fifth round of Geneva talks pending clarification of the Abkhaz position over taking part in the meeting. Naturally the representatives of South Ossetia took the same position.

International organizations participating in Geneva talks had nothing to oppose to such demarche of Sukhumi and Russia. In the joint statement, after the walk out of the Russian delegation, the representatives of the EU stated that “The co-chairs are working for the resumption of the discussions tomorrow morning, 19 May, as planned and call upon all participants to be present” and that Co-Chairs strongly regret the walk-out by the Russian participants at the beginning of the fifth session of the Geneva Discussions, after the Abkhaz participants decided not to attend and after the walk-out of the South Ossetian participants.⁵⁹

As a result, the neutral formulation appeared in the title: “Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1808, 1839 and 1866”. After such victory Karasin has noted that times when the roles of Abkhazian and South Ossetian representatives have been belittled are long gone and from now on their drafts and proposals on Geneva talks have the same “political weight” as drafts and proposals of other representatives (including those of international organizations).⁶⁰

It can be said that by 2009 walk out Moscow has made some progress in implementing the plan mentioned by Lavrov before the Geneva Talks (equal status for Sukhumi and Tskhinvali on Geneva Talks). It can also be said that the demarche of Abkhazian representatives on the eleventh round of Geneva Talks in June 2010⁶¹ can be explained by the same motivation – in return of staying in Geneva format Sukhumi would make additional demands totally backed by Moscow (including walk out).

Non-use of force treaty that Georgia refuses to sign is still the main reason of aggravation for the president of Sukhumi and it will probably remain among the most contentious issues triggering most of the differences.

⁵⁹ <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=20942>

⁶⁰ www.izvestia.ru/comment/article3135153/

⁶¹ <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22404>

Two working groups were formed in the format of Geneva Talks: one on incident prevention and response mechanisms, the second on IDP and refugee issues. The first working group looks to be more productive. Though it must be noted that the main tactics of the Russian Federation is stalling and shifting responsibilities onto others (by disrupting negotiations through the representatives of Abkhazia and South Ossetia or by putting forth principally unacceptable demands or preconditions knowing beforehand the negative attitude of the Georgian side to that subject).

Despite the obvious obstruction of the Geneva talks from the Russian Federation, the Georgian side remains fully committed to the peace process, being convinced that the peaceful dialogue and negotiations are the only way to ensure that the security and stability are established in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the IDPs and refugees are returned in a safe and dignified manner.

Tornike Sharashenidze

Russian Policy in the European Union

A relation of Russia with the European Union is in general a broad topic but in the context of conflict with Georgia, just a few topics are to be discussed. Not being a member state of the EU, Russia did not have any voice on the forums of this organization and could have used diplomatic pressure only from the outside.

On September 2, 2008 Moscow welcomed Special EU Summit that discussed Georgian-Russian war issue and on which, in the end, no actual steps were taken against Russia. The ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia expressed its satisfaction, that “most EU member states displayed a responsible

approach..., well aware of the importance of mutually advantageous cooperation”.⁶² The Ministry denied the accusations of disproportional use of force and expressed its surprise that actions of official Tbilisi were not assessed at all.

Probably it was clear from the very beginning that European Union would not and could not have radically confronted Russia, and when in November 2008 Sarkozy himself stated that Moscow has implemented the obligations under Sarkozy-Medvedev Agreement, it became obvious that European Union was moving toward reconciliation with Russia.

As for the future of the EU Observer Mission in Georgia, Russia has openly stated from the beginning that such Mission was pointless, as “there were already enough international observers on the ground”.⁶³ Later, when it became clear that EU has taken firm decision to employ Observer Mission, Russia backed down (the question however is what would have Russia done having the veto right in EU).

Monitoring Mission of the European Union (EUMM) was deployed following the EU-brokered 12 August Six-Point Agreement and the September 8 Implementing Measures Agreement in 2008. EUMM began its operations on October 1, 2008 with 200 monitors on the ground. Its mandate consists of four important components, namely stabilisation, normalisation and confidence building, as well as reporting to Brussels to inform EU policy makers about the on-site situation.

Normalisation was the first and most urgent task facing the mission. At its very inception the mission was assisted in the efforts to bring back to normality the lives of those parts of the population living in the areas adjacent to the administrative boundary lines with Abkhazia and South Ossetia and displaced by the hostilities.

While the Mission’s mandate covers the entire territory of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders, the de facto authorities’ denial of access to South Ossetia and Abkhazia has been hampering the mission’s normalization and stabilization efforts.⁶⁴

⁶² http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/C3A6AA0BD1F6A15AC32574B800327206

⁶³ euobserver.com/9/26706

⁶⁴ <http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22575>

EUMM has still not managed to access the occupied territories. However, the reason for that is not only “defiance” of Sukhumi and Tskhinvali regimes. The main source of this problem is the rigid position of Moscow and Russian diplomats speak openly about that.

On July 27, 2009 General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) session adopted a final document, stating that “deployment of the mission following the conflict between Georgia and Russia in August 2008 shows the EU’s willingness and ability to act resolutely to promote peace and stability. The deployment of EU monitors has contributed to creating the necessary conditions for the implementation of the agreements of 12 August and 8 September, 2008.

In this context, the Council calls again on all parties to fully comply with their commitments, including the withdrawal of all military forces to the positions held prior to the outbreak of hostilities.

The Council further recalled that EUMM Georgia has a countrywide mandate and called for unhindered access of EUMM to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which has so far been denied”.⁶⁵

The adoption of that abovementioned document was followed by official Moscow’s criticism. In his offical comment Grigory Karasin, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation states that it is impossible not to note that the decision of the Council abounds with phrases and terms indicating a desire to carry on political games while ignoring the new realities that took shape in the region after the tragedies of August 2008, and, in particular, to penetrate inside the territories of sovereign Abkhazia and South Ossetia despite the fact that even from the name of the Mission it follows that its activities cover Georgia only. Sukhumi and Tskhinvali negatively treat EU attempts to penetrate into their territories.⁶⁶

From this statement alone, it becomes apparent, that Moscow’s intentions are to elude the implementation of international responsibilities and to hamper the fullscale work of EUMM.

⁶⁵ http://mfa.gov.ge/files/30_10670_290134_EUMM-GAERC.27.07.09.pdf

⁶⁶ <http://www.un.int/russia/new/MainRoot/docs/warfare/statement280709en.htm>

Chapter II. The “Compatriot protection” policy of the Russian Federation and Consular policy toward Georgia

Tengiz Pkhaladze

The “Compatriot protection” policy of the Russian Federation toward Georgia

For many centuries the representatives of many nations and nationalities have been living on the territory of Georgia. Throughout the many thousand year history, traditions of toleration and tolerance to other nationalities and religions made possible for the representatives of different nationalities and religious beliefs to co-exist in multinational Georgia. Despite the conflict zones

(Abkhazia and South Ossetia) and August 2008 Russian-Georgian War, Russians, Abkhazians and Ossetians still live in Georgia without suffering any discomfort, let alone persecution and oppression.

Russian diaspora has existed in Georgia for many centuries and has never been a threat to the Georgian country. As for one of the Russian modern policy's main trend – “protection of compatriots rights” with regard to Georgia, it covers a wide range of population: Russian diaspora and Russian-speaking population as well as Georgia's non Georgian-speaking and part of Georgian-speaking population and population of Abkhazia and South Ossetia that became Russian citizens through mass passportization carried out by Russia in violation of international laws and Georgian legislation.

The present study will cover the actions of the Russian Federation carried out in Georgia (in Abkhazia and South Ossetia among other regions) on the grounds of “compatriot protection”. It must be noted that all of Russia's illegal and detrimental for the Georgian country actions were camouflaged with the motive of “protection of the rights of compatriots” residing on the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. However, if we consider the results of those actions, in the first place they have affected exactly Abkhazians, Ossetians and those ethnic groups, whose care and protection was proclaimed by Russia as its “holy duty”.

First of all let's define “compatriot” and “fellow citizen”, because Kremlin interpretation of these concepts differs from the definitions customary for the International Law.

“Who are our fellow citizens?” “Is it possible to distinguish between “ours” “almost ours” and not-ours”? Russians and “Russian-cultured” from “Russian-speaking” and “Russia-oriented” once and for all?”⁶⁷ These so to speak rhetorical questions were asked by the creators of “archipelag.ru” – one of the networking projects of “the Russian World” website. They asked and they “found” the answer: It seems impossible to draw one single fat line that separates Russia from what is not Russia and never has been Russia.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ http://www.archipelag.ru/about_project/

⁶⁸ http://www.archipelag.ru/about_project/

The official legislation is saturated with such logic and ideology as well. For example, Decree "On main directions of state policy in the Russian Federation in respect of the compatriots living abroad", last amended in July 2010, states, that the concept of "compatriots" residing abroad refers not only to the Russian citizens residing in foreign countries, but to-

- Persons and their descendants living outside the Russian Federation but are considered and Related to peoples historically living on the territory of the Russian Federation;
- Persons, who made a free choice in favor of spiritual, cultural and legal links with the Russian Federation and whose direct relatives by ascending line previously resided in the territory of the Russian Federation, including:
- Citizens of the Soviet Union, living in countries that were part of the Soviet Union, who have acquired the citizenship of those countries or have become stateless;
- Immigrants from the Russian state, Russian republic, the RSFSR, the USSR and the Russian Federation, who have the appropriate nationality and have become citizens of foreign states or stateless persons.⁶⁹

In short, according to the lyrics of one of the Russian hit song of popular Russian singer Oleg Gazmanov, „Я рожден в Советском Союзе, сделан я в СССР“ – I was born in the Soviet Union, I was made in the USSR - and therefore, Siberia, Volga Region, Caucasus, Baltics and many other things such as KGB and “spetsnaz” – is “one country”! ⁷⁰I think there is no need to specify what country we are talking about.

It must be noted that before 2010 amendments, the “Compatriot Law” was even more infused with Soviet identity and did not require spiritual, cultural and legislative “free choice” of links with Russian Federation.

Even this small attempt to “progressorize” the legislature became a matter of sharp criticism and resentment for the ideological “fathers”. Even President Medvedev came under fire of one of the authors of the “Compatriot Policy”, Modest Kalerov. The latter accused the president of denying the interests of compatriots: “brainless Officials announcing president signing the law on

⁶⁹ <http://graph.document.kremlin.ru/page.aspx?1;1291765>

⁷⁰ http://www.gazeta.ru/comments/2005/01/13_a_224133.shtml

compatriots, are in a hurry to conclude: that inhabitants of the CIS countries will no longer be "automatic compatriots."⁷¹

Appealing on Soviet and post Soviet identity is not accidental for Russian legislators and more so for the Russian ideology. The terms such as "states that emerged on the territory of former Soviet Union", "Post-Soviet countries", "Former Soviet Republics" (there are much more versions with the emphasis on Soviet and Soviet Union) are widely used by Russian officials. This is a definition that clearly corresponds with the concepts of Russian policy and bears clearly defined meaning and function. In particular:

1. This termin underlines that the main factor determining the real meaning of those countries is the fact that they were part of the USSR and emerged after the fall of the Soviet Union. The fact that those countries have their own history, statehood and traditions is of no importance. Therefore, the citizens of the former Soviet Union residing on the territories of those countries "are not obliged to take the citizenship of those countries".
2. The termin "states that emerged on the territory of the former Soviet Union" levels these countries with such separatist regions as Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Karabakh, Transdnistria etc. These regions also were the part of the Soviet Union and "the only difference" is that they "have not yet" gained the recognition of their independence. Hence - the termin "Unrecognized Republics" (Непризнанные республики). It was in accordance with this logic and by inspiration of Moscow ideologists, that in the year 2000 CIS-2 or "Commonwealth of Unrecognised States" was formed".⁷²
3. Russia, as the USSR successor, has obligations to the citizens of the former Soviet Union and therefore people "residing in the states emerged on the territories of the former Sovirt Union" are "compatriots" and it is Russia's "holy duty" to defend their rights.

And now the main question – which part of the Georgian population can Kremlin consider its compatriots or fellow citizens? If we consider Russian legislation that was in force before 2010, according to the Kremlin logic, any resident of Georgia can fall under the category of "compatriot".

⁷¹ <http://www.regnum.ru/news/1308005.html>

⁷² <http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A1%D0%9D%D0%93-2>

If we take a look at the real picture, the solid part of Georgian population has close ties with the Russian Federation. As for the Russian citizens, their exact number is unknown, because most of them reside on the territories of conflict zones, Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The part of the population that might be considered as "compatriots" can be conditionally divided into three categories:

1. Ethnic Georgians who are based in Moscow, but did not break their ties with Georgia. They have property, dwelling and close relatives on the Georgian territory. These people left for Russia to find work and because of the economic distress. A lot of Georgian people went to work in Russia in the 90-es. As of today, according to different data, 600 000 – 900 000 Georgians reside on the territory of Russia. Most of them, along with the Russian citizenship have the Georgian citizenship as well.
2. Russian-speaking diaspora and Russian citizens who came to live in Georgia and had or still have Russian citizenship, but at the same time have Georgian citizenship or a right of abode.
3. Population of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the majority of which acquired Russian citizenship by free choice or was forced into it.

From all the above listed categories it is the third that represents rather interesting example of the Kremlin "Soft Power". The technology of this approach comes into absolute contradiction with International Laws as well as with the legislation of the Russian Federation. This is Russian, so called "passportization" policy, which implies massive granting of Russian citizenship and subsequent distribution of passports to individuals residing in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

As of today, majority of population of these territories have Russian passports. As stated in the report of "Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia" (so-called Tagliavini Commission), granting of the Russian citizenship is regulated by paragraphs 13th and 14th of the new Russian Law on Citizenship (came into force in 2003). This simplifies the procedures of acquiring Russian citizenship.

This opened broader avenues to exploit to the thousands of applicants from South Ossetia and Abkhazia. One of the essential requirements for other states to be obliged to recognize conferrals of citizenship under the terms of international law is, that there must be an adequate factual connection between the applicant and the receiving country – in this case Russia - and which must not be arbitrary.

The examples of factual connection are family reunification, long-time residence and extended government or military service. In addition, an explicit consent of the home country is required. Georgian law, however, does not recognise dual citizenship. Former Soviet citizenship is not considered sufficient grounds, since this status had already been translated into Georgian citizenship at the time of independence.

Given these requirements, only a limited number of such conferrals can be deemed as legally binding under international law. The vast majority of purportedly naturalised persons from South Ossetia and Abkhazia are not Russian nationals in terms of international law. Neither Georgia nor any third country need acknowledge such Russian nationality. Consequently, the persons living in South Ossetia and Abkhazia who had first become Georgian citizens after the dissolution of the Soviet Union continue to remain so irrespective of “passportisation” policies.

They were still citizens of Georgia at the time of the armed conflict of August 2008, and in legal terms they remain so to this day unless they had renounced or lost their Georgian nationality in regular ways. The mass conferral of Russian citizenship to Georgian nationals and the provision of passports on a massive scale on Georgian territory, including its breakaway provinces, without the consent of the Georgian Government runs against the principles of good neighbourliness and constitutes an open challenge to Georgian sovereignty and interference in the internal affairs of Georgia.⁷³

Despite the strict categorical tone, the report of Tagliavini Commission fails to give the full picture of the unlawful nature of the passportization. Conferral of Russian citizenship on Abkhazian

⁷³ http://www.ceig.ch/pdf/IIFMCG_Volume_I.pdf

territory started back in 90-es of the 20th century through the public organization “Congress of Russian Communities”.⁷⁴ This organization interceded with relevant Russian agencies for those who were interested in Russian citizenship.

The “Congress of Russian Communities” is a nationalistic-imperial political group chaired by Dmitry Rogozin – current Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to NATO. Rogozin’s views and judgements clearly show the aspirations, goals and essence of “compatriots and fellowcizens protection”. According to Rogozin, the fact that “compatriots” reside “in the countries emerged on the territory of the former Soviet Union does not mean that they should take the citizenship of these countries”!⁷⁵

Therefore, Russian policy totally complies with the logic of humanitarian actions aimed to the support of compatriots, Residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia - are former Soviet citizens who did not accept the new Georgian citizenship. That's why Russia, as successor of the Soviet Union is obliged to grant these people citizenship and rights under the Russian constitution”.⁷⁶ Being absolutely convinced of the validity of such arguments, Russia has no qualms to issue threats: “even a single hair drops off the head of a Russian citizen, Russia will be obliged to make use of her entire arsenal to protect her citizens”.

It is noteworthy that Russia has justified its August 2008 military actions in Georgia as necessary protection of its fellow citizens. Therefore, the process of passportization should become a subject of larger study and international discussion because this technology, first approbated in Georgia was further used in Moldova (Trans-Dnestria) and Ukraine (Krym).

The passportization process continued even after the war of August 2008, now on the territories officially annexed by Russia. One of the examples of the above is the information spread by Ossetian radio on 11 June 2009 that “documents are accepted for the execution of foreign Russian

⁷⁴ <http://www.rodina.ru>

⁷⁵ <http://www.rodina.ru/news/more/?id=494>

⁷⁶ <http://www.kro.su/news/more/?id=494>

passports in the temporary consular point of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia in South Ossetia".⁷⁷

The facts of extreme pressure and compulsion have been recorded in the regions of Gali and Akhagori, where the populations were forced into obtaining Abkhazian (Gali) and Ossetian (Akhagori) passports along with Russian passports.

It should be noted that socio-economic situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia is extremely critical. It is rather difficult to find a decent job locally and the population is living in dire economic straits. Therefore, the only solution for those living in such regions lies in trade and economic relations with Russia, particularly with neighboring border regions. To "stimulate" the Abkhazian and South Ossetian populations, Russia has employed three instruments:

1. visa-free movement, by opening illegal visa checkpoints in both regions;
2. issuance of Russian passports;
3. granting pensions and allowances to those acquiring Russian citizenship.

In fact the visa-free regime and in some cases financial assistance was the actually tangible motivation for passportization for the ordinary people because, strange as it might seem, citizenship acquired in such manner is interconnected with many problems in Russian reality and does not provide the grounds to enjoy all the rights of the citizen.

The point is that on Abkhazian and South Ossetian territories Russian passports - and hence Russian citizenship - were issued by the consular sections of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Opening of such consular establishments within the territory of Abkhazia or South Ossetia is subject of separate study because no legal document whatsoever has been created about it. Thus, the application centers set up and field brigades operating within the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia were illegal and, consequently, had no right to consider documents or issue passports.⁷⁸ Such activity amounts to nothing but document forging, a penal crime punishable in Georgia as well as in Russian Federation.

⁷⁷ <http://osinform.ru/14205-v-juzhnojj-osetii-prodolzhaetsja-process.html>

⁷⁸ For additional details of passportisation see: "Humanitarian dimension" of Russian foreign Policy Toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and The Baltic States" www.icgs.ge

Administrative organs of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia readily validate citizenship granted by the illegal consulates and register new citizens by their place of arrival, but not by the place of residence and does not provide them with the internal passports. As a result, such citizens are unable to buy land on the territory of Russia because such transaction cannot be verified by international passport.

It can be said that citizenship acquired in such manner and which leads to the limited rights even on the territory of Russia is a juridical mishap by itself going to the verge of legal absurd and lays sufficient grounds to question the legality of its acquirement; Especially when law changes in the Russian Federation are made in the interests of the ruling elite and not population.

All the above proves that the main objective of passportization on the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia was to artificially increase the number of Russian citizens living there to allow Moscow to later carry out acts “for the protection of her citizens”. Now it was necessary to create a pretext for Russia’s open involvement in the conflicts to justify annexation of the territories of the other country. As for the population of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, to whom the citizenship has been conferred with such abundance, it has become political instrument in the hands of Russia and in reality, the thought to protect their interests, even after granting them with the “limited citizenship”, has never crossed the minds of Kremlin minions.

Working with “Compatriots” on the Occupied Territories of Georgia

After the August 2008 war, working with “compatriots” on the occupied territories became more motivated and extensive. On January 28, 2009, the head of the Federal Agency for CIS Affairs, compatriots living abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation (Rossotrudnichestvo), Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for Relations with the CIS

member states F. Mukhametshin received the “Ambassador” of South Ossetia in Moscow. According to official information, during the meeting they have discussed aspects of cooperation on vast spectre of subjects; among them, the opening of representative office of “Rossotrudnichestvo”- Russian Center for Science and Culture in Tskhinvali.⁷⁹ As it turned out, failure to implement this plan was hindered because “the decision to build the center was taken before the financial crisis. As a result, the construction of Russian centers is not canceled, just postponed”.⁸⁰

Subsequent development of events showed that in that issue Russia “opted” for Abkhazia and on December 18, 2009 opened the representative office of “Rossotrudnichestvo” in Sukhumi. The ceremony was attended by the representative of the federal agency Farid Mukhametshin, “President of Abkhazia” Sergey Bagapsh and other “officials”. Mukhametshin stated that it was “just a beginning” and larger-scale project are planned in the future.⁸¹

Several weeks prior to this event, on November 26, 2009 a “republican conference of compatriots” was held in Abkhazia (of course we are talking not about Abkhazian but “Russian compatriots”). The guests from Moscow, the officials of the Russian President administration listened to the reports of the local organizations and set objectives and goals for “compatriots”.⁸²

Many events, aimed at the work with compatriots and strengthening of Russian communities on the occupied territories were held in South Ossetia and Abkhazia in the years of 2008-2010. Each of those meetings was held as a most important official event with special thanks conveyed to Moscow for taking care of compatriots and therefore Abkhazia and South Ossetia (as can be seen, for the local de facto officials they truly are one and the same concept!). The holidays, such as “national day of Russia”, “the day of Russian language”, the day of Russian Army” and others, in fact are declared national holidays and are celebrated with great pomposity.⁸³

⁷⁹ <http://rs.gov.ru/node/981>

⁸⁰ <http://osradio.ru/culture/28748-culture.html>

⁸¹ <http://rs.gov.ru/node/7134>

⁸² <http://rs.gov.ru/node/6504>

⁸³ For additional information on such events visit:

<http://rs.gov.ru/search/node/%D1%8E%D0%B6%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%8F%20%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%8F> and <http://rs.gov.ru/search/node/%D0%B0%D0%B1%D1%85%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%B8%D1%8F>

On March 5, 2010 the meeting of compatriots in South Ossetia and Abkhazia was now held in Sochi. Participants discussed issues of cooperation of compatriot organizations in education and educational activities. It was decided to hold in Sochi International Conference "The teacher and his role in shaping the personality and professional choices of students; the experience of Russia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia", as well as exhibition on the history of the Great Patriotic War.⁸⁴

Apparently joint efforts were successful and the level of "ideologico-political training has been equally increased and on September 8, 2010 "the first conference of Russian compatriots in South Ossetia"⁸⁵ was at last held in Tskhinvali. The conference noted particular contribution of "Rosses" and "The Union of Russian Citizens in South Ossetia" organizations in consolidating the partnership and friendship of Russian and South Ossetian communities. It was also noted that when South Ossetia was not recognized, these two organizations"were used as the "voice of South Ossetia" to express the ideas that South Ossetia would like to convey to the Russia authorities.⁸⁶

The speech of the Russian "Ambassador" Elbrus Kargiev was rather interesting and significant. He told the assembled about the amendments to the law of "compatriots" and explained that "compatriot status" needed to be cherished and proved by actions and if they tried hard enough, "Russia was ready to embrace such compatriots". Kargiev noted with satisfaction that Russian language is an official language of the authorities of the "Republic" of South Ossetia. In response, the "Minister of Foreign Affairs" of South Ossetia, Murat Dzhioev stated that all who live in South Ossetia can proudly call themselves "compatriots"; that they consider themselves Slavs and everybody perceives the holidays of Slavic culture as their own⁸⁷.

