

RUSSIAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE ABKHAZ-GEORGIAN CONFLICT

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ABSTRACT

RUSSIAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE ABKHAZ-GEORGIAN CONFLICT

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The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the motives, means and implications of the Russian involvement in the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict. It seeks to find answers to the following questions: what are the dynamics of the Russian policy towards Abkhazia; how the contradictions in Russian domestic policy are reflected in the Russian policy towards Abkhazia; what are the implications of the Russian involvement in the conflict and the peace process. This dissertation argues that the Russian involvement in the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict has not contributed to the settlement of the conflict and peace in the region but rather to the realization of Russia's own interests by deepening the crisis in the region. Thus, Russia has conducted neither a pro-Abkhaz nor pro-Georgian policy in this conflict. The second chapter of this thesis examines the historical background of the conflict. The emergence, evolution and nature of the conflict are analyzed in the second chapter. The third chapter focuses on the reasons of the Russian involvement during the war between the Abkhaz and the Georgian forces. The Russian policy towards the Abkhaz conflict before and after the Rose Revolution is analyzed in the fourth and fifth chapters.

Keywords: Russia, Abkhazia, Georgia, the UN, conflict.

ÖZ

“RUSYA’NIN ABHAZ-GÜRCÜ ÇATIŞMASINA MÜDAHALESİ”

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Bu çalışmanın amacı Rusya’nın Abhaz-Gürcü Çatışmasına müdahalesinin gerekçelerini, araçlarını ve sonuçlarını ortaya koymaktır. Bu çerçevede, Rusya’nın Abhazya politikasını oluşturan dinamikler, Rusya’nın iç politik dinamiklerinin Abhazya politikasına nasıl yansıdığı ve Rusya’nın Abhazya’ya müdahalesinin savaş ve barış süreci üzerindeki sonuçları incelenecektir. Bu çalışma, Rusya’nın Abhaz-Gürcü çatışmasına müdahalesi ile, çatışmanın çözümüne katkıda bulunmayı ve barışı sağlamayı amaç edinmediğini, aksine çatışmanın barışçıl çözümünü zorlaştırarak kendi çıkarlarını gerçekleştirmeyi amaç edindiğini ileri sürmektedir. Rusya bu çatışmada ne Abhaz yanlısı ne de Gürcü yanlısı bir politika izlemiştir. Tezin giriş bölümünü takiben ikinci bölümde Abhaz-Gürcü çatışmasının tarihsel arka planı incelenecektir. Çatışmanın nasıl başladığı, gelişimi ve farklı yanları üçüncü bölümde incelenecektir. Dördüncü bölüm, Abhaz-Gürcü Savaşı boyunca Rusya’nın müdahale sebepleri üzerine odaklanmıştır. Gül Devrimi öncesi ve sonrası Rusya’nın Abhaz çatışmasına yönelik politikası beşinci ve altıncı bölümlerde incelenecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Rusya, Abhazya, Gürcistan, Birleşmiş Milletler, çatışma.

To My Parents,

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there emerged many ethno-political conflicts in the former Soviet geography. Abkhaz-Georgian conflict is one of these conflicts characterized by intensive Russian involvement. Considering the Soviet legacy in the region, the role of the Russian Federation seems to have an overweighed impact both on the evaluation of the war in Abkhazia and the peace process. A proper examination of the Russian involvement in the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict is crucially important because, despite the UN presence in the region, the fate of the conflict has been hostage to Russia.

The overall aim of the present thesis is to examine the motives, means and implications of Russian policy towards the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict. The purpose is to find answers to the following questions: What constituted the dynamics of the Russian policy towards Abkhazia; how the contradictions in Russian domestic policy were reflected in the Russian policy towards Abkhazia; what the implications of Russian involvement has been over the conflict and peace process and how decisive the Russian policy in the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict has been explained. Thus, the main research question of the thesis is that:

What are the motives, means and implications of Russian involvement over the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict?

Based on the literature review concerning the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict I have identified several schools of thought explaining the characteristics of Russian involvement in the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict. The first school of thought argues that Russia's involvement in the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict was crucial for the settlement of the conflict and the establishment of peace, security and stability in the region. They argued that Russia has played a positive role in the settlement of the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict.

In the study titled as *Ethnic Conflict and Russian Intervention in the South Caucasus* edited by Fred Wehling, it is argued that Russian intervention in the ethnic

conflicts in the region has had positive implications for the establishment of peace in the region. According to Wehling, “Russia should take on a hegemonic role in the region, as it is the only force both capable of and committed to maintaining peace and stability.”¹ In his article titled as “Ethnic Conflict in the Caucasus: Causes and Solutions”, Andranik Migranian argues that:

.....So we can see that the situation in the Caucasus and Transcaucasia is characterized by old conflicts and the resulting political, economic, and cultural instability. Practically all of the routes into and out of the region are blocked. No one can solve any of these problems internally. Is there a solution? I believe that there is a solution that will prove acceptable. It might not be well understood by the world community right now, but in the future I hope that it will be welcomed by both the local population and all affected ethnic groups. I hope that our partners abroad will come to both understand and support it. We cannot consider any solution without considering the role of Russia, which is inherently involved in these conflicts. Russia is the only force which is interested in and can take the responsibility for solving the region's problems. Because the central fire of inter-ethnic conflict is a serious threat to Russia's internal stability, it is Russia's internal political problem. It is not an internal political problem for any other country. Russia, to protect its vital interests, has to take an active role in finding a solution.²

Emil Pain is another supporter of this view. He argues that “Russian intervention in ethnic conflicts does not mean Russia’s return to imperial domination”³. In support of this argument, Wehling notes that “Russian peacekeeping forces were invited to operate in Georgia, Tajikistan, and other areas with considerable success”⁴. Evgeniy Kozhokin in his article titled as ‘Georgia-Abkhazia’ argues that “since the deployments of Russia's peacekeepers, Georgian and Abkhazian forces have not engaged in hostile military actions”⁵. He also added

¹ Fred Wehling, “Introduction”, Fred Wehling, (ed.), *Ethnic Conflict and Russian intervention in the Caucasus*, Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, August, 1995, <http://www.ciaonet.org/wps/wef02/#11>.

² Andranik Migranian, “Ethnic Conflict in the Caucasus: Causes and Solutions”, Fred Wehling, (ed.), *op.cit.*, <http://www.ciaonet.org/wps/wef02/#11>.

³ Emil Pain, “Understanding the Conflict in Chechnya”, Fred Wehling, (ed.), *op.cit.*, <http://www.ciaonet.org/wps/wef02/#11>.

⁴ Fred Wehling, “Introduction”, *op.cit.*, <http://www.ciaonet.org/wps/wef02/#11>.

⁵ Evgeniy Kozhokin, “Georgia-Abkhazia”, Jeremy R. Azrael and Emil A. Pain, (eds.), *US and Russian Policymaking with respect to the use of Force*, Santa Monica: Rand Pub., 1996. <http://www.rand.org/publications/CF/CF129/CF-129.chapter5.html>

that, "continued Russian pressure would ultimately produce a settlement and if such a settlement is reached, Russia's intervention in Georgia would be viewed by everyone concerned as an impressive success, despite the many controversies with which it has been surrounded"⁶. In the document titled as "The Role of Russia in Resolving Regional Security problems in the South Caucasus" and prepared by Lobov Sliska, it was stated that "in close co-ordination with the UN, Russia is helping to re-establish a dialogue between Abkhazia and Georgia based on mutual trust including issues of security, the return of refugees and economic co-operation"⁷. She adds that Russia continues to play the role of principal mediator in settling the conflict.⁸ "Russia confirms its adherence to the principle of Georgia's territorial integrity and expresses its interest in a peaceful resolution of matters under dispute on Georgian territory by using the mechanisms currently in place and being used by the UN and OSCE"⁹. In the International Workshop organized by the Eisenhower Institute's Center for Political and Strategic Studies in June 1998 on the issue of "Conflict in Central Asia and the Caucasus" it was argued that Russia played a positive role in the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict.¹⁰ It was stated that:

Although the "hand of Moscow" has been cited as a cause in many regional conflicts, participants felt that a complete Russian withdrawal could also have a negative impact on the two regions. After all, one participant stated, it was in the void following the collapse of the USSR that numerous disturbances arose throughout the newly independent states. This participant, from the former Soviet Union, felt that a Russian withdrawal from Chechnya today, for instance, would have similar severe repercussions throughout the North and South Caucasus, which

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Lubov Sliska, "The Role of Russia in Resolving Regional Security Problems in the South Caucasus", *NATO Parliamentary Assembly*, May, 2005, <http://www.nato-pa.int/Default.asp?SHORTCUT=722>.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ "Conflict in Central Asia and the Caucasus: An International Workshop", *The Eisenhower Institute's Center for Political and Strategic Studies*, Washington, DC, June 15-16, 1998, <http://www.eisenhowerinstitute.org/programs/globalpartnerships/securityandterrorism/coalition/regionalrelations/DC.htm>.

are directly linked. Without the presence of Russian authority, another void would be created which competing factions would rush to fill.¹¹

It was also agreed in the same workshop that:

On the positive side, Russia has managed to provide security through the armed forces it maintains in Georgia and in Tajikistan. At least one participant felt that a healthy amount of contact with Russia would help to solve problems related to active conflicts. The bottom line is that Russia continues to be a key to regional peacemaking. Participants agreed that Russia must be involved in regional peacemaking efforts, but not to the extent that it excludes the international community from involvement as well.¹²