Such events become regular not only in South Ossetia but in Abkhazia as well. A large part of the society and especially youth is involved. The russification process under the aegis of "working with compatriots" is in full progress on the occupied regions and for the populations of these regions this could lead to the regretful and potentially fateful results.

⁸⁴ <http://rs.gov.ru/node/9912>

⁸⁵ <http://rs.gov.ru/node/16108>

⁸⁶ <http://cominf.org/node/1166484464>

⁸⁷ <http://cominf.org/node/1166484464>

An explicit example of “compatriot care” is the attitude of Russia’s bureaucratic machine toward the people who actually needs assistance and who were forced to flee to Russia. We are talking about the population of Abkhazia that turned into refugees back in the 90-es of the past century.

As the result of 1992- 1993 armed conflict in Georgia, particularly in Abkhazia (where Russia was one of the players), most of the population was forced to flee the region. Part of them resettled in other regions of Georgia and part fled to Russia. At that point the movement between the countries was visa-free; the Soviet passport was still in use and therefore moving from the Georgian territory to Russia did not pose any difficulties.

From that period on, the abovementioned refugees have resided in the Russian Federation, though most of them were not granted a refugee status for different reasons. Part of the refugees has tried to take advantage of the fact that Russia had simplified the acquirement of citizenship for the population of Abkhazia. As noted above, at that time the issues of Russian citizenship were settled by “the Congress of Russian Communities”

It turned out that this simplified way to obtain citizenship was not intended for refugees from Abkhazia, but it was impossible to refuse them because most of them maintained a residence registration in Abkhazia, therefore a different mechanism of rejection was thought up. The applications were received by the “Congress of Russian Communities” but it could not issue an official document confirming the receipt of application, because it was a public organization. Without such document – “spravka” it was impossible to prove or appeal anything (those who had to deal with Russian bureaucracy even once will never forget what it cost them to get such “spravka”)

As a result, refugees awaited decision on the submitted applications for years and most of them are still waiting. In the recent years the attitude toward ethnic Georgians has changed. The facts of disappearance and “accidental” loss of their applications and documents in the immigration offices of Russia grew in number; and what has not disappeared was sent to the places of residence i.e. registration address for verification. Obviously the refugees did not have such addresses in Russia. Eventually Russian Consular Department referred the documents to the “Ministry of Foreign

Affairs” of Abkhazia, that is, they were passed into hands of the regime that made these people refugees!⁸⁸

This is not a single case. About 50 000 Abkhazian refugees reside on the Russian territory and most of them – in deplorable conditions. As it seems, Soviet NKVD spirit is still alive in the officials of Ministry of the Internal Affairs and Immigration Services of modern Russia. It is hard to believe that in modern world thousands of people are brutally humiliated and neglected, and especially by the country that makes others responsible for protecting the interests and rights of her own citizens.

Condition of the Georgian diaspora in the Russian Federation, or Kremlin’s concern about “compatriots” residing in Russia is also important in this respect.

Teimuraz Karukhnishvili

⁸⁸ http://www.refugee.ru/publ/dokumenty/polozhenie_bezhencev_iz_abkhazii_v_rossijskoj_federacii/9-1-0-9

Georgians in Russia

Georgia has many substantial claims against Russia and among them regarding Georgian diaspora despite the vain attempts of Russian politicians to present themselves innocent before the international society.

Immigration of Georgians to Russia can be divided into four historical stages: Tsarist Russia 1491-1988; Soviet period 1921-1991; period of present independence 1991-2008, post Russian occupation period 2008. On all historical stages Georgians have contributed to formation and development of various spheres in Russia.

According to unconfirmed reports about million Georgians live in Russia as of today. Migrants, forcefully displaced from the conflict regions of Georgia are in the most difficult situation, as due to the circumstances Russian Immigration offices are not registering their legitimacy thus leaving them outside the law and forced to obtain documents valid on the occupied territories.

Primary problems of independent Georgia are related to the hypocritical policy of Russia. The so-called peacekeeper military contingent carried out “creeping annexation”. After that Russia fulfilled its cherished dream and occupied considerable part of Georgian territory, carried out massive ethnic cleansing and recognized “independence” of Abkhazia and so called South Ossetia. This caused the defragmentation of country, large flow of IDPs and refugees (500 000) and related humanitarian and social problems followed by a new wave of migration to Russia.

The world remembers well massive deportation of Georgians from Russia in 2006. It was accompanied by propaganda rallies. Administrative structures were executing total persecution of Georgians: in the streets, at work, at home, at school, higher education institutions and churches. Those doomed for deportation were held in special infirmaries and deported from Russia in cargo airplanes. Russian authorities even shut down Georgian restaurants. When such actions grew into

manifestation of xenophobia, international community confronted Russia thereby stopping this barbaric action.⁸⁹

Oleg Basilashvili, Zurab Tsereteli, Boris Akunin - famous cultural figures of Georgian origin, who have lived in Russia for many years felt themselves as victims of Russian ethnic repressions and addressed Russian Government with the open letter "Russia is living the days of shame".⁹⁰

Despite repeated hypocritical declarations of its love and respect to "orthodox fraternal people", Russian government systematically and purposefully continues imperial, historically approbated aggressive national policy of "divide and rule".

Numerous documents from the tsarist Russia period, including population census records demonstrate that actions of Russian authority in Georgia were always aimed at consolidating the concept of ethnic and religious differences in the minds of people, even where they did not existed. Exercising all available resources Russian authorities facilitated maturing of this process to the verge of separatism. This tactics is actively used toward Georgian diaspora even now.

The concept of "Georgian" in the official documents of the 2010 population census of the Russian Federation is egregious. In the column of nationality Georgians are divided to Georgians, Mengrelians, Ajarians, Svans etc. (Mengrelians, Ajarians, Svans – are subethnic groups of the Georgian nation)⁹¹. According to Russian ideologists, in this document Georgians are represented by 12(!) nationalities.⁹² If this were only the fruit of some "expert's" sick imagination, it would have been less surprising, but when such attitude is specified in the document of national importance, it can only be considered as a purposeful anti-Georgian national policy.

⁸⁹ For more information visit: "Humanitarian dimension" of Russian foreign Policy Toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and The Baltic States" www.icgs.ge

⁹⁰ <http://www.svobodanews.ru/content/article/268422.html>

⁹¹ [Appendix № 1 to the Decree №74 "Alphabetical list of possible answers of the population to encode the answers to question 7 of questionnaire forms of National Population Census 2010"](http://www.perepis-2010.ru/documents/acts/)

<http://www.perepis-2010.ru/documents/acts/>

⁹² <http://www.apsny.ge/interview/1272566326.php>

Consular Issues as Russia's "Soft Power policy" implementation mechanism

On September 2, 2008 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia presented two notes to the Embassy of Russian Federation. One Note indicated that with respect to Russia's hostile actions, in particular military aggression against Georgia, invasion of a part of the Georgian territory, ethnic cleansing conducted in Georgia's internationally recognized parts – Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region and illegal recognition of their so-called independence, and on the basis of Resolution N243 of the Parliament of Georgia (28 August 2008), Georgia terminated the Protocol of July 2, 1992 on the 'Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Republic of Georgia and the Russian Federation'.⁹³

The other Note of the Georgian Foreign Ministry notified the Russian side that in compliance with paragraph 3 of Article 2 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (24 April 1963), the Georgian side maintains consular relations with the Russian Federation and the Consular Office (consul, two vice-consuls, technical personnel) continues its activity.⁹⁴

Also, on 3 September 2008 the President of Georgia issued Decree N 426 on the simplification of visa regime with the Russian Federation. Russian citizens were given the right to receive Georgian visa at all border checkpoints for international traffic.⁹⁵

In response, as predictable, Russia has suspended issuing of visas to the Georgian citizens.⁹⁶ In respect to Georgia this form of "punishment" became traditional since late 2000s, when Russia introduced a visa regime between Georgia and Russia. It must be noted that this introduction did not cause the xenophobic hysteria that occurred in the second part of 2006, when Georgian citizens and ethnic Georgians were persecuted, arrested and deported allthrough the territory of Russia. As a result of those repressions, thousands of Georgian citizens and ethnic Georgians were arrested, abused, and deported for no reason whatsoever. With no explanations or notice, citizens

⁹³ http://mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=30&info_id=7852

⁹⁴ http://mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=30&info_id=7852

⁹⁵ http://mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=30&info_id=7882

⁹⁶ <http://www.newsru.com/russia/03sep2008/poslali.html>

lost their jobs and children were kicked out of schools. Several citizens died as a result of this inhuman treatment.⁹⁷

This time Russia chose a different approach. Upon termination of diplomatic relations, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Sergey Lavrov stated that “Russia was not going to take revenge on the citizens of Georgia”.⁹⁸ From March 2009 Russian Federation, is represented through the Russian Federation Interests Section of the Embassy of Switzerland in Georgia, whereas Georgia is represented through the Georgian Interests Section of the Embassy of Switzerland in Russia. From that time on Russian side resumed issuing visas to the Georgian citizens.

The visas are only issued by respective consular offices and only in the following cases: transit, private invitation, education (student visa) and unforeseen circumstances (special cases – emergency medical assistance, death of a relative etc.).⁹⁹ Time needed for issuing such visas depends on the personal attitude of the consul as well as on the level of significance of the inviting party and varies from several days to several months.

Paralell to this, in 2009 Russian Federation opened its Embassies on the occupied territories, in Sukhumi and Tskhinvali. Particular attention was paid to the active work of the consular departments and services. One of the main reasons for such attention was the fact that passports massively distributed by the Russian Federation on the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in 2002-2006 were to expire in 2008 and almost 90% of the population of the occupied territories required a new passportization.

It should be also considered that during the period of passport renewal Russia stalled the negotiations on visa-free movement with the marionette regime of Tskhinvali and Abkhazia¹⁰⁰ so that population of occupied territories had “additional stimulus” to receive Russian passport on time.

⁹⁷ For more details on the abovementioned repressions see „Humanitarian dimension of Russian foreign policy toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and the Baltic States“ – www.icgs.ge

⁹⁸ <http://www.newsru.com/world/03sep2008/rfambclose.html#1>

⁹⁹ <http://www.georgia.mid.ru/>

¹⁰⁰ Russia signed “agreements” with Sukhumi and Tskhinvali on October 2, 2009 and February 1, 2010 respectively. Both “agreements” actually came into force in summer 2010.

It is absolutely clear that consular service is one of the most powerful and serious tools of the Russian policy, precisely fitting the ideological framework.

Chapter III. Russian Media and Georgia

Mariam Tsatsanashvili

Media Tools to create “Enemy Image”

Funny, when the grasshopper jumps on the wagon, everyone is afraid that he would fall and nobody thinks that the cart may roll

Chinese proverb

“Enemy image” and “Friendly image” - both are political instruments in the hands of political elite to mobilize human resources. One by provoking negative impact and the other by illusion of positive effect give the authorities desirable (and not actual) information to maintain power and make necessary decisions.

Everybody knows that real life is more dramatic than tragic or comic. There are no eternal enemies or eternal friends in politics, there are only eternal interests. Sometimes good intentions bring great pain and vice versa. Drama of life is not the struggle between good and evil but different understanding of evil and good. May be the evil is a hypertrophy of some specific good or the good is the seeds picked out from evil? Nobody asks themselves such questions of life axioms in early childhood. For a child it is simple: those who are with our parents – are good and who is against them – evil.

Today, by manufacturing the image of enemy or friend, media denies its main purpose – to be a mediator between public and government. And here comes dictatorial classics: if we do not have an enemy or a friend we must invent one.

Since the Great War there have often been soldiers looting, torture and other violence photos in the press. In addition, they were inscripted with false accusations. This technology has improved over time, changed colors. Information of such kind makes society feel wrath. The reader believes he is dealing with truthful, objective information. Then it turns out that these facts have nothing to do with the truth. Premeditated manufacturing of public opinion in today's media has reached unprecedented scale. Both internal and foreign policy of Georgia is conducted according to the concept of an enemy and a friend. With mediatechnologies developing so rapidly, people become more and more exposed to the harmful influence of information.

Russian media resources in Georgia

The role of the Russian-language media has significantly decreased during past 10 years. This is explained by low purchasing power, limited advertising market and lack of government support. During Soviet period total circulation of Russian-language newspapers "Zarya Vostoka", "Vecherniy Tbilisi", and Molodezh Gruzii" topped half million copies. Nowadays this number has reduced to few thousands.

At the Round Table meeting in RIA Novosti International Press Center, Tato Laskhishvili, Editor-in-Chief of "Svobodnaia Gruzia", stated that the Russian press showed no promise as long as it was oriented on ethnic Russians, but if targeted at the whole Russian speaking population living in Georgia, potential audience was likely to increase up to 700 000.¹⁰¹

According to the 2009-2010 internet polls conducted by "Information and Society" only 16% of Georgian population (excluding Abkhazia and Samachablo) reads Russian press. It must also be noted that Russian press is not distributed in many regions of Georgia. Obviously TV shows are more popular. According to the same polls public broadcasting allocates a certain time for news programs in the language of national minorities as well as in Russian. ¼ of the population regularly watches TV programs in Russian and 12-17% - occasionally. It must be said that many populated areas do not receive TV programs in Russian (approximately 19% of the population). The final

¹⁰¹ <http://www.media.ge/en/node/33461>

count shows that a large part of the population is an active consumer of the Russian-language media.¹⁰²

During last years the Russian-language information space and dissemination of culture in Georgia has dropped significantly. Broadcasting of ORT, RTR and other Russian channels is possible only through cable channels. Russian radio broadcasting is also suspended (except for certain programs of “Golos Rossii” that are broadcast on the Radio Hit FM wave).

Russian media space on the occupied territories

Dissemination of Russian media space on the occupied territories of Abkhazia and Samachablo is as follows: it became mandatory for Abkhazia to broadcast 7 Russian TV channels. According to the information agency “Apsny Press” the decree was signed by Sergey Bagapsh. According to this decree, Abkhaz state TV and Radio, Russian TV channels such as “Perviy Kanal”, “NTV”, “TV-Centr”, “RENTV”, “Kultura”, “Peterburg 5th channel” and “NTK” – “New Televizion of Kuban” – are free of charge for the viewers. South Ossetian information space is also fully consumed by Russian media.

According to Georgian legislation media distribution has to be licensed. The Georgian National Communications Commission has imposed fine on the TV companies: “NTV”, “TV-Centr”, “Rossia” and “Kultura” for unauthorized broadcasting activities on the territory of Abkhazia and Samachablo. It must be noted that these TV companies have been already fined in August 2009.¹⁰³ At that time they were required to immediately cease unauthorized broadcasting activities. The decision of the commission has not been carried out. This time TV companies “NTV”, “TV-Centr”, “Rossia” and “Kultura” were fined for the infringement of part 4, 5 and 6 of the article 144N of the “General Administrative Code of Georgia” and the article 6 of the Law of Georgia “on Occupied Territories”. The fine amount was 500 000 GEL (approximately 300 000USD).

Similar to the English-language broadcasting “Russia Today”, launched by Kremlin’s chief strategist Vladimir Surkov, Georgia launched “First Caucasian” but Zurab Dvali, General Producer of the channel, stated in his interview with the BBC reporter, that retransmission of the “First Caucasian”

¹⁰² <http://informsoc.org/>

¹⁰³ <http://www.ghn.ge/news-3903.html>; http://www.gncc.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=110&info_id=7747

was discontinued by French satellite. There's also an assumption that "First Caucasian" channel's disconnection from the French satellite could be a result of Russian pressure.¹⁰⁴ In response Russian Deputy Interior Minister Arkady Yedeleev has stated that "First Caucasian" was definitely directed towards planting anti-Russian stance and the ideology of extremism.¹⁰⁵

It is noteworthy that media activity, just taking its first steps in Georgia was referred to as a channel aimed at spreading anti-Russian propaganda and attempting to introduce the extremist ideologies. This was argued by Georgia harbouring militant groups. "First Caucasian" aired that interview and called Yedeleev's allegations "absurd" and an attempt to create pretext for stirring tensions on the Georgian-Russian border. In regard to "First Caucasian" Russian press also notices that "after all, Georgia claims that we "took away" Abkhazia and South Ossetia" – writes "Vremya Novosti" newspaper and for politologist Sergey Makedonov everything is clear: Tbilisi wants to demonstrate that the fight has not stopped and that information war continues.¹⁰⁶

The goal has been achieved: "First Caucasian" now stands for "enemy image". In the beginning of 2010 Georgian Public Broadcaster and Eutelsat signed an agreement to launch satellite broadcast. Russian-speaking "First Caucasian" channel became available for millions of viewers in Europe and Asia via satellite, though it was taken off the air by satellite provider and today it broadcasts only within Georgia. According to the President of Georgia "problems created around the "First Caucasian" channel represent a dangerous precedent of international political censorship".

By the year 2010 state radio station company "Golos Rossii" (the voice of Russia), broadcasting overseas on 38 languages since 1929, increased Russian air time in Georgia up to 14 hours a day by increasing shortwave and mediumwave programs. "Voice of Russia" has broadcasted on 7 frequencies with high-power transmission sites in Saint Petersburg, Krasnodar and Samara. In addition, Russian-language programs of "Voice of Russia" are broadcast in Abkhazia on FM 107, 9 MHz. As of today, the air time has been increased from 6 to 10 hours a day. It must be noted that from August 8, 2008 Voice of Russia's "Sodruzhestvo" (Commonwealth) Radio Service,

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.maestro.ge/?address=news1&id=3215&page=1>

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.newsru.com/world/01feb2010/sputnik.html>

¹⁰⁶ ^{წყარო:} <http://www.ambebi.ge/masmedia/14074-qpirveli-kavkasiuri-arkhiq-rusethis-televiziebis-sapirtsone.html#ixzz0shiZNc6W>

broadcasting to CIS and Baltic states, has worked in emergency mode for a long period of time, passing newsflashes of Russian information agencies, broadcasting realtime and online.

General assessments of the media in the Russian Federation

The attitude of international and Georgian experts on the importance and role of media in Russian Federation in most quotations was as follows: media in the Russian Federation is under total state control; it is an effective tool of information-psychological war; that Russian propaganda has changed its color from black to gray, in other words instead of misinformation - information with bits of truth, thus creating an illusion of objectivity; it has become government's extension, not the kind that freely spreads information, but the kind that Russian government needs it to be.

Why does the most part of Georgian experts support this position? Ongoing situation in Georgia is either completely ignored or distorted. This often contributes to inflaming the ethnic conflicts whereas unethical comments decrease political image of both countries. In reference to Russia, in this case works syndrome of "big and small" country. Russia could have never had same attitude toward big countries. As for Georgian political elite, it is convinced that with such comments it builds itself a new image on the international arena.

In political context, when negatively characterizing a subject, the emphasis is made on nationality: "Georgian President", "Georgian Foreign Minister", "Chairman of Georgian Government" etc. This is responded by rather cynical statements from the officials of Georgia. The government of Russia on its part, with constant call for relations with "Orthodox brotherly nation", makes pseudo-stories about Georgians virtual, tries to change the history and composition of Georgian nation on the principle of "divide and rule".

The webspace makes things worse. If we visit sites such as:

<http://cominf.org/>; <http://ossetia.ru/index.php>; <http://osradio.ru/index.html>;
<http://presidentrso.ru> (President of South Ossetia); <http://cominf.org> (IA RSO) ;
<http://osinform.ru> (IA Osinform); www.radioir.org ; <http://ugo-osetia.ru> (newspaper of South Ossetia); <http://minmol.org> (tourism management "South Ossetia"); <http://mkuor.ru> (Ministry of Culture of South Ossetia); <http://mfa-rso.su/> (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of South Ossetia);
<http://osembassy.ru> (Embassy of South Ossetia in Russia); <http://cik.ru>; <http://alloneparxi.ru>

(Alania Eparchy); <http://www.osgenocide.ru> (**Ossetian genocide**). As well as non-governmental, public sites: <http://osradio.ru> (**radio of Ossetia**); iriston.info (**private site**); www.npruo.ru (People's Party of South Ossetia); <http://www.liveosetia.ru> (South Ossetia „Motherland is beautiful“); <http://yugfm.ru> (radio „South Town“); <http://valo-press.narod.ru/apollon.html> (club „Appolon“); <http://nfossetia.ru> (national forum „Ossetia accuses“); <http://www.osetinfo.ru/> (South Ossetia war crimes public commission); <http://rupor-naroda.livejournal.com/>; (blog „Russian Voice“); <http://zarava.livejournal.com/> (Zara Valieva blog); <http://e-osetia.ru> (Ossetian reference directory); sites of Abkhazia: <http://www.abkhaziya.org/>; <http://abhazia.com/>; <http://www.abkhaziagov.org/ru/>; <http://www.abkhazia.narod.ru/>; <http://www.abkhazia.ru/>; or sites that are no longer being updated or under construction: <http://www.hurzarin.osetia.su/>; <http://www.respublika90.ru/>

We'll see that false facts, misinformation, “building a new history” and materials expressing hatred of Georgia are very common for these sites.

For example, “Yandex maps” server has changed Abkhazian and South Ossetian borders with dividing line separating them from Georgia. According to information agency “Ossinform”, Yandex has made these changes after repeated requests of South Ossetian population. Information Agency REGNUM has informed that “Roscartografia” has published new political maps, where occupied territories of Georgia are showed as independent Republics of Abkhazia and Ossetia with the capitals of Sukhumi and Tskhinvali respectively.

IA REGNUM was the first in the Russian as well as in the world press to recognize independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia after launching independent programs from those regions in 2003-2005.

Russian social network service “odnoklassniki.ru” is very popular. In February 2009 this network gave Abkhazia and South Ossetia an opportunity to register on their site as separate states.

The spread of false information affects Russian-Georgian relations as well. For example, influential Russian newspaper (“Nezavisimaya Gazeta”) put on its website photogallery “War in South Ossetia, Day Two”. The photos of bombed and ruined city of Gori have a comment: city of Tskhinvali does not exist any more”. To be precise, five out of ten photos presented by “Nezavisimaya Gazeta”

depict city of Gori in flames. This is evidenced by the same photos and attached text originally published on the site of British information agency. By the way, copyright on these photos belong to Reuters.

Cases of similar false information are found in the field of religion as well. On the website of Alanian Eparchy one can find the words of Czech archbishop regarding the location of Alanian eparchy. It must be said that facts, events and toponimics are fabricated. Historically Eparchy of Alania truly existed. It was even recognized by Constantinople but on the territory of Karachay-Cherkessia, in the vally of Zelenchuk and not on the territory of present-day Samachablo.

Objectivity requires us to note that Russian-Georgian military campaign has been criticized by the Russian press; however, it has led to a serious pressure on media from the government of the Russian Federation. Administrative influence on the information policy of certain editorials has significantly increased. Right defenders and journalists regarded such facts as a pressure on Freedom of Speech. In September 2008 it became known that Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin met with the heads of leading media agencies, among them with Alexey Venediktov, the editor-in-chief of the radio station “Ekho Mosvy”. According to an account from “the Washington Post”, Putin spent several minutes berating Venediktov in front of the group, reading excerpts of what he found wrong in “Ekho Moskv” transcripts.

On August 19, 2008 the newspaper “Gazeta” published an article by proff. Boris Sokolov, in which the author was writing that Russian-Georgian war, characterized by a speed and success which appeared alien to Russia, was in fact most likely to prove a long-term military and political defeat for Moscow. Soon after the article was published, at request of the President of the Russian Federation Prof. Sokolov was forced to leave Russian State Social University and the paper informed Sokolov that it was no longer interested in carrying his work. The article “Did Saakashvili Win or Lose?” was removed from the website of “Gazeta”.

It must be noted that in response to all this, Russia turned into “everlasting” theme for the Georgian media. Even the “anti-authority” wing keeps saying: “Russia is Georgia’s enemy – says editorial statement of Geurazia.org.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ geurasia.org/tribuna/

The pressure on Georgian and Russian media brought us to the point where today Georgian people is deprived of opportunity to directly talk to the Abkhaz and Ossetian people and vice versa. Information is passed over to influential journalists or reporters. The main targets are newsletters and websites.

When talking about the policy of manufacturing the “enemy image”, we must not forget that besides creating a negative image of the opponent, this policy has another goal – constant psychological tension and stress of the counter party. In such circumstances the opponent becomes extremely nervous, loses common sense, hyperbolizes the threat and eventually harms himself. Good example of the abovementioned is information mirage that was created by broadcasting faked primetime news on March 13, 2010, followed by sharp criticism and disapproval on the international level.

US Ambassador to Tbilisi, H.E. John Bass called this program irresponsible because it sparked panic in Georgia. This bogus news edition depicted advancing of Russian tanks, panic of Georgian population and a coup led by one of the opposition leaders. Only at the end of half-hour long news it was indicated that the report was an "imitation of possible events in Georgia". This was a direct psychological operation, an assault on people's intelligence.

In Russia, media is used as a tool of psychological operations for international pressure as well as for manipulation of its own people. This is a negative influence of media on society. In this case security mechanisms either do not exist or do not work. These circumstances do not allow people and politicians (both within and outside the country) to receive accurate information on development, potentials and objectives of the country. Therefore, the conclusions are inadequate.

Chapter IV. 2008-2009 Cyber War in Georgia

Cyber space as an environment for wield of Soft Power

For the last decade, cyber war has become a means of political activity and influence on political situations. Entirely new realities have been created by manipulating democratic values. The criteria, against which to assess such realities, have not so far been identified but one thing is perfectly clear: cyber wars are often a result of political decisions made by superpowers. Sometimes, this is done by using little states. Therefore, enhancing national and international cyber defence systems has become the foremost challenge of international policy. The challenge cannot be addressed without an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of the risk.

It is no longer a question that cyber space can have positive effects as well as adverse consequences. The current international policy must be focused on systemic prevention of such consequences to forestall any possible cyber disaster. One of the important objectives to address the problem is to determine the extents of impacts in cyber space to identify adequate management, legal and technical measures of defence. I suggest the following hierarchy:

1. Cyber attack, the goal of which may not be certain and its consequence can be less harmful;
2. Cyber crime, the goal of which is to steal information from a particular person, destroy or damage particular databases (for or without any purpose);
3. Cyber terrorism, the goal of which is to destroy critical infrastructure of vital importance;
4. Application of advanced equipment and technology to advance geopolitical interests that causes paralysis of the governance of the state within such interests and involvement of people into the process by social networks – this is already a cyber war.

The cyber attacks carried out in Georgia in 2008-2009 must be qualified as a cyber war. This is a good precedent of how cyber space was used as an instrument of political violence to advance geopolitical interests in Georgia.

Character and dynamics of cyber attacks in Georgia

It can be said for sure that the events of August 2008 were preceded by cyber attacks that later on grew into a cyber conflict. The websites of the Government of Georgia, then media sites (news.ge; TV Company Rustavi-2), bank and other important websites came under bombardment.

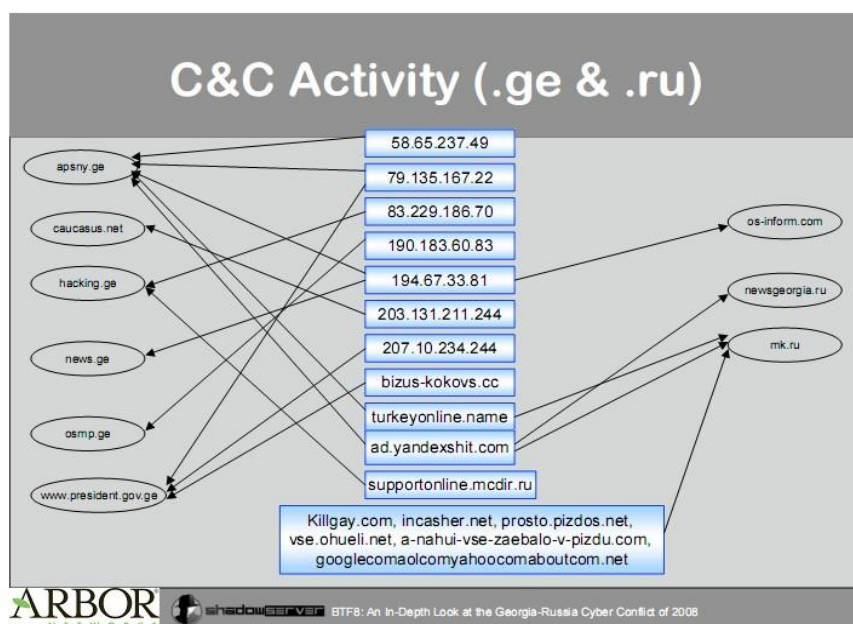
According to the report of one of the international analytical fund (ShadowServer), a DDoS (Distributed denial of Service) attack was registered on 20 July.¹⁰⁸ Starting from 8 August, large-scale Internet-attacks were carried out against the government and media sites of South Ossetia. As a result of one of the attacks, hackers hung Adolf Hitler's and Mikheil Saakashvili's photos on the website of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia. The gravity of events was overlapped with porno sites. The Government, Parliament and Court sites malfunctioned. Not a single Georgian domain could operate from 9-10 August (ge – www.nsc.gov.ge, www.government.gov.ge, www.parliament.ge, www.gncc.ge, www.internews.ge, www.acnet.ge). All these sites were claimed by hackers.

As the reports of ShadowServer show¹⁰⁹, behind these cyber attacks there were Russian operators who gave preliminary instructions of future attacks on forums and at foreign websites (1 win+love+in+Russia 80 7). According to the observers, Georgian websites were attacked from Bizus kokovs' server. The website was later replaced with "July" server (presumably in commemoration of the events of July). It was also established that the server is registered in New York but the registration was performed from a Moscow district with the number 22 00 20.

¹⁰⁸ Andre M. DiMino, An In-Depth Look at the Georgia-Russia Cyber Conflict of 2008, http://www.shadowserver.org/wiki/uploads/Shadowserver/BTF8_RU_GE_DDOS.pdf

¹⁰⁹ In connection with the war of August 2008, ShadowServer Monitoring Group published 4 reports, ibid. http://www.shadowserver.org/wiki/uploads/Shadowserver/BTF8_RU_GE_DDOS.pdf

Later on, other parties also joined the cyber attacks. The social media was used in these relations. For instance, after “botnet” started the attack. When the attackers noticed it, they joined the attack from various forums, including *Twitter* and *Facebook*.



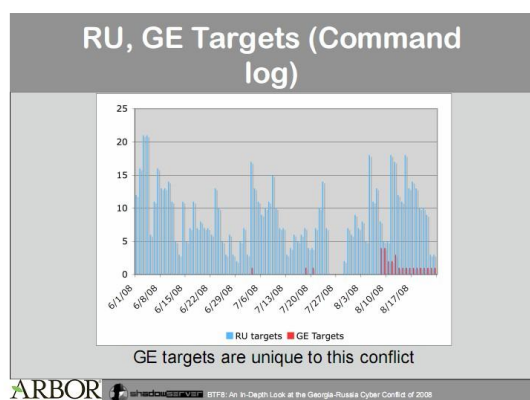
The chart above shows the directions of attacks on sites between Georgia and Russia.¹¹⁰

Attacks from Turkeyonline.name; ad.yanlexshit.com were carried out in the direction of Georgia as well as Russia. It is hard to say who prepared these double strikes but the fact is clear: the attacks assumed a massive scale, presenting the risk of the world cyber war. As the independent experts of U.S Cyber-Consequences Unit, a research institute, report: the cyber groups involved in the attack

¹¹⁰ Andre M. DiMino, An In-Depth Look at the Georgia-Russia Cyber Conflict of 2008, http://www.shadowserver.org/wiki/uploads/Shadowserver/BTF8_RU_GE_DDOS.pdf, slide page N16. 2008 oct. (15.08.09)

against Georgian websites carried out a typical “bothen” attack. Besides, Microsoft’s ordinary software and such social web networks as *Twitter* and *Facebook* were used as an instrument of cyber warfare.¹¹¹ The hackers disseminated at social websites the addresses of possible targets and information on such means of attack, which could be used by a person of little skills in the sphere. As a rule, social networks (*Facebook* and *Twitter*) do not monitor the communication process unless they receive a complaint from the user.

It is also confirmed that counterattacks from the Georgian side were registered but these attacks appeared rather weak. In general, it is hard to determine the magnitude of an attack but the monitors provide quite a precise record of how cyber bombs moved from blog to blog, forum to forum, website to website.¹¹² Cyber attacks against Georgian websites grew into a Georgian-Russian cyber conflict, rolling in wide segments of the population. From 17 August, Georgian websites display the addresses, from which to download a PING IP address, in parallel with such appeals as “Now you know guys, let’s bomb Ru together...”



A year later in 2009, ShadowServer experts Jose Nasario and Andre M. DiMino published a report on cyber attacks in the Internet. The report suspects Russia of the cyber attacks against Georgia.¹¹³ Seizing identification details, application of social networks and modified commercial software is a typical instrument of attack but their combination brings the methods of attack up to the new level, says Emit Ioran, the former Chief of US National Security.¹¹⁴ “Destruction of a communication

¹¹¹ Richard Weitz, **Russia Refines Cyber Warfare Strategies** 25 Aug 2009

<http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/article.aspx?id=4218> (25.08.09)

¹¹² See www.shadowserver.org, <http://www.usccu.us/>

¹¹³ Andre M. DiMino, **An In-Depth Look at the Georgia-Russia Cyber Conflict of 2008**, http://www.shadowserver.org/wiki/uploads/Shadowserver/BTF8_RU_GE_DDOS.pdf

¹¹⁴ **SIOBHAN GORMAN**, **Hackers Stole IDs for Attacks** AUGUST 17, 2009
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB125046431841935299.html> (20.08.09)

system at the start of an attack is a standard military practice,” says John Bamgarney, the Chief Technical Officer and the former cyber-detective of National Security and Central Intelligence Agency.¹¹⁵

The allegation is answered by Russian patriots in the forums: we are not hacker-criminals. We’ll rise against the bombardment of Georgian and Western websites. There is only *stopgeorgia.ru* that shows how we fight Georgians.¹¹⁶

Cyber attacks against Georgian websites in 2009

In April 2009, a powerful cyber attack was carried out against Georgian websites. Court and media websites were blocked. The technology that was used at that time was a publicly available commercial software used by computer network administrators. The hackers modified the software to suit it to their destructive intentions. They reinforced a certain number of the so-called stress tests. These tests are usually used to assess the volume of servers to handle the wave of http packets. Another program was also modified. The websites damaged with the software applied to randomly chosen, non-existing addresses.

An interesting precedent occurred in 2009 in the form of a cyber penetration into the website of the Office of the Patriarch of Georgia. The attack had a specific goal to achieve. The English version of the website of the Office of the Patriarch of Georgia showed a phrase, for which the Azeri media incriminated the Patriarch of Georgia into national slurs against the Azeri (in this case, the website of the Office of the Patriarch of Georgia drew the attack from Belgium). In a few days the Azeri and Georgian spiritual leaders and journalists condemned the fact as a deliberate act to arouse hatred, thus preventing the conflict from unfolding.

The blocking of the e-mails logged on the Georgian domain (ge) coincides with the same period.

Assessments of the 2008-2009 cyber attacks against Georgia

¹¹⁵ These data are taken from the article published by Siobhan Gorman in The Wall Street Journal: Hackers Stole IDs for Attacks, By SIOBHAN GORMAN <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB125046431841935299.html>

¹¹⁶ The Germans refused to allocate the website on the German server.

Whether these cyber attacks will be assessed as cyber terrorism is a matter of proof. In this case, experts and specialists will have to make serious efforts to gather evidence. One thing is clear: cyber attacks in Georgia had different goals and the consequence proved to be different from that of Estonia – much heavier:

As Davit Taliashvili, the head of the Unit of Computer Technologies and Information Support of the Administration of the President of Georgia says: the number of attacks amounted to 64 000 packages per second and the attacks were conducted in an organized manner. Maka Gigauri, the head of the development of the Web Portal of the Parliament of Georgia, says that attacks against the Internet resources started much earlier than the events of August. As soon as the military operations started in South Ossetia, it proved virtually impossible to work in the Internet: all the statements that we uploaded to the Parliament website could be viewed locally on the server of our agency only. This is a target-oriented policy during a military conflict, Gigauri says.¹¹⁷

To address the problem, the Georgian government websites moved on to the servers deployed in Atlanta, USA with the assistance of Tulip systems. However, as the Georgian party says, Georgian websites were penetrated within 15 minutes after the relocation. The server of Georgian information space in USA was changed again.

The technology that the cyber attackers employed against Georgia suggests that they had developed a detailed plan of the campaign well before the conflict. The attackers did not test-study or reconnoiter the Georgian websites. Instead, from the very beginning they employed the plan they had developed specifically for the attack. For instance, to damage one of the Georgian websites, they used graphics software that was developed back in 2006 and has not been used by anyone until the Georgian event of 2008. The hackers registered new domains and designed new websites, repeatedly indicative of the fact that they had already identified specific targets, the attack scenario and had possibly carried out a preliminary test cyber attack.

Consequences of cyber attacks

¹¹⁷ Technological Guideline Navigator: STOP CYBERRUSSIA
http://navigator.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=12&info_id=3630

No published report gives any direct answer to the question whether the acts of hackers were agreed with the Russian military forces. However, this is suggested by the fact that the campaign had started before the media spread news about Russia's incursion into Georgia.

As a result of such acts:

- It was impossible to highlight information through the government websites;
- The military conflict in South Ossetia and Abkhazia was to a certain extent a continuation of the cyber attacks, as a result of which Georgia lost ¼ of her territory, received IDPs, and suffered a loss of civilian population and destruction of the private properties of the people living within the conflict zones.
- According to the blitz-polls that we conducted on our initiative: out of 200 respondents using the Internet during cyber attacks 45% said they lost business and scientific information and 55% said in addition to loss of information their computers were damaged.

Cause and effect relationships between virtual acts and politics

Cyberspace security analysts say that one trend is that hackers are becoming politicized and the other is that civil disobedience movement is being transferred to cyberspace. The dynamics of cyber attacks shows that the application of cyber instruments to knock down critically important national infrastructure has created real risks of political pressure in the virtual world. Due to insufficient evidence to prove cause and effect relationship between the ensuing result and the act, the observers of the processes cannot state for sure what the hackers' goal was when attacking. One thing is clear that hackers can act on behalf of a hostile country or under the influence of any country. It has also been recognized that DDoS attacks are controlled by a state. Therefore, we agree with the position that the cyber conflict in Georgia must be qualified as a cyber war.

In this study, we'd like to specify one phrase regularly used in the media and political vocabulary: "Cyber war between Georgia and Russia." It has been proved that the cyber weapon that is controlled by a state was used against Georgia. Strategic partners failed to prevent it. On the

contrary, their involvement created new hotbeds of conflict. It is abundantly obvious that Russia viewed the United States as the other subject in the conflict and it was against the United States that Russia used its cyber weapon.

Hackers carried out attacks from various countries, using the advanced technologies that had never been witnessed by the observers before. To put it flatly, it is clear that due to a conflict of geopolitical interests with USA, in 2008 and 2009 Russia has turned Georgia and her population into a proving ground for testing the state-of-the-art weapon. Cyberspace of Georgia turned into battlefield. Calls for cyber-battles against each other were heard in social networks of both Georgia and Russia. Personal data bases and computer equipment of the population were damaged, so it was the cyber war against Georgia!

It could often be heard from the media that Georgia won the information war with Russia. It is a wrong conclusion – victory or defeat is measured against the results. Georgia paid a huge price: lost territories, information vacuum and bitter consequences of psychological pressure upon the population.

At the same time, it should be mentioned that some central operators seemed to ask the hackers to contain the scales of the damages incurred by them. The hackers had to knock down the websites so, that they would have not provide service and their visual side would have been damaged. Experts suggest that it was quite possible if the target computers were ordered to delete key data, destroy security instruments, and disrupt a power supply and transportation system. It is a fact that it is impossible to control such process in cyberspace to the end and that the actual consequences proved much heavier than the hackers had intended. With such a “moderate” act Russia may have wished to demonstrate that if provoked she was capable of fully destroying Georgia’s critically important infrastructure. The Russian army may have had the same goal when bombing the areas near Baku-Tbilisi-Jeyhan Oil Pipeline, but not attacking the pipeline itself. By demonstrating her dominance in cyber and military zones, Russia stressed her influence not only on Georgia but on other post-Soviet countries as well. This was a striking example for other countries to learn so that in future they refrain from any act that might interfere with Russia’s interests.

It is also worth mentioning that the consequences of the cyber attack were much heavier than they might seem at a glance. This is borne out by the findings of our empirical surveys when the persons

being in the social network during the attack say that their computers were damaged or they lost important information. However, no such statement can be found in international reports. Although the consequences of the application of cyber weapons were controlled by Russia, some hackers managed to carry out such destructive acts. Although not so ironically, we should still say the following: it is a fact that the hackers were capable of damaging important facilities by means of a cyber attack. This is underscored in all the reports published. The same is confirmed by the experts who had access to the hardware of computer networks in the process of the attacks. Looking at the situation from a different perspective, it may be quite possible that Georgia was spared of heavier and more tragic consequences. The objects of the cyber attack were spared of destruction with grenades and rockets. Georgia and the whole Caucasus escaped the Iraqi and Serbian scenarios.

That's why we say that this was a cyber war in Georgia. This war tested the new cyber weapon and involved large segments of the population.

One often finds such assessments in the media and research reports: a small country (Georgia) becomes an object of a cyber war. I think this is a partly correct formulation, as the consequences of a cyber war are much greater and less subject to a territorial principle. Georgia was not the only country to be affected by the cyber attack. Georgia had signed about 40 defence agreements with USA as a strategic partner. However, it turned out that in cyberspace, to say nothing about the rest Georgia was completely exposed to and unprotected against cyber attacks. As they say, transfer of data to an American server either failed or was so late that it elicited such grave consequences. Georgia has 34 agreements in the spheres of education, culture and science with Russia as well. In 2008-09 Russia showed quite clearly how she was fulfilling those agreements. Despite her victory in cyberspace, Russia is rapidly losing her partnership ability and becoming dangerous for the world by a violent enforcement of her interests.

How to counter the giant state's cyber hysteria

The creation of political mechanisms by EU is of highest importance. It is Europe that should raise the issue of prohibition of cyber weapons. Considering that Europe depends on USA in terms of military security and on Russia in terms of energy security, it is therefore in the position to act as a

mediator. It has the necessary intellectual potential and leverage as well. I don't believe Europe has already exhausted her capabilities in cyber security.

What did Georgia do to contain the cyber attack? To ensure security, Georgia chose to limit the use of cyber space. By decision of the Government of Georgia, the providers barred access to Russian websites for their users. It was a local measure and could have had a temporary expediency but despite such prohibitions modern technologies know other ways too, to access websites.

Georgia received the first assistance in cyber security from Estonia. As Toomas Hendrik Ilves, the President of Estonia, stated at the UN Assembly, before Georgia got involved in the armed conflict, she had become an object of a mass cyber attack.¹¹⁸ Those, carrying out the attack, targeted the websites of news agencies and banks together with the government websites. Following the cyber war, the country has made new holistic organizational and technical steps in the field of cyber defense. For instance, a cyber agency operations center was established in Tallinn in 2010. In turn, USA has 24 such centers today. Similar centers have been formed in Europe and Moscow, too.

The measures taken by Georgia were not effective enough, as this is a global problem and the superpowers are working nonstop to refine their cyber weapons. Therefore, they have a major advantage in the sphere.

The state-of-the-art cyber weapons and technologies are being rapidly developed in China as well. The experts have obtained evidence that Chinese hackers have already performed a preliminary surveillance of such major US infrastructure as commercial electronic networks. What is most alarming, they already possess the software that can be used to destroy these networks. EU has finally called the first Ministerial to discuss the cyber security of the major infrastructure. The USA has formed the first cyber unit to investigate into cyber attacks and cyber crimes. Nevertheless, it seems that the White House is experiencing challenges in coordinating the federal, state and private computer networks related to the critically important US infrastructure. Under such circumstances, the role of Europe in cyber disarmament is inestimable for the security of the new world.

¹¹⁸ President of Estonia warned of a risk of confrontation in cyberspace <http://www.rg.ru/2008/09/25/ilves-anons.html>

We have raised the issue of forming Europe's information security systems at several European forums following the events of August 2008. This is because Europe should become a guarantor for the establishment of not only democratic values but democratic procedures as well.

While Russia has the cyber security doctrine approved in 2000 and the United States has the National Security Strategies approved in 2002 and 2007, the level of implementation of the European Convention on Cybercrime is rather low. Georgia acceded to the Convention in April 2008 but instead of decreasing, the number of cyber attacks actually increased. The Georgian National Security Concept contains only one paragraph (5.10)¹¹⁹ to cover the issue. The paragraph states: "Georgia attributes considerable importance to the protection of the critical information systems of the state. Moreover, secure flow of credible information before and during crises is a necessary precondition for successful crisis prevention and resolution. In this respect, the Georgian Government is developing the legislative basis and infrastructure necessary for the improvement of the information technologies and secure flow of information".

Although the Criminal Code of Georgia is one of the first laws in terms of formally criminalizing cyber terrorism, the legal framework in terms of prevention of cyber violations is rather scant: three articles in the Criminal Code of Georgia, a few articles in the General Administrative Code of Georgia, the Law on Electronic Signatures can hardly be viewed as the legal instruments enough to provide for the National Security Concept. Considering the cybercrime statistics in Georgia, 6 crimes have been identified but only one of them has been investigated. These figures do not reflect the level of legal protection of the consequences of cyber risks. Nor are they reflective of the political will to get interested in the security issues of the new challenge.

Against such background, Javier Solana's statement that due to the Georgia-Russian conflict the European Union will review the strategic provisions of the European Security Concept¹²⁰ leads us to believe that: one lesson that should be learned from the Georgian war is that international organizations must step up their efforts towards cyber security.

¹¹⁹ See Georgian National Security Concept at http://www.parliament.ge/index.php?sec_id=470&info_id=4662&lang_id=GEO

¹²⁰ See <http://top.rbc.ru/politics/06/09/2008/237693.shtml>

Estonia, Georgia, Lithuania – who will become the next victim of cyber war?

The cyber attack against the Estonian Government websites was carried out on 26 April 2006. The culmination of the attack was the Internet service suspension (DDoS). It has been believed that the Estonian fact is the first cyber war against a particular government. Russia was suspected of instigating cyber attacks against Estonia. Of course Russia denies her role in this war. However, irrespective of who initiated the cyber attack against Estonia, the experts are of a mind that the attack amounted to a cyber war in terms of resources and coordination.

The US Cyber-Consequences Unit has published a report describing how in August 2008 Russia used a massive, well-integrated, fore-planned information war campaign against Georgian Internet facilities in parallel with the military operations. The reports of 2009 ascribe the attack against Georgia to the organization known as “Russian Business-Network”. It should also be noted that the immediate link of the group to the cyber attacks cannot be borne out with public information. Besides, the experts cannot agree whether the group still exists or not.

Refraining from cyber attacks against vital infrastructure is also confirmed. However, the cyber warfare technologies have proved so successful that the organization gave the full version of the report only to the US government and a few other Internet security professionals. We can use only publicly accessible provisions of the report.¹²¹ Therefore, we add our observations to the public information and reconciling them presume that:

Cyber war can victimize any state that falls within the sphere of conflict of geopolitical interests between Russia and the West and fails to ensure adequate balance of interests. Cyber conflicts are inevitable in addressing political issues in the future world.

There is only one solution: Europe’s role in cyber security is an indispensable task.

Cyber weaponry has experienced tremendous progress for the last two years, getting far ahead of international agreements (even treaties in the military sphere), as the latter fail to provide for adequate instruments to prohibit the application of the Internet resources and civil technologies as a weapon.

¹²¹ US Cyber-Consequences Unit is an independent non-profit research institute that cooperates with Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy of Taft University. The organization’s studies are conducted by John Bamgarner, the main author of the report. By using various Internet resources, he and his group monitor the Internet traffic at <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/4218/global-insights-russia-refines-cyber-warfare-strategies>

The consequences of the war of August 2008:

- 1/5 of the Georgian territories have been occupied – as considered by the international community. According to the estimates of Russia's official circles – the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia have been liberated. Hundreds of people have been killed; thousands have become IDPs and refugees, including Abkhazians and Ossetians.
- The new cyber weapon was used. The cyber attack was designed to achieve a particular result – the US to recognize Russia's predominance in the region. The cyber-attack of 2008 incurred a material damage to Georgia's communication capabilities, knocking down over twenty websites for more than a week. The attack against Georgia was prepared by a group of Russian hackers, whose clear link to the Russian government cannot be confirmed. However, a consecutive development of the cyber attacks and military actions suggest that the Russian government and the cyber attackers acted in at least indirect coordination.
- The Georgian events showed that the Russian cyber offensive operations have improved significantly following the Estonian conflict of 2007. Based on gained experience the Russians would further refine their cyber weaponry.
- Potential targets received another warning – they have to reinforce their cyber security.

Tengiz Pkhaladze

Giorgi Gvimradze

Chapter V. Religion Factor Used by Russia in the Context of "Soft Power"

“Nearly 80 percent of the Georgian population is Orthodox with close ties to the Moscow Patriarch. The Russian Orthodox Church does not formally preside over the Georgian Orthodox Church, unlike in Ukraine and Belarus, but the ties between the two groups have long helped Russia to push into Georgia socially”.¹²² This is an extract from one of the recent interesting articles published by Starfor, a US analytical center, regarding Russia’s growing interests in the so-called modern expanding influence. It is interesting to see why the authors believe the Church is an instrument for Russia to exert pressure on the Georgian community and how in reality Russia is using a religion factor in relation to Georgia. The answer to this question calls for a little historical overview to clearly demonstrate the actual picture of the current realities.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the post-Soviet people regained the freedom of religion in addition to many other fundamental freedoms. A religious thirst is one of the most powerful intrinsic needs of a human being. Therefore, every community has quite a large segment of the followers of one or another faith. The Orthodox Christianity is one of the traditional religions in Georgia (as in many other countries, including Russia). Thus, at the beginning of the nineties of the twentieth century people thirsting for religious beliefs moved to the Orthodox Church mostly because of the tradition, not because of theological literacy. For a large part Orthodoxy was identified with being a Georgian and to prove so they refer to the centuries of experience. For the last two decades, the Orthodoxy in Georgia has assumed a national-political identity. Orthodox Christians make up 80% of the population and almost the same number expresses trust to the Church. However, it should be mentioned that conducting such survey is a mistake in itself. It should be stressed that to identify who the people express their trust to, the survey represents the Church and the Great Shepherd as a political institute and a political figure and names them next to the institutions having similar functions.

It is natural that such positive attitude to the Orthodox religion is well known to the political engineers of Russian Federation. Therefore, it is logical to presume that they will attempt to use this factor to their own advantage.

Orthodoxy and the Kremlin Ideology

¹²² Russia’s Expanding Influence (Part 1): The Necessities http://www.stratfor.com/memberships/156075/analysis/20100304_russia_0

Russia announced Christianity as the state religion in the 10th century (988). After that, Russian kings and later emperors were actively involved in running the Church affairs though the Church still managed to retain a measure of independence.

Under the rule of Peter the Great, Russian Church lost independence it had so far. The emperor abolished the Patriarchate and replaced it by a governing Synod. The members of the synod acted as state officials as well thus enjoying secular privileges. This reform brought the Church under complete state control.

The Church autonomy in Russia was restored only after the collapse of Tsarist monarchy in 1917. However, another problem cropped up when the Bolsheviks came to power and declared a severe war against religion in general. The wave of repressions followed. A target-oriented ideological machine started up against religious denominations and claimed the lives of a large number of spiritual figures across the whole Soviet Union. Under such circumstances, the fate of the Russian Orthodox Church took interesting twists and turns. The attitude to the Church that had been repressed until the forties was changed in 1943. The modern “Russian theology” ascribes this to the miracle by Mother of God. The Miracles of the Icon of the Mother of God of Kazan reads that Stalin was visited by a nun to tell him about the revelation of the Mother of God who asked that the above icon be carried around Moscow and Petersburg if Russia was to be saved from Fascism. The “Great Leader” could not fail to realize that the idea was rational for him and ordered that the request be granted. This was followed with the opening of the Churches and restoration of the office of the Patriarch (Russian Patriarch Tikhon passed away in 1925. Since then Russia had not had a Patriarch until 1943). A certain part of the ecclesiastical community had a rather critical attitude to this decision of the Soviet state, complaining Stalin wished to employ the Orthodoxy as an ideology. Whatever the motives, the plan worked for Stalin’s benefit. At that time, the Communist government sounded the ideas of the Third Rome, the New Constantinople. “In 1943, Joseph Stalin, the former Seminarian from Tbilisi, decided to use for his political goals tens of millions of Russians abroad and unite the countries of the post-Byzantine empire (Eastern Europe and the Balkans) under Russia as the Third Rome and play up an ethno-confessional “card”.¹²³ It should also be mentioned that the restored Church was called the Russian Orthodox Church, re-emphasizing the “Great Leader’s” ambition to exploit on the ethnic idea. In turn, the Office of the

¹²³ Prist Gleb Yakutin: Historic Path of the Orthodox Talibanism. Moscow 2002 <http://www.vehi.net/politika/yakunin.html>

Russian Patriarchy did not oppose the idea of the Third Rome: “In 1947-48, the Stalinist Orthodox Church hoped to hold a Pan-Orthodox Council, at which with the invisible help from the Ministry of State Security, the Patriarch of Moscow would have moved from the fifth place on the patriarchal hierarchy on the very top, thus to become Patriarch of the Word. Then Moscow would again be declared the Third Rome and Joseph Stalin – the new Constantine the Great.”¹²⁴ For certain reasons the idea failed.

Despite the fact that the second wave of repressions followed Stalin’s death, compromises could still be reached with the spiritual figures – starting from the forties, there are striking examples of collaborationism between the state and the Church. The awards that the high-ranking figures of the Russian Church received for their merits before the Soviet state speak for themselves. The Museum of the Office of the Patriarch of Russia proudly displays the four Orders of the Hero of Socialist Labour that Patriarch Aleksey I was awarded with. Other religious figures were no exception as well.

Such relationship was largely due to the use of the Church resources for the activities of secret services as well as to ideological influence on various Orthodox communities mainly within the Soviet states.

One of the important aspects of the current Russian political thinking is the question of “Russian World.” The Office of the Patriarch of Russia seems to be the best way to materialize the idea. In this case, the above idea is often called “Holy Russia” that, as the Patriarch claims, stands above all geographical and material dimensions, having a more civilized idea. Translating it to the geographical category, the idea includes Ukraine, Russia and Belarus and partly Moldova, since the Russian Orthodoxy played certain role in the development of these peoples. As the Patriarch of the Russian Church said, while visiting Ukraine he got a better feeling of the above idea of “Holy Russia.” This cannot be understood and encased within modern geopolitical realities or be suited to this or that sovereign state.¹²⁵

In addition to the external ideological function, the Russian Church has an internal political application as well. The Government exploits on its authority to achieve its political ends. Just like

¹²⁴ Prist Gleb Yakutin: Historic Path of the Orthodox Talibanism. Moscow 2002

<http://www.vehi.net/politika/yakutin.html>

¹²⁵ Interview of the Most Holy Patriarch Kiril for National Interest Program (Russia TV canal). 26 November 2009.

<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/print/950675.html>

in Georgia, about 70% of the Russian population professes to be an Orthodox Christian though only 20% might actually be a parish.

It is now believed that the Church is losing its authority and employing a variety of methods to regain it. That's why the Russian church figures come up with permanent evaluations of the domestic or foreign policy of Russia, demonstrating friendship with the top officials of the nation, etc. In this respect, it is interesting to see how The "Nezavisimaya Gazeta" assesses the 1st year performance of the Patriarch of Russia where the Patriarch was hailed even a TV evangelist. The article stresses that the Patriarch has not left a topic not to comment on, even those that were believed to have been exhausted.¹²⁶ One of the recent forms to regain authority has been expressing negative attitudes to other confessions and staging different protest actions against particular government decisions.¹²⁷

The viewpoints of the Russian Church regarding modern challenges and relations with Georgia can be viewed within the same context.

History of One Common Faith

*"We were not harmed by the Muslim world neither by Mongols, Persians, Arabs or Turks as much as we were harmed with a "kindred", one-faith relation with the Russian culture and Church."*¹²⁸

Merab Mamardashvili

Indeed, having one common faith proved to be a decisive factor in the Georgian-Russian relationship. The Russian historians are still trying to represent the annexation of Georgia and cancellation of the autonomy of the Georgian Church as a voluntary act. Russian and, disappointingly, some Georgian historians, public or political figures claim that Georgian Church as well as the Georgian State was saved with an accession to Russia in the 19th century. It is hard to make deliberations on how the history of Georgia might have unfolded if the commitments under the Georgiyeusk Tract had been fulfilled or if the "Great Russian Emperor" had forsaken us to the

¹²⁶ "The Year of Patriarch Kiril" – over the past year the Head of the Russian Church became much more popular. 2010-02-03. http://www.ng.ru/editorial/2010-02-03/2_red.html

¹²⁷ Aleksandre Ziachenko: Authority of the Church as Political Resource of Power. Archevani Magazine N2, May 2006

¹²⁸ Lasha Khetsuriani: Russian Orthodoxy and "Moral Masochism". <http://gandaba.livejournal.com/198837.html>

end. However, worse consequences can hardly be imagined. As Nikoloz Durnov, a Russian scholar writes: “If a Georgian had decided to write a true story of the acts of the Russian exarchs in Georgia, we would have blushed at hearing their deeds as they were discrediting the image of Russian exarchs. The Russian exarchs arrived in Georgia not to take care of parishes entrusted to them but to rob and destroy the property of the ancient Georgian Church, pervert the Georgian language... They had brought nothing but a terrible evil and harm to the Georgian Church. For them Georgia was a country of barbarians only. They dumped all the laws and ecclesiastical resolutions regarding the Georgian Church into the Mtkvari River, burning in fire numerous Church documents, taking some of them to Petersburg, closing down 25 eparchies and 860 churches and monasteries.”¹²⁹

After East Georgia was annexed in 1801, it was time to deal with West Georgia and the Georgian Church. For the next decade, the Russian substitute kings studied the Church, creating the relevant conditions.

On 21 June 1811, based on the report from Archbishop Varlam Eristavi, Governor Tormasov submitted to Emperor Alexander I for signature a document to cancel the autonomy of the Georgian Church and the title of Catholicos-Patriarch. The head of the Georgian Church was called “Exarch.” The latter was appointed a permanent member of the Russian Synod.¹³⁰ Varlam Eristavi’s “merit” paid off – he was the first and last Georgian Exarchs. From that time on till the restoration of autonomy, only the Russians were ordained to the office of the Exarch.

The fate of Catholicos-Patriarch Anton II was tragic. He was summoned to Moscow and informed of the decision that his title had been cancelled. He could not get back to Georgia and died in Nizhniy Novgorod in 1828.

Mitropolit Dositheos of Kutaisi and Mitropolit Ekvtime of Gaenati were arrested in 1820 since they were preventing Russia from gaining the districts of Likht-Imereti and Abkhazian Catholicoses. “They put bags on both of them down to the waist and tied their hands, beating Dositheos severely and taking them away... Mitropolit Dositheos of Kutaisi was drowned near Surami with the bag on. They carried his corpse to Ananuri, burying him there. Mitropolit Ekvtime of Gaenati was taken to Petersburg to be presented before the Emperor Alexander I.” Before the audience with the

¹²⁹ Sergo Vardosanidze: “Georgian Orthodox Apostolic Church in XIX-XX Centuries. Tbilisi 2007.

¹³⁰ Sergo Vardosanidze: “Georgian Orthodox Apostolic Church in XIX-XX Centuries. Tbilisi 2007.

Emperor, Ekvtime was told the Emperor would pardon him if he asked for forgiveness. Unbroken in spirit, the high priest proudly stated that he had nothing to ask forgiveness for, calling the Emperor “Nero of the New Time.” Enraged Alexander I put him under arrest, sending him to Svir Monastery far from Petersburg, where he died on 21 April 1822.”¹³¹ As a result, the above eparchy moved under the Russian rule.

A Russian-language Theological Seminary was opened at the beginning of the 19th century to train students to replace Georgian priests. Chanting and service in Georgian in the temples were prohibited. The walls of Georgian temples were whitewashed with plaster, destroying unique frescoes. Georgian churches were robbed. The Icon of Khakhuli was believed lost for decades. Even today, it cannot be restored to its original shape. Valuable Church items were taken from Georgia and sold with the assistance of the Russian exarchs. Most of the exarchs entertained xenophobic feelings towards Georgians. Many of them discredited everything Georgian, reducing Georgians to the point of savages and barbarians.

At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, the proponents of the autonomy of the Georgian Church came to the forefront of public attention. The attitude of the Russian Church towards them was rather negative for the above reasons. Bishop Kirion (Sadzaglishvili), a staunch advocate for the autonomy of the Georgian Church, was sent from one eparchy to another and finally summoned to Russia in 1905. He returned to Georgia only after the restoration of the autonomy of the Georgian Church in 1917.

The restoration of the autonomy of the Georgian Church followed the appointment of a Provisional Government in Russia in February 1917. On 12 (25) March 1917, the Georgian priests convened in Svetitskhoveli Cathedral, declaring the restoration of the autonomy of the Georgian Church. In September of the same year, Holy Synod of the Georgian Orthodox Church enthroned Bishop Kirion (Sadzaglishvili) as Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia.

This fact had controversial repercussions in Russia. The Provisional Government tried to convince Georgia that independence would be harmful for the Church itself but finally had to recognize the fact, however with some exceptions. The Provisional Government recognized a national, not a territorial autonomy of the Georgian Church. Unlike the Government, Russian Church completely opposed the decision of the Georgian clergy. Taking advantage of the February Revolution, the

¹³¹ Sergo Vardosanidze: “Georgian Orthodox Apostolic Church in XIX-XX Centuries. Tbilisi 2007.

Russian Church restored the title of the Patriarch just as Georgia restored the independence of the Georgian Church. Tikhon, now the first Patriarch of Russia, sent Georgian Church leaders an official notice severely criticizing their conduct. The Head of the Russian Church qualified the restoration of the autonomy of the Georgian Church as an unlawful act, calling on the Georgian priesthood to get back to his subordination.¹³² Disappointingly, Patriarch Tikhon did not consider the fact that the abolishment of the independence of the Georgian Church at the beginning of the 19th century happened in gross violation of the ecclesiastical law that entitled the Georgian hierarchs to legitimize the restoration of the autonomy.

Interestingly, the establishment of the Soviet rule of government and atheistic repressions did not change the attitude of the Russian Church. Instead of restoring and maintaining a Christian brotherly relationship with the Georgian Church of the same faith that was experiencing the same persecution and thus had similar interests, the Office of the Patriarch of Moscow would not restore a Eucharistic relationship with the Georgian priesthood.

The situation changed only as a result of Stalin's above decision. In 1943, Patriarch Sergi of Russia recognized the territorial autonomy of the Georgian Church. Unfortunately, international recognition could not be gained until 1989.

The breakup of the Soviet Union turned the churches of Georgia and Russia into the independent churches of two independent states, putting their relations up to an entirely new level. These contacts and mutual relationships have had much to do with the political processes touched upon below.

Attempts to disseminate "Russian Theology" in Georgia

We purposely put the word "Russian" in the heading of this chapter in quote marks, as no such event exists, to be more correct, must not exist in reality. The Orthodox world knows and recognizes only Christian theology, without dividing it into Russian, Georgian, Greek, Serbian, etc theologies. We'd like to re-emphasize that the Orthodox world must not divide it into such. Disappointingly, though, the aforementioned ideology offers such a phenomenon. We'd like to

¹³² Epistle of Patriarch Tikhon of Moscow to Georgian Bishops. Archevani Magazine N7-8, October 2006.

point out that what we are going to discuss below can be called more a “mythology” than a theology. For this reason, the word “theology” is also put in quote marks.

Just as in many other spheres, Georgia is now experiencing lack of original Georgian ecclesiastic literature. Most of the available books are either in Russian or published in Russia or translated from Russian. We have nothing against Russian literature as such. Nor do we want in any way to diminish the importance of translation activity. On the contrary, if we say that there is Christian theology this implies the need to become conversant with the Russian original texts as well as translations but not just Russian or just translations.

Rarely can we meet the works of the modern Orthodox, so-called progressively thinking but actually true Christian thinking authors (Anton Surozhel, Alexander Shmeman, etc). On the other hand, the above mythology is more than enough.

Referring to globalists as Satanists, denouncing plastic cards and other chip-bearing items as a seal of the devil, dismissing the New World Order as anti-Christian, etc. - all fall within the sphere of mythology. It should also be stressed that such ideas are found in the works of the Western authors as well but the scales of Russian authors in terms of quantity and area of dissemination is beyond compare.

It is a fact that the aggression is directed against the Western values and technologic process. It is no secret that Russia stands out for neither her technologic progress nor aspirations to the Western values. Therefore, all of this can just as well be a means of justifying oneself. It is obvious that Russia sees whole West as one pole and wishes to represent herself as the other. Just as the Soviet Union in the past, Russia now is trying to counter the Western values.

In traditionally Orthodox communities with Orthodox Christians making up the absolute majority of the population the Kremlin-like regimes choose Christianity, to be more correct, its twisted and misinterpreted version, as one of the instruments of influence. Thus, representing the Western values as anti-Christian is more a part of the target-oriented ideology than naive ignorance.

It is a fact that far from being quenched by participating in rituals only, religious thirst is associated with a legitimate desire to deepen knowledge. Due to the fact that the tradition of theological activity had been stopped for understandable reasons for quite a long time in Georgia and because the current situation in the country still leaves much to be desired, the niche was occupied by the

Russian ecclesiastical literature in good but mostly in bad terms. As for Russia, she also experienced a certain interruption that could have led to a measure of heresy (though the Russian Church had hitherto been quite ideologized) but considering its extent, the deficit was filled soon. That's how Russia started to export a misinterpreted Christianity to the post-Soviet countries.

Another reason why the ideology is being spread is an interesting nature of a human being to shift the blame for his failure on to others.

"Should the globalists win, we'll find ourselves in an environment where goodness and wickedness replace each other; people cherishing traditional values will be dismissed as "backward" and declared criminals, fundamentalists, fascists, isolationists, etc. Satanist values – pedophilia, homosexuality, legalization of drug addiction and prostitution will rise; the elderly, the sick and unwanted "excess people" will be killed through euthanasia; sadism, violence, witchcraft, gang rule will rein... According to experts, the consequences of the global project will be extremely terrible, including for its designers."¹³³ These are the horrible words that we read in one of the striking examples of "Russian theology" published in Georgia, the authors of which are not identified by the translator but he states that they are Russian. "The authors are Russian and, naturally, they discuss the problem against the background and at the example of Russia but even a cursory examination is enough to see that the problem of the United World State faces our country with as much acuteness as it does all the old and traditional states."

Such and other citations describing even more horrible pictures can be brought endlessly but we'll try to discuss their goal that we believe is more political than purely religious. Monk-Deacon Abel (Semyonov), the author of another such work, can't conceal his "political" thinking: "it is obvious that the global control exercised by means of an individual identification number also means the loss of the defence capability of the county. What secret can there be when the central computer is instantaneously informed on each movement of the military and equipment? ... This is nothing but a conspiracy against Russia, the Church, the whole world."¹³⁴ We purposefully underscored the word "Russia," as the author puts a comma after this particular word, reinforcing his "political" concern mentioned above.

¹³³ Globalization – What Has It in Store for Us? About the End of the World and Antichrist. Tbilisi 2008.

¹³⁴ Monk-Deacon Abel (Semyonov): Antichristian Philosophy of Globalization – How to Survive God's Wrath. Tbilisi 2008.

Similar views are entertained across the whole Russian Church, even on the higher levels of the Church hierarchy, with a greater political sentiment at that.

“The Western aggression has torn “Holy Russia” into three Slavic states... All the poisonous elements of the Western aggression are designed, with a subtle hideousness, by mondialist structures, which do not even conceal their goal: genocide, spiritual death of the Russian nation... So far neither the state nor the political or public figures have taken any action to defend the motherland from genocide. Only a robbed, emptied-of-blood Russian Orthodox Church has fought to the last ditch for a spiritual, moral and physical survival of reverent Russian people – Archbishop Vladimir Ilim of Middle Asia.¹³⁵

“The Russian foreign policy must be fully directed against the world masonism. Alternative international containing structures must be formed under the aegis of Russia. To do so, Russia must review her foreign ties. Allies must be sought among the states, organizations and public structures ready to support the new policy of Russia” – Mitropolit Agatangel Savin of Odessa.¹³⁶

The ideas expressed in the last article are particularly reflective of the political philosophy of the Russian Church. The above actions to be taken are quite reminiscent of the Kremlin concepts regarding the reinforcement of alternative international organizations (e.g. Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)) and the New Architecture of European Security first stated in Russian National Security Strategies and later voiced by President Medvedev himself.

On account of their content and pathos, the statements cited above lead us to think that Russia is purposefully carrying out the export of the above ideologized theology or mythology to achieve her political goals presumably primarily in the states of the same faith.

It is worth mentioning that such an export cannot be carried out without domestic exporters. It is hard to say by what means but such an “ideological message” has reached Georgia. One magazine called “Cornerstone” is most distinguishable for its positive attitudes to Russia. The pro-Russian orientation of the magazine reached its peak during the August War in the article named “Will the Lord Permit Approximation with the West Now?!”¹³⁷ The article offers quite an interesting formulation. In the author’s opinion, the Russian aggression was a whip in God’s hand for

¹³⁵ <http://www.pravoslavie.uz/lzdat/vostok2/01.htm>

¹³⁶ Nikoloz Mitrokhin: Russian Orthodox Church as a Political Party. Archevani Magazine N3-4, June-July 2006.

¹³⁷ National-Religious Magazine CORNERSTONE N8 (27), September 28. Pages 4-5; Editor’s page “Will the Lord Permit Approximation with the West Now?!”

approximation with the West, expressing hopes that the Lord did not permit such rapprochement centuries ago, starting from the time of the crusaders, then the time when the West dismissed Sulkhan-Saba's pleas for assistance, etc and will not permit it to happen now either. "Perhaps the Russian block-posts cropped up here and there across Georgia are the very pincers that have descended from heavens into insurmountable barriers toward such integration?! Every reasonable government is aware and adequately reckons with the pragmatic reality that Russia is their powerful neighbor by divine providence."¹³⁸

Thus, incriminating just Russia of exporting a pro-Russian ideologized theology would be a mistake. Justice requires that the Georgian community, too, assume the responsibility.

Russian Church and Occupied Regions of Georgia

After the official Moscow had recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, it became the turn of the Russian Church to do so. However, since the war of August 2008, the Georgian and Russian Churches have succeeded in maintaining a positive relationship. The Office of the Patriarch of Russia has made repeated statements that despite the political problems between the two countries the Russian Church recognized the integrity of the borders of the Georgian Orthodox Church.

The position officially declared by the Russian Church has its explanation. Not recognizing the "eparchy" of Tskhinvali and its "bishop" is not a step made to "care about Georgia" and uphold justice. One of the reasons for such approach is the eparchy's ties with the Old calendarist Greek Orthodox Church.¹³⁹ In 2005 The Holy Synod in Resistance of the Orthodox Church of Greece consecrated Archimandrite Giorgi as bishop of so called Diocese of Alania though the latter was affiliated with Russian Orthodox Church Abroad that has recently reconciled with Patriarchy of Moscow.

The attitude to the "Spiritual Leader of the Abkhazians" is slightly different. Besarion Aplaia often hosts guests from Moscow. On one of the recent visits in 2010, Sukhumi was honored by

¹³⁸ National-Religious Magazine CORNERSTONE N8 (27), September 28. Pages 4-5; Editor's page "Will the Lord Permit Approximation with the West Now?!"

¹³⁹ Greek Old Calendarists is a section of the Greek Orthodox Church not accepting calendar reform by Pope Gregory XIII, who introduced the modern Gregorian Calendar in 1582.

Protodeacon Andrey Kuraev, a Russian Church authority. “*The 24 Hour*” newspaper reported about the visit though it is interesting that Georgian journalist did not question by what status Kuraev had arrived in Sukhumi, what purpose was served by his meeting with the “Spiritual Leader of the Abkhazians” not recognized by the Office of the Patriarch of Russia, etc (see below about the issue of not recognizing). The visit as such proved to be quite interesting and important. The provocative question that Kuraev asked the students whether they recognized Aplia to be their spiritual father could have been designed to determine and later explore the opportunities for exploiting on Aplia’s authority. As the author of the article reports, the students’ reaction to the question was not as favorable as may have been expected for the spiritual leader of Abkhazia and, possibility, for the Russian deacon.¹⁴⁰

Now let’s get back to the question of not recognizing the independence of the Abkhazian and South Ossetian churches. It is known that after these regions have been recognized by Russia, both regional churches applied to the Office of the Patriarch of Russia to recognize their ecclesiastic autonomy (it is noteworthy that according to the ecclesiastical canon, these churches fall within the jurisdiction of the Office of the Patriarch of Georgia). However, the Russian synod did not do so and did not encroach upon the canonic integrity of the Georgian Church.¹⁴¹

Such decision of the institute approximated with the Kremlin came as a surprise even to the Russian clergy, many stressing the fact. But some of them explained political motives of the decision. One of them is Andrey Kuraev himself. It is noteworthy that as the deacon stated, the recognition by the Russian Patriarchy of these regions would have resulted in the loss of almost the only partner, whose help it desperately needs in dealing with the Churches of Ukraine and Estonia. At the same time, Kuraev points out that the Patriarchy of Moscow did not oppose the Kremlin decision on its own initiative, since the Patriarchy does not judge the government’s decision regarding the recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.¹⁴²

Thus, as mentioned above, the policy of no recognition is not the step made out of love to the Georgian Church. Rather, it was an attempt to gain its support.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ The 24 Hours, 18.05.2010. <http://24saati.ge/index.php/category/news/2010-05-18/6677.html>

¹⁴¹ ROC supports the integrity of the Georgian Church. 07.10.08. <http://www.nr2.ru/society/199623.html>

¹⁴² Deacon Kuraev tells Krim residents why ROC does not support disintegration of the Georgian Patriarchy

¹⁴³ <http://www.nr2.ru/society/199623.html>

Besides, it is believed that the Russian Patriarchy has even encouraged the Arch Hierarch of Abkhazia to declare independence. The activities of the Russian Church since the nineties in the territory of Abkhazia by sidestepping the Georgian Patriarchy provide a reasonable cause to believe so.

The statement made by Russian Patriarch Alexy II concerning the military actions in South Ossetia does not explain that the conflict is situated within the territory of the sovereign state of Georgia that falls within the canonic jurisdiction of the Georgian Church. The statement seems to be intended to preserve the situation and prevent a fair resolution of the conflict inspired and organized by Russia.

Totally incomprehensible is the support and encouragement of the Russian Patriarchy toward Priest Besarion Philia (the same Besarion Aplia) who disobeys the legitimate church authority and proclaims himself Head of “Sukhumi-Abkhazia Eparchy”. Patriarch Alexy II even awarded him with the Order of Russian Orthodox Church.¹⁴⁴ At one time Philia attempted to move under the jurisdiction of the World Patriarchy but failed. Instead, he received support from the top officials of the Russian Orthodox Church. Despite the fact that they were well aware of B. Philia’s apostasy from his own holy priesthood, not only was he welcomed to the Synodal Residence of the Most Holy Patriarch of Russia Alexy II but was also permitted to conduct service in the Patriarchal Assumption Cathedral in the Kremlin. He is particularly welcomed to the Department of Foreign Church Relations of the Patriarchy of Moscow.

Since the nineties of the 20th century, the Russian Church has appointed as supervisors of the Georgian Churches of Abkhazia and South Ossetia the bishops of the Russian eparchies bordering these regions. One of them, namely Bishop Theophanous of Stavropol and Vladikavkaz, while on a visit to Tskhinvali in 2005, declared Tskhinvali as the territory within his jurisdiction, prohibiting the clergy in Tskhinvali to serve there. This was followed with an epistle of Bishop Giorgi to the Patriarchy of Moscow, expressing protest over the hierarch’s declaration. Moscow responded to the epistle with silence.¹⁴⁵ The reason for such an attitude of the Russian hierarch must be accession of the so-called Bishop of Alania to the Old Style Greek Orthodox Church.

¹⁴⁴ <http://abhazy.com/news/cultura16.html>

¹⁴⁵ Bishop Theophanous in South Ossetia: “I, the Russian hierarch, am the master here! These temples are all mine!”
<http://www.elib.ru/News/NewsPrint.shtml?QUERY=PN&ID=8086>

It should also be mentioned that the Russian Church in general and the above Deacon Andrey Kuraev in particular fails to appreciate the potential of the Georgian Church to feed Abkhazia spiritually, since the Abkhazian people have developed an independent spiritual path over this period of time. The Abkhazians cannot reach the Georgian clergy for confession.¹⁴⁶

The relations between the Georgian and Russian Churches have moved to the new phase recently. The Russian Patriarchy dispatched its official representative Archimandrite Romanoz (Lukin) to Georgia to serve in St. John the Theologian Cathedral. It should be mentioned that this was the first time the Russian-language priest had arrived from Moscow. Before then, priests had always been ordained out of the local church staff and, naturally, despite dealing with the Russian-language parish and despite being ethnic Russians, they had obeyed the Georgian Patriarchy. However, now the priest dispatched by Moscow will be under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Moscow.

The fact elicited a number of controversial questions, namely why the priest was sent from Moscow when the local resources could have been used, etc. However, it was noted that it might be an ordinary matter all the more so that Georgia, too, dispatched its representative to Moscow to serve in St. George's Georgian Cathedral in Moscow. The most interesting aspect of the fact is that no other Orthodox Church in Georgia has its representative. To be objective, it should be noted that as said in the statement, he (Archimandrite Romanoz) will only discharge the missionary's functions and his core duty will be to serve a Russian-language parish. As for the clergy dispatched by the Georgian Church to Russia, such measure was not implemented the first time and the reason behind it was related to the lack of a Georgian-language staff locally.

We have already discussed those quite warm relations that the Russian Patriarchy has maintained with the Kremlin-controlled de-facto regimes in the occupied Georgian territories. Unfortunately, it should be mentioned that the hierarchs and clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church often violate the ecclesiastical laws of the territorial integrity of the Georgian Orthodox Church: permanent visits of the Russian clergy to Abkhazia, their service within the jurisdiction of the local church, etc. Such facts are presented in the other chapters of this work, too.

On September 20, 2010, Russian Patriarch Kirill's congratulation on the adoption of the Declaration of the National Sovereignty of South Ossetia was published.¹⁴⁷ The letter states: "for the last few

¹⁴⁶ Sukhumi-Abkhazian Eparchy renamed into Abkhazian Orthodox Church comprising Sukhumi and Pitsunda Patriarchies. <http://kavkaz.forum2x2.ru/forum-f3/tema-t207.htm>

¹⁴⁷ <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/1281205.html>

years the government and people (of South Ossetia) have had to pass a rough road of state building and social and economic development.” The Russian Patriarch stresses the importance of the relations between Russia and South Ossetia, “which are directed towards strengthening stability in the region and reinforcing friendship and cooperation between the peoples of these countries.”

In his letter addressed to the Russian Patriarch, His Beatitude Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia Ilia II responded: “This move is regrettable and absolutely not clear, as it signals support for and recognition of the forcibly imposed separatist regime, and of the illegally proclaimed 'independence' on this ancient Georgian land, which the whole world has acknowledged”.¹⁴⁸

The examples cited above provide more than sufficient grounds to conclude that the Kremlin is trying to use faith and the Church as one of the core instruments of influence on the masses. Sadly enough, a certain part of the hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church support the imperialistic ambitions of the ruling political regime, thereby contributing to further aggravation of the current crisis.

Chapter VI. Culture, Education, Science and Public Relations as Mechanisms of Russia’s “Soft Power” implementation

Tengiz Pkhaladze

Nato Bachiashvili

Culture within the context of Russia’s “Soft Power”

In 2005, the new service was set up with the Administration of the President of Russian Federation – Interregional and Foreign Cultural Cooperation Division headed by Modest Kolerov, a well-known ideologist. The objective of the Division was to increase the effectiveness of Moscow’s efforts to maintain and bolster influence in the post-Soviet countries. With this step Moscow identified the instrument that would enable Russia to influence processes in her neighboring countries.

Russian culture is indeed the effective instrument that gives Moscow the opportunity to maintain influence over the post-Soviet countries, with minimum or no resentment of local communities.

¹⁴⁸ See the Heralds of the Office of the Patriarch #31 (559); 30 September 2010

Not really a long time has passed since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Besides, the Russian-language diasporas in the post-Soviet countries are quite representative. Therefore, the intellectual and creative elite of the post-Soviet countries are still sensitive to Russian culture.

Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that the Russian “Soft Power” has so far failed to gain any solid support in Georgia. Certain cultural events have not become a subject of intense public interest. Such events as “Novaya Volna” and “Slavianski Bazaar” have not had such repercussions in Georgia as in other countries. Besides, the activities of Russian organizations in Georgia are extremely limited. As a result, the Kremlin “Soft Power” failed to take roots in Georgia at that time. However, recently Moscow has spared no effort and the Kremlin’s manifestation of its “Soft Power” has assumed increasing character. Following the war of August 2008, the Kremlin policy is focused on an attempt to win over the hearts of the Georgian population by cultural expansion and create the image of the friend “who has nothing to divide” with Georgia and to make it look that it was only due to some irresponsible steps of certain Georgian politicians that the armed conflict broke out between the two states.¹⁴⁹

Interestingly, in using culture as a foreign policy instrument, today’s Moscow is still employing the old Soviet-time idea clichés and stereotypes. The main accent in the events ordered and funded by the Kremlin is placed on the joint Soviet past, the status of Russia as the legal successor to the Soviet Union and the common “Russian space”. “Once they were one country, the Baltics and South Caucasus, Russia and Ukraine...”, so reports Kinosoyuz, one of the channels of NTV Plus that promotes the works of “the common Soviet” cinematography.¹⁵⁰ One of the trailers of the channel depicts the images of a number of Georgian feature films (e.g. “Me, Grandma, Iliko and Ilarion,” “Chrichina,” “Soldier’s Father”).

On December 19, 2009, a tragedy unfolded in Kutaisi, Georgia. The violation of safety rules while dismantling the Memorial of Glory claimed the lives of two persons (woman and her daughter). The explosion of the memorial elicited a controversial reaction of the Georgian community and the tragedy – the greatest resentment. Grabbing the chance to use it to its own advantage, the Russian government promptly denounced the dismantling of the Memorial of Glory and qualified the fact as an attempt to ignore the victory of Georgian and Russian soldiers over fascism, the friendship and the great Soviet past of Georgian and Russian peoples. The leading Russian TV channels

¹⁴⁹ President Medvedev’s speech <http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=270950>

¹⁵⁰ <http://ntvplus.ru/channels/channel.xl?id=3406>

dedicated special reports to the event, forgetting right there that just a year before in August 2008 hundreds of “friendly Georgian people” had been physically destroyed and thousands internally displaced by the “friendly Russian army”. Russian Premier Vladimir Putin personally stated that the Memorial of Glory would be erected on Poklonnaya Hill in Moscow.

At first, they suggested creating the exact replica of the memorial dismantled in Kutaisi. However, later on, the decision was made to make the event more pompous by announcing a competition to identify the best design. The competition was organized by the Municipal Office of Architecture and Civil Engineering of Moscow. The competition that was held from April 5 to May 25, 2010 drew more than 25 works of sculpture, out of which the experts chose six. The models were displayed in the Hall of Glory of the Central Museum of the Great Patriotic War on Poklonnaya Hill. On July 7, 2010, the exhibits were viewed by Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, Leader of the Movement for Fair Georgia Party Zurab Nogaideli and Chairman of the Union of Georgians in Russia Mikheil Khubutia. Before then on the Holiday of May 9, the proposed place of the sculpture was visited by the Leader of Democratic Movement Nino Burjanadze and Leader of Movement for Fair Georgia Party Zurab Nogaideli in the company of Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov.

Voting to identify the best design took place in the museum as well as through the Internet. 65 000 people took part in the poll. 20 000 of the respondents voted for the sculpture with the possible name of “Raising the Flag over Reichstag”. The design was approved at the joint meeting of the Board of Trustees and Public Board of Historical Heritage Foundation.¹⁵¹

It should be mentioned that the winning design (“Raising the Flag over Reichstag”) was given the greatest ideological and historical-political significance. The monument will depict Mikhail Egorov and Meliton Kantaria raising the Soviet flag over Reichstag. The lower part of the monument will depict the Soviet liberating soldiers participating in the Great Patriotic War out of all the fifteen republics of the Soviet Union. In the background of the monument, there will be a replica of the Memorial of Glory that was dismantled in Kutaisi as well as small marble cubes depicting the monuments built in honor of the Great Patriotic War in the republics of the former Soviet Union. One of such cubes will reflect the image of the Bronze Soldier¹⁵² displaced in Tallinn. The opening of the memorial is scheduled for December 19, 2010 on the 1st anniversary of the dismantling of

¹⁵¹ <http://www.interfax-russia.ru/Moscow/exclusives.asp?id=142174>

¹⁵² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bronze_Soldier_of_Tallinn

the Memorial of Glory in Kutaisi. Arrangements were made to bring the offspring of Meliton Kantaria and Mikhail Egorov to Moscow to attend the opening of the memorial.¹⁵³

One can't help wondering whether the Memorial of Glory would have drawn such great attention of the Kremlin had it not been related to the Soviet symbols. For instance, we can say that there is a St. George's Georgian Church¹⁵⁴ built in Bolshaya Gruzinskaya Street in Moscow in 1750. Under the agreement between Georgian and Russian Churches, the service in the church is performed in two – Georgian and Russian languages. The Church also runs a Georgian Sunday School and serves as a place of get-together for the Georgian Diaspora and Georgians arriving from various parts of the world. The current condition of the church is deplorable, indeed. However, none of the Muscovite officials or the Georgians so enthusiastically rooting and channeling funds for the erection of the Memorial of Glory in Moscow has ever struck to move their hands to save the spiritual house that is of critical importance for Georgians. The only "appeal" to save the cathedral was the bank account appearing at the website of the Union of Georgians in Russia, to which citizens could, if they wished, transfer money as a donation towards restoration of the temple.¹⁵⁵

Another striking example of the "genuine concern" for Georgian culture is Russia's acts during the war of August 2008 – a number of monuments of the cultural heritage were destroyed and damaged as a result of deliberate aerial bombardments, land offensives, scorching and looting. The official Moscow has never sensed even a moral responsibility for such acts of vandalism, to say nothing about gross violations of international law, namely the ignorance of the commitments under the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and the 2003 UNESCO Declaration on Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage.¹⁵⁶

Situation in the occupied territories

The first post-war "cultural event" in the territory of Abkhazia was held on August 17, 2008 with the participation of Russian peacekeepers. Sukhumi hosted an exhibition of Georgian military

¹⁵³ <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/171527/?print=true>

¹⁵⁴ <http://www.dzalisa.org/arhiv/opisanie-pamatnika>

¹⁵⁵ <http://www.georgians.ru/article.asp?idarticle=1034>

¹⁵⁶ The information of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on the damage to the Georgian cultural heritage as a result of the Russian military aggression can be seen at http://mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=535&info_id=10188

equipments gained by the Russian army. The military equipment and weapons were demonstrated by the Russian peacekeepers themselves. The exhibition had a great “political-ideological significance.” It must have illustrated the weapons, with which the Georgian army had intended to wrap things up with the Abkhazian people! The “exhibition” was attended by journalists and “holiday-goers” in Sukhumi.

The loot was mainly gained as a result of a special operation known as “Forcing the Georgian side’ to Peace.” According to General Sergey Chaban, the Commander of the Collective Peacekeeping Armed Forces within the Conflict Zone in the Territory of Georgia/Abkhazia, the core goal of the operation was to demilitarize the facilities of the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Internal Affairs and other law-enforcement structures based in West Georgia. The operation was carried out by the Russian peacekeeping forces.¹⁵⁷

On 21 August 2008, Tskhinvali hosted a concert of St. Petersburg Marin Symphonic Orchestra with Valeri Gergiev as a conductor. The concert played the 5th and 6th Symphonies by Tchaikovsky as well as the 7th Symphony by Shostakovich known as “Leningradskaya” that is dedicated to the Blockade of Leningrad. The name of the concert was “To you, the living and the dead! To you, South Ossetia!” («Вам, живым и погибшим! Тебе, Южная Осетия!»). At the same concert, the maestro compared Tskhinvali to Stalingrad, a hero city of the Great Patriotic War of 1941-45 (presuming Georgians to be fascists). For the concert held, Valeri Gergiev was paid Artiom Borovik Charity Fund prize in October the same year.¹⁵⁸

Following the Georgian-Russian war, the Kremlin held the first solemn concert to celebrate the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Freedom Square, Sukhumi on October 16, 2008, with participation of Joseph Kobzon and the Band of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation. It is worth mentioning that the concert opened with a topic of the songs dedicated to the Great Patriotic War, after which Joseph Kobzon, the chief initiator of the event, appeared on the stage with the words “Abkhazia, we are with you.”¹⁵⁹

Following a series of concerts and shows, Moscow started to strengthen legal framework in the sphere of culture. In 2009-2010, Cooperation Agreements between the Ministries of Culture of

¹⁵⁷ <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/140566/>

¹⁵⁸ <http://www.pravda.ru/culture/music/classical/28-10-2008/289573-gerg-0/>

¹⁵⁹ <http://www.caucasustimes.com/article.asp?id=16680>

Russia and Abkhazia (11 November 2009)¹⁶⁰ and then between the Ministries of Culture of Russia and South Ossetia (6 July 2010)¹⁶¹ were drafted and signed, forecasting cooperation programs in the sphere of culture till 2012.

The Day of Russia (12 June) was celebrated with much pomposity in Abkhazia in 2010. The events drew in such Russian ensembles as Academic Choir “Masters of Choral Singing” and a folk dance group “Rossianochka”. The event was held as part of the Russian-Abkhazian cultural cooperation project –Cultural Exchange Season “Russia-Abkhazia 2010”. The project started on 9 May 2010 and will last till November. The project envisages the arrival of folk bands, chamber orchestras, artists and other cultural figures in Abkhazia.¹⁶²

Within these and other projects Russia took planning of cultural events and “revival” of culture in Abkhazia under her patronage. Accordingly, the spirit of planned events must be in harmony with the official Kremlin ideology. On May 28, 2010 the so-called President of Abkhazia Sergey Bagapsh was presented a design to erect a 66-m-high monument called “Noble Angel of Peace” in Sukhumi. The project was initiated by Oleg Oleinik, one of the project authors and President of Charity Program “International Festival of Goods Deeds,”¹⁶³ and Nikolay Drozdov, a member of the Academy of Sciences of Russia, professor of Moscow State University, doctor of natural sciences and a popular TV anchor. The monument is scheduled to open by 2014. It was also proposed to hold the 2010 Summer International Festival of Goods Deeds in Abkhazia and organize Living Planet, an international environmental forum in Ritsa National Park. It is no secret that experts arriving from Russia will be the main participants of both of these events.¹⁶⁴ It is also noteworthy that in February 2010 the Russian Federation made a decision to establish a biosphere polygon that will unite the Caucasian nature reserves, including the specially protected territories of Abkhazia into one territory.¹⁶⁵

In 2010, Sukhumi hosted the “Georgievskaya Lenta” (St. George Ribbon) action. The event is annually held in Russia on the initiative of “Nashi” (Ours) organization in celebration of the victory in the Great Patriotic War. The preparations for this event in Sukhumi started from Public School N2. The event was attended by Ambassador of Russian Federation to Abkhazia Semion Gregoriev

¹⁶⁰ http://mkrf.ru/video/detail.php?ID=80148&sphrase_id=105627

¹⁶¹ http://mkrf.ru/documentations/584/detail.php?ID=94505&sphrase_id=10562

¹⁶² <http://apsnypress.info/news/951.html>

¹⁶³ <http://www.world-kindness.ru/program/fdd>

¹⁶⁴ <http://www.rian.ru/world/20100528/239690914.html>

¹⁶⁵ <http://abkhazeti.info/abkhazia/2010/1266257356.php>

who presented the war veterans with the souvenirs commemorative of the jubilee as well as by Sukhumi Mayor Alias Labakhua who presented them with monetary gifts (tellingly, in Russian rouble as it is an “official” currency in the territory of Abkhazia). The school students welcomed the veterans with the St. George Ribbons and flowers.¹⁶⁶

It is interesting to take a look at the symbols of the St. George Ribbons. The Soviet symbolism referred to it with a slight variation as a “Guard Ribbon”. This is an attribute specific for the military awards of the Russian Empire, Soviet Union and modern Russia¹⁶⁷, including the awards that the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union presented to the officers distinguishing them in the Caucasian War¹⁶⁸, the Muhajir¹⁶⁹ and the communist repressions¹⁷⁰ in the territory of Abkhazia.

The territory of Abkhazia is a home to the unique monuments of ancient Christian culture. It was from the Abkhazian coast that St. Andrew the First-Called and Simon the Canaanite came to West Georgia to preach Christianity. There are more than 300 Christian historical-cultural monuments in Abkhazia, most of which require restoration. Following the military aggression of 2008, Russia decided at its sole discretion to assume responsibility for the “survival” of cultural heritage as well.

On 21 September 2008, TV Channel SPAS (СПАС) that is the first public Orthodox channel in Russia announced a competition to identify the best architectural designs for the cathedrals of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.¹⁷¹ The move was justified with the ostensible fact that there are many Orthodox Russians now living in the territory of these countries, which in near future must deploy the permanent garrisons of the Russian army. Therefore, building a church in each of these republics is “completely logical,” so explains the information published on the TV channel website. It is also noteworthy that soon after the Russian occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia on August 18, 2008 director of the channel Alexander Batanov broadcasted an appeal to admit Abkhazia and South Ossetia to the jurisdiction of the Russian Eparchy. This is a difficult process, Batanov says, and the competition that has been announced must become the first step in this direction.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁶ http://www.rian.ru/victory_news/20100429/228278065.html

¹⁶⁷ <http://www.za-lentu.ru/>

¹⁶⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caucasian_War

¹⁶⁹ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhajir_\(Caucasus\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhajir_(Caucasus))

¹⁷⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_repressions

¹⁷¹ <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/477079.html>

¹⁷² <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/477079.html>

The restoration works in New Athoni Monastery Complex have been conducted for years. They were scheduled to be completed towards the end of 2008. The restoration works were conducted by Morion Ltd of Chelyabinsk, a company specializing in the construction and reconstruction-restoration of churches. The restoration works were based on the restoration works contract made by and between the Government of Abkhazia and the contractor. The restoration works were conducted in three phases. The restoration completely changed the dome of the cathedral, the central cross as well as the bell tower. The second phase modified the remaining 16 domes. It was for the first time that the restoration works had used a nitrate-titanium solution that had hitherto been used for the construction of rocket and orbital stations only. Before then, architects from St. Petersburg had been involved in the restoration of the Fortress dating back to the 4th-6th centuries.

Nikolay Sokolov, an architect-restorer of Moscow, specially visited Abkhazia in the company of an expedition group to study about 35 facilities that came as a surprise to the Russian specialists. These monuments gave them the opportunity to explore ancient, sometimes pre-Christian culture. In their opinion, great scientific studies may be undertaken and later create interesting places for Russian tourists to visit in the territory.¹⁷³

The dome of Sukhumi Cathedral of the Holy Mother of God had been modified by the Easter Holiday of 2010. The dome had been prepared by the same contractor – Morion Ltd. of Chelyabinsk, it is the 20th dome changed by the company. The existing dome was changed with a special alloy that was used with the cupola of the New Athos Monastery, and covered with a gold layer.

“The restoration of the major Abkhazian monuments is an absolute task of Russia,” stated Pavel Pozhigailo, the Chairman of the Supervisory Board of the Society of All Russia for Protection of Historical and Cultural Monuments. The delegation arriving in Abkhazia includes archaeologists, art critics and restorers from Russian Federation.

Naturally, we can't have anything against the saving and restoration of cultural and historical monuments. However, the main problem is that such “restorations” fail to preserve the original appearance of monuments. In fact, the existing historical style is replaced with the Russian style, presenting greatest threats to the above cultural monuments.

¹⁷³ http://www.kavkaz-news.info/portal/cnid_5419/alias_Caucasus-Info/lang_en/tabid_2434/default.aspx

In this respect, Paata Davitaia, the Vice-Chairman of the Parliament for the Minority, sent a special notice to Patriarch Kiril of Moscow and All Russia, calling on the Patriarch to take actions to protect and preserve the Georgian churches and monasteries in Abkhazia.

As stated in the document, the Vice-Chairman asks Patriarch Kirill to pay attention to the process of the so-called restoration of the churches and monasteries based in the occupied territory of Georgia, which are the religious-historical heritage and property of the Georgian Orthodox Church. As Davitaia states the so-called restoration works are not intended to preserve the original appearance of these churches and monasteries. In particular, these acts “are deep and oppressive” in character, the consequences of which will be manifest soon enough. There is even a greater cause for concern to see private businessmen being involved in the effort – the “restoration” sponsored by them is carried out to suit individual taste. “The interest and subsequent involvement of Russian businessmen in the current restoration process have compelled me to apply to you insofar as these acts directly run counter to the position of the Patriarchy of Russia regarding the integrity and inviolability of the borders and whole Orthodox heritage of the Georgian Orthodox Church. In this respect, please take every action to stop the process that is destructive to us all,” so reads the letter to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.¹⁷⁴

Mass cultural ideological measures and other manifestations of “Soft Power” in the occupied territories

The representatives of Russia and de-facto governments of the occupied territories attach greatest importance to cultural and other ideological measures. The use of the attribute “ideological” is not accidental. Such projects implemented in the occupied territories are given such ideological significance by Moscow that essentially they are in harmony with the old Soviet-time mass actions and events and serve as a striking example of the “spiritual food” cooked by the current Kremlin regime. We’d like to single some of them out:

On June 11, 2010, South Ossetia hosted an event called “I – a Citizen of Russia”¹⁷⁵ in celebration of the national holiday of Russian Federation. The event was organized by the Division of Youth Policy of South Ossetia and Youth Organization “New People” (“Новые люди”). The Russian Week was

¹⁷⁴ <http://www.internet.ge/index.php?action=news&category=home&news=83490>

¹⁷⁵ <http://cominf.org/node/1166483517>

held on 10-18 June 2010. Tskhinvali hosted public lectures and speeches on the topic “Ossetians in the Russian Army.” They also organized a round table on the topic “Russia’s Role in the Restoration of the Statehood of Ossetia.”¹⁷⁶ On June 12, Tskhinvali witnessed the opening of the Russian House and another round table on the topic “Russia and South Ossetia in the 21st Century.”¹⁷⁷

On 12-16 November 2008, Sukhumi hosted a patriotic-cultural event “Abkhazia – the Country of Friendship.” The objective of the event was to demonstrate the attractiveness of modern Abkhazia for Russian TV viewers and increase their interest in Abkhazia. TV Centre, a Russian TV channel, participated in the event.

As for the true goal behind the event, the organizers unveiled it from the very beginning. In their opinion, the project “is no doubt the first step made towards fulfilling the assignment given by the Russian President Vladimir Putin, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia and the Government of Russia to regulate the commercial-economic, social, scientific-technical, information, cultural and educational sectors, including the involvement of Russian regions into the processes.”¹⁷⁸

One of the events planned as part of the project was to make a field TV program called “Street of Your Fate” (“Улица твоей судьбы”) that was organized with the blessings of Catholicos-Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Alexy II. The TV program was created with the support of the Ministry of Regional Development of Russian Federation and “Russian World” (“Русский мир”) Foundation.

The organizers of the event were: Regional Public Organization “Vioni Dukha”, a Russian nationalist-patriotic association, TV Company “TV Centre” Program “Street of Your Fate”, Orthodox Charity Fund “Presvet”, “Eurasian Research Centre” foundation (the goal of which is “the development of cultural, humanitarian and educational relations between Russia and the former Soviet republics”¹⁷⁹ and is believed to be one of the ideological laboratories implementing the “Soft Power” of the Kremlin), “A-Mobile”, “Abkhazian Public Olympic Movement”, etc.

Sports events are also held in Abkhazia to draw the attention of the masses. On August 3, 2009, Sukhumi hosted the 6th international festival in chess called “ABHAZIA OPEN: SUKHUMI 2009.” About 200 chess players from Russia and Abkhazia took part in the tournament. The chief referee of the tournament was Alexander Sapfirov, the Executive Director of Krasnodar Chess Federation.

¹⁷⁶ <http://cominf.org/node/1166483505>

¹⁷⁷ <http://cominf.org/node/1166483535>

¹⁷⁸ http://www.abkhaziya.org/news_detail.html?nid=21063

¹⁷⁹ <http://www.ea-studies.ru/about/>

In mid-August the same year, Gagra, a coastal town in Abkhazia, hosted an “international” tournament in Tennis that brought together participants from Moscow, St Petersburg, Vladikavkaz, Sochi, Nalchik, Adler, Taganrog and Ivanovo.

In July 2009, Sukhumi hosted a mini football match between Russian and Abkhazian soccer veterans. The Russian side in this match was represented by Sergey Kiryakov, Dmitriy Ananko, Akhrik Tsveiba, etc.

In October the same year, Sukhumi hosted a joint Russian-Abkhazian event called “Moscow Sports in Abkhazia.” The bulk of the events took place on the Mohajir Shore. As part of the event, the governments of Abkhazia and Moscow planned friendly matches in football, master classes and exhibition performances in judo, sambo, sumo, chess, motor freestyle, etc. The event was honoured by People’s Artist of Russia Nadezhda Babkina and her ensemble “Russkaya Pesnya” as well as other representatives of music and art from Russia and Abkhazia.

The ceremony of the signature of the Memorandum of Cooperation between Russia and Abkhazia in the field of Culture and Sports was signed on October 19.

The Abkhazian sportsmen participated in international sports events on behalf of Russia. On September 23, 2009, Abkhazian wrestler Denis Tsargush won World Champion’s gold medal for the National Team of Russian Wrestlers.¹⁸⁰

Russia spares no effort to attract tourists to Abkhazian resorts with the purpose to increase the interest of the peoples of Russia and the rest of the world in Abkhazia. Advertisements are mainly put up at the websites of travel agencies. It is worth mentioning that such firms are usually based in Russia. The major travel agency operating in Abkhazia is Rusaltur with an office in downtown Moscow. Interestingly, the pass permit system operated in the office would be envied even by the Russian public officials.¹⁸¹

The trade name Rusaltur was founded in 1996. Apsni-tur Ltd that is the holder of Rusaltur trademark is a leader in the holiday tour management of the Russian market in the Republic of Abkhazia. This company has about 2000 travel agencies across Russia. Therefore, almost any interested person can buy a tour to Abkhazia. The company has the largest quotas in Abkhazian

¹⁸⁰ <http://www.allsportinfo.ru/index.php?id=32220>

¹⁸¹ <http://www.abkhazia.ru/tours/>

hotels and health resorts, offering tourists holiday packages in such Abkhazian holiday destinations as Gagra, Bichvinta, Sukhumi, Akhali Atoni, Gudauta, Miusera, etc. The company serves private as well as corporate customers.

On the next page the same Rusaltur describes in detail that Russian citizens and CIS citizens can cross the Russian-Abkhazian border freely, without any visa after passing through the general customs and boarder checkpoint. Russian citizens and CIS citizens (other than Ukraine and Tajikistan) can use their foreign passports as well as the domestic passports of the Russian Federation. Starting from April 2009, citizens of Ukraine and Tajikistan are required to bear foreign passports. Foreign citizens must have a Russian Federation visa (double or multiple entry to enter and depart from the Russian Federation) and an Abkhazian visa.

Under the 25.07.2006 Law on the Resort Fees of the Republic of Abkhazia, Foreign nationals arriving in Abkhazia for a period longer than 3 days, have to pay one-time resort fee of 30 rubles to the place of residence.¹⁸²

The website also describes in detail the holiday price quotes in Abkhazian resorts.

The average daily hotel charge from June through August in the major resort cities of Abkhazia ranged from 1000-2600 roubles (\$50-100), the per child charge – 600-1300 roubles (approximately \$25-50). Cost of the rooms with air-conditioning, a TV, refrigerator and balcony was more expensive (\$100-220). Prices in the private sector were relatively cheaper.

Despite relatively cheap prices, the holiday season of 2010 in Abkhazia failed. If Abkhazia was visited by some 5000 tourists in 2009¹⁸³, the number of tourists in 2010 did not exceed 200 according to some information sources. The long-drawn-out formal procedures at the Russian-Abkhazian boarder, the dangerous criminal situation and an overwhelming presence of the military and ammunition in Abkhazia (that affects the mood of holiday goers) all accounted to the failure of the tourist season. Besides, the tourists complained about low service and food quality. The severest complaints were made in relation to the Public Insurance Agency of Abkhazia. As mentioned above, if a person arrives in Abkhazia for 3 days, he pays the insurance charge of 30 roubles and if stays there for more than 3 days – 250 roubles. If staying in Abkhazia together with the family, the fee increases significantly. However, the Abkhazian official structures are trying

¹⁸² <http://abkhazia.ru/useful/>

¹⁸³ <http://www.rosbalt.ru/2010/07/21/755403.html>

hard to blow up the number of tourists. According to their claims, about one million tourists arrived in Abkhazia in 2009¹⁸⁴. However, considering the current Abkhazian infrastructure, the number is beyond any limit imaginable.

To help increase the popularity of Abkhazia, in 2009 the Russian Federation issued the first series of post stamps of Independent Republic of Abkhazia. Based on the statement made by Eduard Philia, the General Director of Abkhazsvyaz (“Абхазсвязь”), the news agency reports that some of the stamps issued depict the image of the State of the Abkhaz in the 8th century, the capital city of which was “Kutaisi – the current Mingrelia”!¹⁸⁵ They also printed the stamps dedicated to the Fifth World Convention of the Abkhaz-Abag Peoples, Victory of Abkhazia and 15th Anniversary of Independence.

One of the stamps is dedicated to the Russian peacekeeping forces. According to Philia, although the Abkhazian stamps have so far been circulated within the territory of Abkhazia, they plan to sign a contract with the Ministry of Communications of the Russian Federation to address the problems associated with the circulation of Abkhazian stamps abroad and delivery of letters in Abkhazia. As Philia states, at this point the problem is being solved with the assistance from Russia: the mails addressed to Abkhazian citizens are delivered to a special Post Office Box N1455 in Sochi. The employees of the Ministry of Communications of Abkhazia travel to Sochi twice a week to bring mail to Abkhazia.¹⁸⁶

The contribution of the Russian communications to the “development” of the occupied territory is not limited to post stamps and mail traffic. In November 2009, Russia started to move Abkhazia to the Russian telephone codes +7 940 for cellular communication and +7 840 for fixed telephones. The telephone number in Abkhazia now consists of 7 digits as it is in Russia.

The process ended by January 2010, with Abkhazia having been fully subscribed to the Russian system of telephone codes.¹⁸⁷

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¹⁸⁴ <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/164334/>

¹⁸⁵ http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/stamps_abhazia

¹⁸⁶ http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/stamps_abhazia

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<http://www.interfax.ru/society/txt.asp?id=117518&sw=interfax&bd=17&bm=12&by=2009&ed=17&em=1&ey=2010&seid=0&mp=0&p=46>

Education and Science as Instruments of Russia's "Soft Power"

During the times of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, the field of education and science was subject to the system of dependence on Moscow. The system started to disintegrate from the nineties of the 20th century. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian Federation has tried to gain the status of the main educational-scientific center of the post-Soviet territory. However, in this direction as well, the Kremlin policy falls under ideological pressure and within clumsy red-tape frames, as a result of which the bilateral agreements signed within the sphere are reduced to the papers put on the shelf to gather dust.

The current agreements, made by and between Georgia and Russia in the sphere of education and science are as follows:

1. Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Georgia and the Government of the Russian Federation on Scientific-Technical Cooperation (February 3, 1994);
2. Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Georgia and the Government of the Russian Federation on Cooperation in the Fields of Culture, Science and Education (February 3, 1994);
3. Agreement between the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Georgia and the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation on Cooperation in the Field of Education (February 11, 1994).

The education process in Georgia (except the occupied territories) runs according to the curricula and guidebooks approved by the Ministry of Education of Georgia. The teaching process in Georgian and Georgian-Russian schools runs according to the same curricula and guidebooks. The situation is radically different in the occupied territories. Teaching in Abkhazia and South Ossetia is carried out according to the curricula and guidebooks approved by the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, which conform fully to the ideology of the official Moscow.

According to the official Russian sources, there are about 600 state-funded Georgian students and post-graduates learning in Russian higher education establishments¹⁸⁸ (in this case too, the accent is placed on nationality, not citizenship). These are mainly the representatives of the Georgian Diaspora in Russia. As for the students officially sent from Georgia, according to the estimates of the Ministry of Education of Georgia¹⁸⁹, 15 persons traveled to Russia to continue their studies in 2005, accounting for just 4.8% of the total number of students traveling abroad for continuation of their studies in 2005 (in total, 311 students). Not a single student was sent for continuation of their studies in Russian Federation in 2006-2008. The statistics make it obvious that the aggressive policy of Russia for Georgia had found its due reflection in the education sphere as well. In this respect, it is interesting to briefly overview some of the orders of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia, under which the following programs were implemented for the Georgian young people affected by the war of August 2008, living in Russian Federation or staying there for studies:

1. Order N2, 06.01.2009 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia on Approval of the Procedure for Georgian Citizens Living in the Russian Federation by August 7 2008 to Gain the Right to Continue Studies in Higher Educational Institutions Accredited in Georgia.

Goal: facilitating the integration of Georgian citizens living in the Russian Federation who were affected as a result of the military actions of the Russian Federation in Georgia in August 2008 into the higher education system of Georgia.

The program was effective until July 2009. Under the program, 43 Georgian citizens living in the Russian Federation were authorized to continue their studies in higher educational institutions accredited in Georgia.

2. Order №725 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia (September 4, 2009) approved "The Rule for submission and review of the documents required for high-school graduates/graduate students/students with the purpose of study in accredited programs of the higher educational institutions accredited in Georgia without passing uniform national entrance/general graduate examinations".

Goal: assisting foreign and Georgian citizen entrants living abroad and promoting student mobility.

¹⁸⁸ http://www.georgia.mid.ru/rg/rg_05.html

¹⁸⁹ http://mes.gov.ge/index.php?module=text&link_id=68&lang=geo

Under the program, over 100 young Georgians living in the Russian Federation before August 7, 2008 were authorized to continue their studies in higher educational institutions accredited in Georgia.

According to the official information of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, 409 of the 2300 general education institutions are non-Georgian facilities (including schools, schools of language sectors and schools where the language of teaching is only Russian/Azeri/Armenian); there are 140 Armenian-language, 124 Azeri-language, 142 Russian-language and 3 Ossetian-language schools operating in Georgia. At present, there are 14 schools in Georgia (including 12 government-funded and 2 private) where teaching is conducted in Russian only.

These figures do not cover the occupied territories of Georgia. Before touching upon the situation in the occupied territories, we think it fit to present a short analysis of the Georgian education system in general and the education opportunities of the non-Georgian communities.

Georgia is a multi-ethnic state. According to the census conducted by the National Agency of Statistics in 2002, the distribution of the permanent population (not including figures for the occupied territories) according to regions is as follows¹⁹⁰:

Total population - 4371535

Including:

Georgian - 3661173

Azeri - 284761

Armenian - 248929

Russian - 67671

Ossetian - 38028

Abkhaz - 3527

Yezid - 18329

¹⁹⁰ http://www.geostat.ge/cms/site_images/files/georgian/census/2002/1%20tomi%20-%20saqarTvelos%20mosaxleobis%202002%20wils%20pirveli%20erovnuli%20sayovelTao%20aRweris%20Sedegebi.pdf

Greek	- 15166
Kist	- 7110
Ukrainian	- 7039
German	- 651
Tatar	- 455
Byelorussian	- 542
Turk (Osman)	- 441
Pole	- 870
Kurd	- 2514
Chechen	- 1271
Moldovan	- 864
Jew	- 3772
Gypsy	- 472
Assyrian	- 3299
Other	- 4651

The above figures clearly show the importance of education opportunities for non-Georgian-language population in Georgia.

Preschool education

On March 31, 2009, Order N188 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia approved the Georgian Language Program, under which from 2009 the Ministry started the implementation of the sub-program called “Promoting the Teaching of the Georgian Language on a Pre-school Level in

Non-Georgian-language Regions.” The goal of the sub-program is to improve the level of knowledge of the Georgian language in non-Georgian-language regions by delivering an effective education program to pre-school children. The sub-program envisages the establishment of pre-school education centers on the basis of the six public schools chosen in Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti Regions¹⁹¹, publishing teachers’ and students’ textbooks and procuring adequate equipment and teaching aids for these centers. Besides, it is intended to develop parent education guidebooks to be translated and published in Azeri and Armenian languages.

General education

Providing non-Georgian-language schools with textbooks

As part of the process to reform and enhance Georgian general education system, Georgia developed new curricula and, based on them, new textbooks. The new curricula and textbooks are provided in Georgia for the non-Georgian-language schools as well (including in Azeri, Russian and Armenian languages).

In 2005, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia started large-scale procurement of the textbooks compliant with the Georgian Education Standard for non-Georgian-language state secondary schools.

To implement Georgian as the Second Language Standards, it became necessary to prepare the new types of textbooks in the Georgian language based on the methods of teaching Georgian as a second language and the communication language teaching principles. Accordingly, in 2005-2006, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia developed Parts I and II of such textbook called “Tavtavi” that was based on the language proficiency criteria identified within the European Council Program “European Language Portfolio” and “Common European Framework for Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment.” Part I of Tavtavi consists of a Student Book, Workbook and Teacher’s Book and Part II comprises a Student Book, Workbook, Teacher’s Book and Portfolio. In 2007, the set of Part III of Tavtavi was prepared and introduced – this involved the preparation of the textbook (Student Book, Workbook and Teacher’s Book) by the

¹⁹¹ Both regions are the Georgian territories densely populated with Azeri and Armenian communities.

team of authors and its printing. The sets of Tavtavi books for all three levels were distributed free of charge to all the non-Georgian-speaking (including Russian) schools.

Besides, the textbooks in the History and Geography of Georgia were received by all the 5th graders by 100%. The 6th-9th graders of the non-Georgian-speaking schools received textbooks in the same subjects as well.

The statistics of the activities performed in 2009 are as follows:

In 2008, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia distributed 34 438 textbooks to 7 regions (Bolnisi, Tetritskaro, Tsalka, Gardabani, Marneuli, Dmanisi, Rustavi) within Kvemo Kartli district. The same year, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia distributed 16 883 textbooks to 6 regions (Borjomi, Ninotsminda, Akhalkalaki, Akhaltsikhe, Adigeni, Aspindza) within Samtskhe-Javakheti district.

In 2008, the National Curriculum and Assessment Centre distributed 7 290 textbooks to schools in Kvemo Kartli district and 4 497 textbooks to schools in Samtskhe-Javakheti district (Georgian Language, Mathematics, Biology, Music, Art and Foreign Languages).

In 2008, as part of the Program to Learn the National Language in Non-Georgian Schools, the 2nd grade Georgian language textbooks (Let's Learn Georgian) were distributed free of charge to the 2nd-graders of all the non-Georgian schools across Georgia. Overall, 7 000 books were purchased under the program.

In 2009, as part of the Sub-program for Improving Availability of the textbooks of the Students of Non-Georgian Sectors, Georgian as the Second Language textbooks were distributed to 6 025 3rd graders of all the non-Georgian schools and sectors (including 1 888 Russian-speaking students).

To successfully implement the School Grants Program, the Teachers Professional Development Centre prepared a Project Preparation Guidebook and conducted trainings for schools in how to develop School Improvement Projects.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia and the Teachers Professional Development Centre implemented the program called "Retraining Georgian Language Teachers of Non-Georgian Schools." By this time, 250 Georgian language teachers of non-Georgian schools have been retrained.

In 2009, Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia and the Teachers Professional Development Centre implemented two programs, namely: 1) Skilled Georgian Language Specialists in the Schools of Ethnic Minority Regions; 2) Learn and Teach Georgian.

The program “Skilled Georgian Language Specialists in the Schools of Ethnic Minority Regions” is a public program intended to pay high salaries to professional teachers of Georgian Language and Literature in regions densely populated with ethnic minorities. The competition will identify the teachers that speak the language of the local community and are capable of teaching Georgian Language and Literature on a high professional level. The recruitment process will attach priority to the local specialists and the Georgian language teachers already working. The specialists identified through the competition who meet the pre-qualification requirements will go through the training organized by the Teachers Professional Development Centre and sign contracts. Under the contracts, in addition to teaching students, the teachers will conduct trainings for the Georgian language and literature teachers in their or/and neighbouring schools.

At the end of the training conducted by the Teachers Professional Development Centre, 10 best performing teachers will be identified to work as trainers. Unlike the remaining 40 teachers chosen, they will cover all the teachers wishing to learn Georgian in the district. The teachers and trainers will be responsible for planning/implementing various activities in schools, activate the environment in their communities, setting up Georgian language clubs to organize Georgian language evenings/competitions. Students and teachers as well as parents will be involved in these events.

The program Learn and Teach Georgian is intended to conduct trainings for and promote professional development of Georgian language and literature teachers of all ethnic minorities. To make sure the virtual space is accessible for the representatives of the language minorities, the Ministry of Education and Science has developed and is implementing special programs. One of such successful projects as part of the education reform is “Deer’s Leap”, a Georgian school computerization program. The program is intended to provide all the general education institutions of Georgia, including non-Georgian-speaking schools, with computers and Internet access, and integrate information technologies in the teaching process in 4 years.

Multilingual Education

In 2008, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia with the support of OSCE developed a policy framework and action plan (2009-2014) "Integration of National Minorities through Multilingual Education". According to the action plan, Multilingual Instruction Support Program was approved by Order N185, 31.03.2009 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia.

The program includes further piloting of the multilingual teaching course in 40 non-Georgian public schools (including 15 Russian schools). Trainings for the implementation of multilingual programs were provided to the employees of the Ministry, school principals, staff of the education resource centres and teachers.

Likewise, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia is working on the development of multilingual instruction program patterns for all levels of the general education. The Centre will also develop a multilingual education textbook and additional study materials that will be distributed to non-Georgian schools for free.

Access to Higher Education

At the beginning of 2008, series of legislative changes were made on the joint initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia and National Examinations Centre. As a result of the changes, non-Georgian entrants to higher education institutions will have the opportunity to pass Uniform National Examinations in their native (not state) language.

Under Social Grants Program, the government finances the students having acquired secondary education in non-Georgian schools within Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti districts. 20 students per district are financed.

The Education and Reform Fund set up with the President of Georgia offers a foreign study financing program to the representatives of national minorities. With such financing, 7 representatives of national minorities were sent to Hungary and USA to acquire Bachelor's degree in Business Administration. 7 students were chosen through competition in 2008 as well.

Against the background of enhanced teaching of the state language, it was important to renovate the method of teaching the native language to national minorities. In the non-Georgian schools of Kvemo Kartli the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia launched Azeri as a Native Language Support Programs, on a par with development of the relevant standards and training teachers. About 500 teachers have been trained under the program.

Since 2006, National Curriculum and Assessment Centre has been issuing The Dialogue newspaper, enabling school authorities, teachers, parents and students to ask questions, offer recommendations to and receive answers from the experts of the Centre.

In 2009, under the Sub-program for Improving the Availability of Textbooks for the Students of Non-Georgian Sectors (budget: 543600 Lari), 6025 9th graders (including 1 888 Russian-speaking students) of non-Georgian public schools of Georgia were provided with textbooks in History of Georgia, Geography of Georgia and Civil Education. In 2010, under the above sub-program, the Ministry will provide textbooks in History of Georgia and Geography of Georgia to the 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th graders (in all, 9 440 Russian-speaking students).

In 2009, jointly with the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, National Examination Centre organized Olympiads in Georgian, Azeri, Armenian, and Georgian languages. National Examination Centre also ensures the translation of tests during externship exams into Azeri and Armenian. Likewise, translations into Azeri, Armenian and Russian will be provided during the examination of doctoral candidates.

In 2009, the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia approved Minority Language Protection Subprogram. This subprogram is intended to continue the financing of the two Ossetian Sunday Schools, opened in the school year of 2007-2008 with the funding of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia at Tbilisi Public School N11. Ossetian Sunday Schools opened at Tbilisi Public School N11 will help to establish the tradition of Ossetian Sunday Schools, where Ossetian children (and interested persons from other nationalities) can learn the Ossetian language, culture, history, folklore, Georgian-Ossetian literary relations, mythology, ecology, Caucasian dances and songs. The same program is continued in 2010.

Activities of Russian public-educational organizations in Georgia

There are many Russian public-educational organizations operating in Georgia today. The goal of most of these organizations is to promote Russian language and Russian culture. The most active of these organizations are: Union of Russian Compatriots in Georgia “OTCHIZNA”, International Cultural-Educational Union “RUSSIAN CLUB”, “RUSSKY MIR” Foundation, Association of Russian-language journalists of Georgia, Union of Russian Women in Georgia “YAROSLAVNA”. Each of these organizations has branches in different regions of Georgia or comprises several other organizations. For instance, Union of Russian Compatriots “OTCHIZNA” includes about 25 organizations, including “RADUGA”, a cultural-charitable and scientific-educational union of the Russian community in Georgia, Russian Home Society, “ARION” Literary Society of Pushkinists, Union of Russian Youth in Georgia, International Humanitarian-Charitable Union “NADEZHDA”, “Russkoye Slovo” Union of Teachers, etc.

Unfortunately, some of these organizations are trying to portray a distorted picture of the actual situation, often repeating the Kremlin rhetoric. For instance, the 2009 “Otchizna” Report claims that Russian language is persecuted in Georgia and that Russian language, Russian culture and the Russian factor as a whole are being driven out of Georgia.¹⁹² However, running counter to its own claims, the same organization reports that it is working actively and implementing its projects. According to the same report, in 2009 “Otchizna” conducted over 100 different events and activities in Georgia. Its main effort was targeted at fulfilling the State Program for the Support to Compatriots as well as the State Program for Voluntary Return of Compatriots to Motherland of Russian Federation. Out of these activities, particular attention should be placed on permanent contacts and joint activities with young compatriots such as organizing “Brain Ring” events among Russian-speaking schools, organizing meetings and tours for school students on the topic of the Great Patriotic War on holidays related to such war as well as methodological work – providing free methodological and study books for Russian schools students. In October-November 2009, “Otchizna” held the Olympiad in Russian language and literature, in which participated about 600 students from different parts of Georgia. “Otchizna” also organized a competition “Best Teacher” and qualification improvement courses for Russian language and literature teachers (110 teachers completed the courses). The scales of financing and implementation of such events would be enviable for quite a few social-political organizations operating in Georgia, suggestive of the fact that Georgia is not in any way persecuting the Russian language or creating artificial barriers to Russian-speaking organizations.

¹⁹² <http://www.otchizna.ge/otchet%202009.html>

This is as well illustrated in the interview given by Orest Peschanenko, the principal of Private Russian School “INTELLECT”, to the portal “Sootechestvenniki”.¹⁹³ Answering the journalist’s question, the principal says that his educational institution used to be known as Russian South Caucasus Army School N9 and later as the School, set up with the Embassy of the Russian Federation. When the school faced closedown due to the termination of diplomatic relations between Russia and Georgia, it was Georgia that extended a helping hand to the school. Today, it is running as a private school named Intellect, operating under the license granted by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. The curriculum includes all the subjects contemplated by the annual national curriculum approved by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. However, the interview shows that the school also teaches the program that helps those wishing to continue their studies in Russian Federation.

In the interview, the school principal expresses thanks to the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia as well as to the management of Isani-Samgori Resource Centre who, as he says, are considerate of the school needs and offer assist to the possible extent.

It should also be mentioned that in 2009 the President of Georgia awarded a few successful graduates of the school with computers.¹⁹⁴

There are many Russian language centres operating in Georgia. Besides, Olympiads are held in the Russian language for school students. Therefore, any claim that the Russian language is persecuted and harassed is a figment of imagination of those who wish to internationally portray a twisted picture of the actual situation or secure additional grants, thus having no connection to the reality.

Occupied Territories

The situation in the occupied territories of Georgia is entirely different. Following the conflicts of 1992-1993, Abkhazia and South Ossetia consistently moved to the Russian education standards.¹⁹⁵ Since then, everything has been done in Abkhazia and South Ossetia to make sure the Russian education system was introduced in these regions and the local young people were involved in the process. The efforts to this end have particularly intensified since the Russian-Georgian war of

¹⁹³ <http://www.russedina.ru/articul.php?aid=11389&pid=21>

¹⁹⁴ <http://www.vestikavkaza.ru/articles/obshestvo/mif/636.html> 10.04.2009

¹⁹⁵ <http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

August 2008. Particular attention has been attached to sending young people to Russian higher education establishments to make sure they acquire professional as well as adequate ideological-political “education.” Bringing up the future elite of Abkhazia and South Ossetia is a critical objective for the Russian Federation. This instrument of Russia’s “Soft Power” can ensure subsequent loyalty of the peoples of the occupied territories to Russia. Therefore, Kremlin has spared neither effort nor money to accomplish that objective.

In 2008, Russia allocated 70 seats for the enrolment of the citizens of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Russian higher education institutions. In this respect, the report was delivered by Vladislav Nichkov, the Chairman of the Department for Cooperation in Education and Science of the Ministry of Education of Russian Federation at the 12.11.2008 Meeting of the Board of Education and Science of the Russian Federation. It is noteworthy that the topic of discussion at the meeting of the Board was “Measures to Promote the Development and Perfection of Russian Education Activities in CIS Countries as well as the Development of Russian National Education Institutions.” The Board was presided over by Minister of Education and Science of Russia Andrey Fursenko.

At the same meeting, Victor Sadovnich, the Rector of M. V. Lomonosov State University of Moscow, proposed that a special inter-departmental commission be set up to promote the development and export of Russian education technologies and formulate clear national strategies to that end. In his opinion, that would promote a better coordination of all activities of the agencies operating in the field, including such organizations as RosZarubezhCentr and Russky Mir Foundation.¹⁹⁶

In 2009, just for the citizens of Abkhazia the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia allocated 100 seats in the higher education establishments across Russia. However, it should be mentioned that according to the information found at the personal website of the President of Abkhazia, only 70 of the seats were filled, including 27 seats in the field of equipment and technology, 12 seats in the field of healthcare, 12 seats in the field of economics and management. The remaining 30 failed in their exams.

In 2010, only 57 entrants from Abkhazia became students in the higher education institutions across Russia, including 14 in Moscow, 6 in Voronezh, 6 in Rostov, 3 in St Petersburg and others in Nalchik, Ryazan and Samara higher education establishments. The students will master the

¹⁹⁶ <http://www.edu.ru/fasi/mon-site/press/reliz/5027.print/C>

following specialties: 18 – construction and transport, 5 – culture and art, 8 – medical, 5 – economics and 3 – jurisprudence.¹⁹⁷

According to Leonid Lakerbaia, the Vice-Premier of the de-facto government of Abkhazia, any citizen of the “Republic of Abkhazia” may obtain the quota but the core requirement is to have an Abkhazian passport. After the relevant documents have been gathered (including the health certificate stating AIDS test results) those wishing to obtain the quota will take the relevant exams. The examination commission will be staffed by the “Ministry of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia”. Enrolment priorities will be granted to the children of those killed in Abkhazian war, school medal winners and Olympiad winners. In other cases entrants will be examined under the general procedure. Those enrolled will be provided with a dormitory if such facility is available with any particular higher education establishment. In addition to ordinary scholarship, Abkhazian students will get 5 000 rouble monthly scholarships from Sukhumi Government.

On September 4, 2009, Moscow State University of Foreign Relations and Abkhazian State University signed the Agreement on Cooperation and Training of Diplomatic Personnel in Abkhazia. Under the agreement, every academic year, professors from Moscow State University of Foreign Relations will deliver lectures for Abkhazian students at the Faculties of International Relations, Law and Economics.

As for South Ossetia, Russia allocated 200 seats in 2009 but not all the seats were filled – only 150 students applied to Russian higher education establishments. In 2010, Russia allocated 172 seats but only 117 were filled. 26 seats were allocated for the graduate schools in 2010.¹⁹⁸

In parallel, Russian Federation holds a number of events with participation of public-scientific circles and politicians from Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

In February 2010, following the de-facto elections in Abkhazia, Sergey Bagapsh’s official visit to the Russian Federation was marked with a meeting with the students and professors of the Moscow State University of Foreign Relations.¹⁹⁹ The list of official visits of the de-facto President of Abkhazia also included a meeting with Russian President Dmitriy Medvedev, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, Russian Vice-Premier Sergey Ivanov, Transport Minister Igor Levitin. The

¹⁹⁷ <http://www.abkhaziagov.org/>

¹⁹⁸ <http://osinform.ru/22778-v-rossijskie-vuzy-v-yetom-godu-postupilo-117.html>

¹⁹⁹ <http://www.mgimo.ru/news/guests/document143693.phtml>

visit program was aimed to sign various agreements between Russia and Abkhazia in military, transport, bank, illegal migration control, emergency response and environmental sectors. At the end of the visit, Sergey Bagapsh met with Patriarch Kirill of Russia.

Later on, in March (16.03.2010), as a repercussion of the above visit, Moscow State University of Foreign Relations organized a scientific conference in celebration of the 200th anniversary of Abkhazia's accession to the Russian Empire. The topic of the conference was "Russia-Abkhazia: 200 Years of Friendship and Cooperation." The conference was attended by Vice-Rector Sergey Bagaturov, professors and instructors of the University as well as by Sergey Shamba, the de-factor Prime-Minister of Abkhazia, as part of his working visit to Moscow. The latter delivered the speech "Russia and Abkhazia: History and the Present".²⁰⁰ As they say, no comment! The Russification policy implemented by the Russian Empire in the territory of Georgia in general and Abkhazia in particular, the repressions and the exile of the indigenous population of Abkhazia (Muhajir)²⁰¹ were all the events worthy of "celebration"!

At the same conference, Andrey Kelin, the Director of the CIS 4th Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation, delivered a speech, informing the attendants about the phase of Russian-Abkhazian present relations. He stated that current "interstate relations" are developing rapidly, 34 agreements had already been signed and their number would soon exceed 50. Kelin also noted that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was performing coordinated work, fulfilling Dmitriy Medvedev's instructions under the South Ossetia and Abkhazia Support Program. As he said, the main emphasis had so far been placed on the settlement of security problems and the implementation of economic programs would follow later. He also stated that efforts are being made to achieve Abkhazia's international recognition but it is a long-term issue. As Kelin said, "it took many years for the Soviet Union to be recognized!"²⁰² The comparison is telling indeed.

The plenary meeting was also attended by the Ambassador of Abkhazia in Russian Federation Igor Akhba, Ambassador of South Ossetia in Russian Federation Dmitriy Medoev, and the representatives of the Russian community and Abkhazian Diaspora. Russian historians, ethnographers, and political scientists, including Alexander Krilov, Ana Broito, Alaxander Skakov, Lubov Solovyova, Alexander Kadirvbaev, Vasil Avidzba (Director of Abkhazian Humanitarian

²⁰⁰ <http://www.mgimo.ru/news/press/document146878.phtml>

²⁰¹ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhajir_\(Caucasus\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhajir_(Caucasus))

²⁰² <http://www.mgimo.ru/news/press/document146878.phtml>

Research Institute), Antonina Khashba (Head of the Chair of Archaeology, History and Ethnography of the Abkhazian State University), Teimuraz Achugba (ethnologist), Taras Samba (President of the World Congress of the Abkhaz-Abazg Peoples) and Denis Chachkhalia (writer) delivered speeches at the conference. The speeches of the participants were issued in a special brochure.

The representatives of Russian scientific circles often visit Abkhazia to hold joint conferences. It should be mentioned that a number of “international conferences” and “international symposiums” have been held for the last 2 years. In principle, there is nothing to be surprised at, except the fact that the only guest to all such “international;” events is Russian Federation.

On 22-26 September 2008, about 110 Russian scientists took part in Bichvinta 4th International Conference “Information Technologies in Science, Technology and Education.” The event was organized by Prokhorov Academy of Engineering Sciences of the Russian Federation, Federal Space Agency of the Russian Federation, Military Topographic Division of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, Moscow Institute of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, Power Engineering Institute of Moscow, Abkhazian State University and Sukhumi Physics & Technical Institute.²⁰³

This event really challenges our attention. The thing is that in May 2010, Sergey Lavrov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, submitted to Dmitriy Medvedev, the President of Russian Federation “the Program for the Effective Exploitation on A Systemic Basis of Foreign Policy Factors for the Purposes of the Long-Term Development of the Russian Federation”. One of the paragraphs of the document states that it is necessary to facilitate ERA-SFTI, a joint Russian-Abkhazian venture, with participation of ROSATOM, on the basis of Sukhumi Physics & Technical Institute to launch a high-tech production of polycrystalline silicon panels that are necessary for eco-friendly power generation.

Obviously, the above makes the true goal of the conference perfectly clear. It is equally noteworthy that the program was published in Newsweek, a Russian magazine, but has recently disappeared from the Internet. Therefore, we’d like to provide the original of the above citation as it appears in a printed version: *„Оказывать содействие созданному с участием Росатома на*

²⁰³ <http://abhazia.com/news1-393.html>

базе Сухумского физико-технического института совместному российско-абхазскому предприятию ООО «ЭРА-СФТИ» с целью запуска в 2010 году высокотехнологичного производства мультикремниевых пластин, необходимых для создания экологически чистых источников энергии.”

Russia is doing her best to present Abkhazia and South Ossetia as separate states as soon as possible. For this purpose, the Federal Agency of Geodesy and Cartography of Russia issued maps depicting Abkhazia and South Ossetia in colors different from that of Georgia and marking Sukhum (Сухум) and Tskhinval (Цхинвал) as their capitals.²⁰⁴ Similar maps are planned to be issued in future where the ancient Georgian villages now within the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia will have their names changed for Abkhazian and Ossetian names. The new maps will depict the borders of the above “independent countries” according to the administrative borders that these autonomous republics had had by the time the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.²⁰⁵

Situation in secondary schools within the occupied territories

The Kremlin has maintained a different approach to general education within the occupied territories. Teaching in Abkhazia and South Ossetia is implemented in accordance with the curricula and the textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, which conform fully to the ideology of the official Moscow. On August 18, 2008, 8 days prior to the recognition of the “independence” of South Ossetia, at the meeting with the Russian Premier Vladimir Putin, Minister of Education Fursenko stated that Russia can improve the quality of education in South Ossetia if South Ossetia is integrated into Russian national projects. Russian Premier Vladimir Putin agreed. Thus, the education system of South Ossetia found itself completely under the Russian national education project.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ http://www.rosreestr.ru/upload/rosreest/files/izmeneniya_karta.pdf

²⁰⁵ http://www.rosreestr.ru/upload/rosreest/files/izmeneniya_karta.pdf

²⁰⁶ <http://premier.gov.ru/events/news/1672/>

According to the official estimates, there are 25 840 school students in Abkhazia (not including Gali region). There are 63 Abkhazian, 51 Russian, 39 Armenian and one Russian-Armenian schools in Abkhazia.²⁰⁷

The Russian language has the status of the state language in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Therefore, it is mandatory to study it in all secondary schools. Media broadcasting in both regions is mostly in Russian. Russian TV channels have fully spread over and covered the occupied territories of Georgia. Besides, the main future prospects of the current school students include acquiring education in Russian higher education establishments. As for employment, mainly Russian companies are represented in the occupied regions. Consequently, the demand for knowledge of the Russian language is quite high and most of the children opt to get Russian education. Besides, there are no curricula for teaching different subjects in Abkhazian and Ossetian languages. More importantly, there are no specialists in Abkhazian and Ossetian languages to be able to impart thorough knowledge to school students. Subjecting the education systems of Abkhazia and South Ossetia is not limited to just teaching the Russian language. All subjects are taught in Russian, mostly based on the textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation. In reality though, very little attention is given to the Abkhazian and Ossetian languages, their level of study being reduced to that of an optional subject. Although the de-facto governments of the occupied territories stress the need for maintaining their national identity and the status of the native language, the actual situation is entirely different from the declared course. For instance, it would suffice to mention that the 2009 budget of Abkhazia amounted to 3 billion 874 million 44 thousand Russian roubles, including social-cultural events (mostly entertaining the guests arriving mainly from Russia and organizing concerts with their participation) – 743,263 million roubles, education and professional training – 401 million roubles, and the Abkhazian Language Development Program – 13,63 million roubles.

Unlike South Ossetia that has openly asked the official Moscow to admit South Ossetia into the Russian Federation as its integral part, the idea of identity in the Abkhazian community is much stronger. Relatively stronger is the Abkhazian civil society, too, that sees the assimilation of Abkhazians with Russia and the Russification of Abkhazia as a real problem.²⁰⁸ Therefore, the de-

²⁰⁷ <http://www.apsny.ru/education/education.php?page=content/uchzav/uchzav.htm>
<http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%90%D0%B1%D1%85%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%B8%D1%8F#.D0.9E.D0.B1.D1.80.D0.B0.D0.B7.D0.BE.D0.B2.D0.B0.D0.BD.D0.B8.D0.B5>

²⁰⁸ <http://origin.tavisupleba.org/content/article/1750494.html>

facto government in Abkhazia has to reckon with the public sentiments and create at least the illusion of national identity. However, all of this is so phony that in some cases it would make a good comedy, had not it be a tragedy. For instance, Sergey Bagapsh declared 2010 as the year of the Abkhazian language and just before the elections started practicing Abkhazian because in order to register as a candidate for Presidency, he had to submit the reference of a local linguistic commission to the Central Election Commission. According to the “constitution” of Abkhazia, the President of Abkhazia must speak the state language fluently. The linguistic commission issued President Sergey Bagapsh and ex-Vice-President Raul Khajimba a positive reference with the following formulation: “As Segey Bagapsh and Raul Khajimba demonstrated a good knowledge of the Abkhazian language during the pre-election campaign, the commission found it unnecessary for them to take the exam.” For the rest of the presidential contenders – Beslan Butba, Zaur Ardzinba and Vitali Bganba – the exam was obligatory but not really hard to pass. The five-member linguistic commission asked the candidates to read aloud a text in Abkhazian and retell the content. Besides, the nominees must have taken part in a dialogue on a variety of topics and answer the questions of the members of the commission. According to Aleksey Kaslandzia, the chairman of the commission, “all the candidates speak the state language fluently.”

The situation is “better” in the parliament of Abkhazia, that is, in “national assembly.” The law that passed in 2007 and came into force from January 2010 requires that the official meetings of the President and the meetings of the parliament be held in the Abkhazian language.²⁰⁹ It turned out, though, that the objective would never be accomplished, as only very few of the 35 “members of the assembly” speak Abkhazian, to say nothing about the classic literary Abkhazian language. However, the “lawmakers” would not be intimidated with the problem and they hired simultaneous interpreters to assist them. In April 2010, the first “meeting” was held through simultaneous interpretation from Russian into Abkhazian and vice versa. The interpreter found herself in quite a predicament as she could not interpret the works of several members speaking concurrently; besides, the interpreter completely skipped many of the replicas that evoked laughter and exchange of opinions, as she thought they had nothing to do with legislation.²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ Republic of Abkhazia, 08.04.2010 http://www.abkhaziya.org/news_detail.html?nid=25746

²¹⁰ See The 24 Hours newspaper, 13.05.2010 <http://24saati.ge/index.php/category/news/2010-05-13/6505>

What's the most interesting is that despite so much trouble, paperwork in the same parliament is done in Russian and can be made in Abkhazian in 2015²¹¹ at best, provided, however, there is at least the minimum number of Abkhazian language specialists in Abkhazia.

Situation in the Georgian schools within the occupied territories

Before 2008, teachers in the Georgian schools in Gali region had managed to teach using Georgian books with a varying degree of success, the situation has changed for worse since Russia's recognition of the independence of Abkhazia. In 2009 new books were introduced in the schools of Gali region– Geography of Abkhazia and History of Abkhazia. Children are taught Geography of Russia and History of Russia as well using the books that the Office of the Mayor of Moscow has donated to the de-facto government of Abkhazia. As Alexander Aplakov, the Minister of Education of the then legitimate government of Abkhazia, says, these books present a terribly distorted version of Abkhazian-Georgian relations.²¹² Teachers are forced to conduct the teaching process in Russian. The mandatory subjects of study include: the Abkhazian Language, History of Abkhazia, Geography of Abkhazia, which are taught in Russian.²¹³ Geography of Russia and History of Russia are also taught.²¹⁴ The Ministry of Education of the de-facto government of Abkhazia can see nothing wrong in it, since Gali is one of the regions of Abkhazia and education there must comply with the "national standards."

There are 31 Georgian schools operating in Gali region. The official sources of the de-facto government of Abkhazia have reduced the number to 12.²¹⁵ Of course, this better serves the purpose – decreasing the number reduces the risk of allegations regarding the closedown of Georgian schools. Therefore, about 20 Georgians schools have just vanished from the official release data as if they had never existed. These education establishments have to work under constant tensions and closedown threats as the Russification process has touched upon schools as well. Georgian teachers and students are prohibited from learning and speaking in Georgian. Attacks on and intimidations of Georgian schools have become rampant. For instance, on September 8, 2009, armed people raided Public School N 13 in the village of Nabakevi in Gali

²¹¹ http://www.abkhaziya.org/news_detail.html?nid=25746

²¹² <http://origin.tavisupleba.org/content/article/1561454.html>

²¹³ <http://www.abkhaziagov.org/ru/president/press/news/detail.php?ID=28054>

²¹⁴ <http://origin.tavisupleba.org/content/article/1561454.html>

²¹⁵ <http://www.apsny.ru/education/education.php?page=content/uchzav/uchzav.htm>

district According to the local population armed people in military forms broke into the school. The reason for the incident was Georgian banner at school; the school administration was congratulating pupils with the new school term in Georgian language. The teachers tried to explain to the aggressors that the school was Georgian and they had right to greet pupils in Georgian; however, the attackers shouted at them and threatened them. Later, the aggressors tore down Georgian banner and left the territory.²¹⁶

On 3 February 2010, the Georgian and Armenian schools in Gali region were visited by OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Knut Vollebaek. He was accompanied by the de-facto Minister of Education of Abkhazia Indira Vardania. At that point, Mrs. Vardania “admitted” that there were 20 schools in Gali region, some of which were Georgian.²¹⁷ As for the OSCE High Commissioner, he said he was content with the approach that the government of Abkhazia employed to Armenian schools but could not say the same in relation to Georgian schools. The OSCE High Commissioner said that he was concerned with the reluctance to the opportunity of education in Georgian at those schools.²¹⁸

As for Akhagori region, there were three public schools there before the August War – two Georgian schools and one Ossetian school. Now, as is known, there are only two schools – one Georgian and one Ossetian, which are both accommodated in the one and the same building.²¹⁹ The learning process in the Russian school takes place based on the curriculum and guidebooks approved by Russian Federation, and Georgian Language and Literature were removed from the curriculum of 2010-2011 learning year. The teaching of Georgian Language and Literature in the Georgian school is only ostentatious – parents and teachers alike have to buy books in Tbilisi and smuggle them into the territory of the occupied region of Akhagori.²²⁰

Tengiz Pkhaladze

Nana Devdariani

²¹⁶ <http://www.humanrights.ge/index.php?a=main&pid=11265&lang=eng>

²¹⁷ <http://www.abkhaziagov.org/en/news/detail.php?ID=28086>

²¹⁸ <http://1k-tv.com/forum/index.php?showtopic=103&st=40>

²¹⁹ <http://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/content/article/2145300.html>

²²⁰ <http://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/content/article/2145300.html>

“Public Dialogue” and Russia’s “Soft Power”

*“You cannot make one happy if you give him something,
you can make him happy only if you take something away from him”*

Friedrich Nietzsche

Since the military aggression of 2008, dialogue with the Georgian community has become quite a popular topic for the Kremlin. As mentioned in the previous chapters, Vladimir Putin and Dmitriy Medvedev have repeatedly made public statements regarding the need for friendly ties with the Georgian people.

There are quite a few Russian public associations in Georgia, the goals of which are, inter alia, promotion of Russian culture and development of Russian cultural centers in Georgia. In Tbilisi, there is International Cultural-Educational Union “RUSSIAN CLUB”, with Nikoloz Svetnitsky as its president. The union publishes a monthly social-cultural magazine “Russian Club”. Besides, there are Griboyedov Tbilisi State Academic Russian Drama Theatre, with the same Nikoloz Svetnitsky as its director and the Russian Puppet Theatre operating on the basis of N. Dumbadze State Children’s Theatre in Tbilisi. Among other active Russian public associations, which are dedicated to the implementation of cultural projects in Georgia, we should mention “RADUGA”, a cultural-charitable and scientific-educational union of the Russian community in Georgia, “ISKRA” Russian Cultural Center, Association of Russian-language journalists of Georgia, “ZHEMCHUZHINA” Russian Cultural Center, “YAROSLAVNA” Union of Russian Women in Georgia, etc. The main activities of these organizations include organizing meetings, round tables in different fields of culture, literary evenings, performances and other events.

Over the years, the Georgian Diaspora in the territory of Russian Federation has formed a number of organizations. Their activities are mainly aimed at preserving ethnic identity, culture and cultural heritage and address various social-humanitarian issues.

Besides, the ties established over the years between scientific-academic circles, artists, professional circles, public figures and politicians still exist. All these resources can actually be used to settle relations between the two countries. However, as mentioned above, the Kremlin vision of “relations” is aimed at fulfilling its own ambitions and imperialistic plans. Therefore, public effort of

goodwill faces a different ideological platform of Moscow that distorts and nips in the bud an otherwise noble idea of “restoration of trust between the peoples”.

By the decision of June 15, 2010, according to the results of International Russian-Georgian Poetry Festival, the International Federation of Russian-speaking Writers awarded its official representative in Georgia, director of the Griboyedov Tbilisi State Academic Russian Drama Theatre and the president of International Cultural-Educational Union “RUSSIAN CLUB” – Nikolai Sventitskiy, poet and translator and the author of Anthology of Georgian Poetry - Nathan Baazov, Zaza Abzianidze - the editor of “Literaturnaya Gruzia” magazine, critic and writer, poet - Lia Sturua and poet Davit Gulua. In connection with his jubilee and for the contribution to the preservation and development of the world cultural heritage, the International Federation of Russian-speaking Writers awarded Otia Ioseliani, an outstanding Georgian writer, scenarist and playwright, with the Order of Cultural Heritage.²²¹

These awards produced no controversial repercussions unlike those produced by the David the Builder awards granted by Alexander Ebralidze, the founder of the Congress of Georgian Peoples, a Georgian businessman in Moscow, to Georgian poets and critics. Mr. Ebralidze founded the award himself in 2009. Considering the foundation document,²²² it is a “historical-literary” prize, serving extremely noble purposes: “to deepen the interest of the society towards the literary works on the history of Georgia, to highlight the lives of merited patriots of the country and reveal their role.” The only problem that sent tempers fraying and caused a controversy was that the founder and president of the Congress of Georgian Peoples is Alexander Ebralidze, a citizen of Russia. The Russian media have often reported about his criminal past.²²³ Mr. Ebralidze appeared on the social-political scene not long ago when in 2009 he made a public statement of his wishes to run for the Georgian presidency.²²⁴ His organization is an outstanding representative of the so-called “public associations” recently formed in Russia, which are busy vigorously discussing the Georgian-Russian relations and making loud political statements and the rhetoric of which goes in full harmony with that of the Kremlin ideologists.

Against the background of severed diplomatic relations, Moscow handles the matter of dialogue with Georgian politicians with great “attention”. A few Georgian political leaders have visited

²²¹ <http://rulit.org/announcements/>

²²² <http://premia-davit.congress-georgia.org/en/award/regulations/>

²²³ <http://criminalnaya.ru/publ/30-1-0-1360> ; <http://www.rospress.com/corruption/2934/>

²²⁴ <http://lenta.ru/news/2009/05/15/ebralidze/>

Russia for the last two years. However, only two of them – Nino Burjanadze and Zurab Nogaideli were honored by the “special privilege” to meet and talk face to face with Vladimir Putin. Yedinnaya Rossiya, a government party of Russia, even signed a cooperation agreement²²⁵ with the political movement “For Fair Georgia.”²²⁶

Promises have been made to reopen Russian market to Borjomi and Georgian wines. The Russian air space has been reopened from time to time, with Airzena, a Georgian airline, permitted to perform a few chartered flights to and from Russia, but all of this happened only after repeated requests and appeals from the Georgian side. However, the Russian side politicized the matter too much to believe that they wished to make any real step toward improving the relations between the two countries.

Overall, it should be mentioned that the Russian-Georgian people diplomacy resources are rather limited at this point. The Kremlin attempt to employ public activity to bolster its influence raise further suspicions and distrust of the official Tbilisi. The Georgian government is extremely cautious about such initiatives and, therefore, meetings are usually held beyond the borders of Georgia.

“In a public format” as well as on an official level Russia is constantly talking about the “new realities”, declaring Georgia as the culprit in the war of August 2008 while remaining unwilling to assume even the slightest responsibility. One can’t help wondering what type of relation the Russia officials imply and how they envision friendly relations with Georgia within the context of the “new realities.” First of all, it’s about Georgia’s foreign political course, namely Georgia’s aspirations to become a NATO member. The opinions of Russian experts and political scientists on the topic have been published a number of times but the first open statement by an official person was made in February 2007 when, after having returned to Georgia from the consultations in Russia, Vyacheslav Kovalenko, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation in Georgia, stated the following at the press-conference in Tbilisi: Russia wishes to see Georgia an independent, sovereign, neutral state!²²⁷

After the first independent Republic of Georgia had been established (1918), the Bolshevik Russia insisted that Tbilisi declare neutrality and it was only in return for such declaration that Moscow

²²⁵ <http://justiceforgeorgia.ge/>

²²⁶ <http://www.edinros.ru/text.shtml?12/1426>

²²⁷ <http://top.rbc.ru/politics/06/02/2007/95947.shtml>

agreed to sign the agreement recognizing the independence of Georgia. Such agreement was signed on 7 May 1920.²²⁸ However, Russia occupied and annexed Georgia within just months after the signature of such agreement (25 February 1921).

Today, Moscow is actively talking about neutrality. Even “Conflict resolution” and “establishment of good-neighborly relations” scenarios have been formed. In the article “How to make peace with Georgia,” director of the Carnegie Moscow Centre Dmitri Trenin states: Abkhazia will not return to Georgia, but it could trade land for peace — and recognition. The Gali district, with its ethnic Georgian population, would revert to Georgia in return for Tbilisi’s recognition of the rest of Abkhazia as an independent state. As part of the settlement, Russia’s military presence in Abkhazia would become less relevant and might be reduced. South Ossetia, by contrast, has virtually no prospect of becoming a viable state. Its reunification with North Ossetia would be a disaster, whether it happens within or beyond the borders of Russia. But South Ossetia would not simply fold back into Georgia, either. A creative solution to the South Ossetian issue can be found along the lines of the Andorran model. That is, South Ossetia would retain the formal trappings of independence — it could mint coins, print stamps and raise its flag — but Georgia would be legally present in South Ossetia as a guarantor of its remaining or returning Georgian population. Such presence would also protect Georgia itself from the threat of a surprise attack against its capital. Although Russia would have to pull back its forces north of the Roki tunnel, it would retain the right to protect South Ossetians. A joint police force would keep the peace as necessary.²²⁹

Other similar scenarios have also been put forward. However, there is a “slight problem” – how the Georgian community is prepared to accept it all. Therefore, Moscow is trying to help create “a favorable public opinion”, using the idea of “dialogue between the peoples” for this purpose. Such a dialogue requires an ideological platform to turn Russia into an attractive partner. But this is where Moscow encounters a serious problem. Russian expert Vyacheslav Nikonov says that Russia has rather limited resources for manifestation of “Soft Power.” First of all, Russia has no ideology to offer the world. Her financial resources are hundred or thousand times less than those of the West. Russia has certain facilities to use the global media but considering that the global media work mostly against Russia, this becomes quite a challenge. As for the Russian global media, they are in embryo stage. On the other hand, global media alone cannot solve the problem – it is

²²⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Moscow_%281920%29

²²⁹ <http://carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=41354>

necessary to have the ability to develop guidelines of certain values, something that the Russian bureaucracy does not possess. Mr. Nikonov stresses the advantage that, in his opinion, Russia undoubtedly has – the great culture.²³⁰

Leaving the rest of the world alone and focusing on Georgia would lead us to an interesting result: “lack of ideology”-which is a rather generic description. In reality, it is Russia that has plunged deepest into liberalism since the demise of the Communist ideology (including its ugly manifestations). Nevertheless, Russia has not stopped searches for the “forth ideology” (whether a softened Communist, “liberal imperialistic” or the so-called “Eurasian” ideology). None of them has proved to be satisfactory for the Georgian community, as each of them entails an aspiration for restoration of the Russian Empire within the former borders. After the war of August 2008 this prospect has become almost absurd. The ability to create an ideology that will make the seizure of 20% of the Georgian territory look attractive is beyond imagination.

Getting back to the advantage discussed by Mr. Nikonov – Russian culture, no spectacular results should be expected in relation to Georgia. Georgia is justly proud of her older and richer culture (which does not mean ignoring, say, Pushkin, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Chekhov, etc). No doubt, a common cultural tradition is very important but considering that modern Russian mass culture has readjusted itself to an American model, the choice will be made in favor of the original, not a copy. What remains is the classic (or Soviet) cultural heritage but it covers a narrow circle of persons and, therefore, the dialogue between such small groups cannot influence the overall situation and has no adequate information support, either.

Conclusions and recommendations

The Russian model of “soft power” is a political instrument devoid of value that is still on the stage of development. However, the process is designed to refine the technologies of masking current political interests, not to create a system of values. For this purpose, Moscow is employing the so-called “humanitarian direction,” the constituents of which are culture, education, science, compatriot protection policy, consular activities, and the media. By using them, Moscow is trying to help create a favorable political opinion in Georgia to make it easier to carry out her intention –

²³⁰ <http://www.russ.ru/Mirovaya-povestka/Komponentov-myagkoj-sily-u-Rossii-nemnogo>

increase her influence in the region and turn South Caucasus into a de-facto zone of her own “privileged interests.”

To achieve these goals, Moscow is yet again using double-standard policy. For instance, while preaching on impermissibility of “rewriting history,” it is actually doing the same in relation to Georgia. Kremlin ideologists “alter” the history and toponymy of Georgia at their sole discretion, raising doubts in their documents over the concept of Georgians as a nation, dividing it into twelve different, non-existent nationalities.

Moscow claims protecting the interests of compatriots but organizes repressions within her own territory against them, persecuting her own citizens for their national or ethnic belonging. Moscow distributes passports in Abkhazia while refusing, for no objective reason, to grant documents to some 50 000 refugees from Abkhazia who have lived in Russia for almost 20 years.

To achieve her objectives, the Kremlin is prepared to violate international laws as well as those of the Russian Federation. The so-called “consulates” operating for years in the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as well as the passports distributed by such structures provide ample evidence to that effect.

Russia’s “Soft Power” policy is not at all painless. The ethnic cleansing operations conducted by Russia in the occupied territories of Georgia have now been replaced with an aggressive Russification policy, endangering the indigenous peoples of these territories, first of all Abkhazia. Passportization, transferring the education system to the Russian standards, control over the church, consistently replacing Abkhazian language with Russian - all presents the greatest threat to the existence of the Abkhazian ethnos.

It is noteworthy that the Kremlin is carrying out, with almost no alteration, the Abkhazia colonization plan of the Old Russian Empire. Schools and churches were the main target at that time, too, since these elements are the strongest mechanisms of influence upon people. Two centuries ago, in one of his reports, Kutaisi Military Governor, General-Major Gershelman complained they had made a mistake by permitting Georgian priests into the Abkhazian population and entrusting the education business to Georgian clergy and teachers. In the same report to his commanders, General-Major Gershelman further proposes the following measures to be implemented for correcting the mistake:

- “1) By the decree of the Holy Synod dated 3 September 1898 liturgy and all other Christian rituals for the parish of Abkhazian population to be performed in Slavic language.
- 2) By the decree of Georgia-Imereti Synod office on March 17, 1898 the teaching of Georgian language in schools of Abkhazia and Samurkazano to be prohibited;
- 3) To establish schools for Sukhumi highlanders, mostly for the education of Abkhazian children and granting them state scholarships in Stavropol Gymnasium;
- 4) To impose eparchial and administrative supervision over liturgy and school teaching to ensure compliance with the above orders;
- 5) To restrict the right of Georgians to be attributed to the indigenous rural communities enjoyed by those settled before 1865;
- 6) Sukhumi District to be colonized by the Russian people; and finally
- 7) To submit seven Mingrelians involved in the Georgian movement to eviction from the Caucasus.²³¹

As we can see, nothing has changed much in this respect today. The modern ideological machine of the Kremlin employs the same methods and means to get the peoples of the occupied territories accustomed to “correct thinking.”

It should also be mentioned that the formation of the Russian “Soft Power” is a dynamically developing process. It is being continually “tested” in the neighbouring states of Russia. The passportization technologies tested in Georgia have cropped up in other regions (e.g. the Crimea – Ukraine, Transdnistria – Moldova) in slightly modified forms. The technologies tested in the Baltic countries are similarly transferred to Georgia. Unfortunately, neither the Georgian government nor international community could predict the extent of risk presented by the passportization program implemented by Russia in Georgia (namely, in the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia) or the deplorable consequences that the program could lead Georgia to. Nor was the “compatriots policy” perceived as a new threat to the neighbouring countries of Russia. The consequences are all clear now. Unfortunately, the conflict zones within the territory of Georgia have turned into a sort of laboratory of the Kremlin aggressive policy, where the “homework” given by Moscow is

²³¹ <http://www.kavkasia.ge/index.php?action=more&id=45&lang=rus>

tested and fulfilled. Thus, the process is taking on increasingly dangerous forms and scales, requiring a timely and adequate reaction from international community.

Proceeding from the above, the authors think it expedient to provide the following recommendations:

- The modern “compatriots” policy of Russia suggests that the problems will crop up in future more intensively and acutely. Therefore, in our opinion, it is advisable to strengthen cooperation in this respect with the countries being the primary targets of the Kremlin “compatriots” policy (e.g. Ukraine, Moldova, the Baltic states). In addition to experience sharing, joint efforts will make it easier to discuss the issues within the context of pan-European security.
- Sometime in the past, Georgia made a big mistake by allowing Russia to declare the population living in Abkhazia and South Ossetia as “compatriots”. “Inclusion in the way of cooperation towards occupied territories” strategy of the Georgian Government is one of the effective means to correct the mistake. The population of the occupied territories will feel as a Georgian and not Russian “compatriot” only when it has a real trust in Georgian community and hence the Georgian state. Therefore, maximum community involvement in the implementation of the strategy and the measures contemplated by the Action Plan of such strategy is one of the critically important preconditions for their success. Thus, developing a long-term platform of Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-Ossetian public dialogue is one of the vitally important objectives.
- It is necessary to neutralize the adverse consequences derived from the efforts of the Russian ideological centres by supporting and promoting the publication of work and essays on the modern history of Georgia, including in Russian, as the majority of the population, including young people within the occupied territories are chiefly Russian speaking.
- Russia is well aware that the West is not going to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Therefore, step-by-step, Russia is trying to get the West accustomed to the idea that all of this is a fact and, as Russia is not going to step back, it would be better for the West to get used to it silently. To prevent this from happening, Georgia must work actively to make sure the western communities do not allow their governments to get quietly reconciled with the matter. We need to show our partners the real side of Russia’s policy and Russia’s criminal

acts in the occupied territories. To respond to the “new realities” theory of Russia and weaken the rhetoric of the Kremlin ideologists, Georgia can use the OSCE resolutions made at Bucharest and Lisbon summits reporting the ethnic cleansing of Georgians in Abkhazia. The resolutions were supported by Russia as well, meaning that now it is trying to legalize and legitimize the consequences of the ethnic cleansing.

- It is of critical importance to take effective steps to ensure cyber security and clean information environment. In this respect, too, cooperation with such partners as Estonia is very important. Learning from the experience of this country would no doubt be beneficial for Georgia. In cooperation with the western partner states, Georgia may develop a joint training mechanism to forestall cyber risks. It should also be considered that cybersecurity issues play an important role in NATO’s New Strategy Concept. Strengthening cooperation with NATO in this area is a vitally important objective for Georgia.
- To achieve the level of information culture, it is advisable to implement the European program for adaptation to information community, with a particular attention to information culture issues to settle ethnic and regional aspects.
- The dialogue with the Russian community requires special attention. Dismissing the idea completely would work to Georgia’s disadvantage. It is necessary to think about the format that is maximally effective for the Georgian side and can set a precedent of cooperation in at least one particular sphere (e.g. cooperation with human rights organizations operating in Russian federation).
- The Georgian Diaspora in the Russian Federation also requires special attention. The pressure under which the Diaspora was forced to work should be taken into account. The Georgian Diaspora just like the entire Russian population is within such information-ideological space, from which it is extremely difficult to see the objective picture of the actual situation. Therefore, it is critically important to be moderate when referring to the Diaspora and develop special public programs to help Georgians living in Russian Federation to preserve their national identity and obtain objective information on Georgia.

And finally, the Russian “Soft Power” must necessarily be considered in Georgian National Security Concept. In assessing the risks, it is noteworthy that the technology involves the application of such sensitive instruments as religion, culture, education, public activity, etc.

Thus, a clear line must be drawn between the Russian “Soft Power” and the cultural, educational, religious and other events that have nothing to do with the Russian policy.

“Soft Power” cannot be prohibited – it can best be prevented by disseminating objective information, promoting and developing one’s own historical-cultural and spiritual values.