The second school of thought in the literature does not make any specific reference to the determining role of Russia. The Abkhaz-Georgian conflict is explained with its own internal dynamics ignoring the crucial role played by the Russian Federation. Even in case of referring to the Russian role, the main point tends to be the Georgian-Russian rapprochement and the isolation of Abkhazia. Viacheslav A. Chirikba in his article titled as “Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict and Its Aftermath”, argues that “the much speculated about Russian assistance to Abkhazians should not be overestimated as is the case in practically all Georgian and in many Western publications.”¹³ Georgui Otyrba in his article titled as “War in Abkhazia: The Regional Significance of the Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict” does not make any reference to the Russian support to Abkhazia during the War. However, he argues that “there is need for a clear and open policy on the part of Russia”¹⁴. He adds that, “Russia has historical influence in the Caucasus and its opinions are to carry great weight”.¹⁵ It is argued that “Russia did not have a serious policy and it should prove its value in helping to resolve regional differences through trust and

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Viacheslav Chirikba, “Abkhazian-Georgian Conflict and Its Aftermath”, Mehmet Tütüncü (ed.), *Caucasus: War and Peace*, Haarlem: SOTA, 1998, p.74.

¹⁴ Georgui Otyrba, ‘War in Abkhazia: The Regional Significance of the Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict’, Roman Szporluk (ed.), *The International Relations of Eurasia, National Identity in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, NY/London: Sharpe, 1994, p. 300.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

reassurance particularly with the Abkhazians and the North Caucasians”¹⁶. It is clear that in these studies, Russian role and its importance is too much minimized and/or even ignored.

The third school of thought in the literature makes strong references to the so called pro-Abkhazian stance of Russia. Though Russia’s determining role over the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict is emphasized, it is argued that Russia should give up this pro-Abkhaz stance in order for the peace process to go further and the conflict to reach a settlement. Revaz Gachechiladze in his article titled as “National idea, state-building and boundaries in post-Soviet space (The Case of Georgia)” argues that “there was much speculation to what extent the outcome of these war may be attributed to the military aid given to separatists from Russia’s armed forces”¹⁷. He said that:

As for Russia’s involvement it seems as the different branches of power and even different ministries of Russia carried out different policies in the Caucasus; Russia had no single and clear policy in these conflicts and actually supported all the belligerent. But in the end, of each conflict in Georgia, Russia appeared to be the only peace-keeper.¹⁸

He stated that “Russia implemented more pressure on Georgia and at least informally, preferred to maintain separatist regimes to keep pressure on Georgia and added that all served for the continuation of Russian traditional influence in the South Caucasia”¹⁹. Irakli Kakabadze in his article titled as “Russian Troops in Abkhazia: Peacekeeping or Keeping Both Pieces” argues that “through the course of the conflict, the Russian army supported the Abkhaz side and Russia ensured Abkhazia to win the war and Georgia to accede to Russian demands”²⁰. Kakabadze

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.300-305.

¹⁷ Revaz Gachechiladze, “National Idea, State Building and Boundaries in Post-Soviet Space (The Case of Georgia)”, *GeoJournal*, Vol. 43, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publisher, (September) 1997, p. 58.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Irakli Zurab Kakabadze, “Russian Troops in Abkhazia: Peacekeeping, or Keeping Both Pieces”, *Perspectives on Central Asia*, Vol.II, No. 6, Washington, Eisenhower Institute’s Center for Political and Strategic Studies, September 1997, <http://www.eisenhowerinstitute.org/programs/globalpartnerships/securityandterrorism/coalition/regionrelations/OtherPubs/Kakabadze.htm>

adds that after Georgian accession Russian policy switched sides and was conducted in a more balanced way.²¹

David Darshiashvili in his article titled as “The Russian Military Presence in Georgia: The Parties, Attitudes and Prospects” argues that:

Before the war and in its initial stage there was evidence of Russian military aid to the Georgian Army. But in a short time Russian weapons (combat aircraft included) appeared on the Abkhaz side. Georgian official circles stated time and again that many operations of the Abkhaz were planned by officers of the Russian Army General Staff and that in the ranks of the Abkhaz units there were many Russian citizens, including regular military men. The fact that in the course of the war years the sympathies of the Russian military and politicians towards Abkhazia were on the rise and that real help stood behind them, is not denied either by independent experts or by some representatives of official Moscow.²²

As a result of the overall literature analysis on the Abkhaz-Georgian Conflict, I identified a certain deficiency in some part of the literature. The common problematic point in these approaches is their tendency to explain the conflict by either affiliating Russia a positive role in the Abkhaz-Georgian peace process, ignoring the role of Russia in the overall process or to define Russia’s role as if it was the supporter of one of the side. They fail to see that Russia has never carried the anxiety to be on the side of Abkhazia or Georgia. Russia’s main concern was rather to achieve her interests. Russia thus perceived the conflict as a tool of manipulation serving to its high military presence and domination in the region.

This thesis argues that Russian involvement in the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict does not aim at the settlement of the conflict and peace in the region but rather the continuation of the status quo and the realization of its own interests by deepening the crisis. Russian policy has been determined by Russia’s geo-strategic, geo-political and economic interests in the region and strategic changes in regional conjunctures. The chaotic nature of Russian domestic politics, on the other hand, shaped Russian policy in the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict and caused it to be inconsistent. Thus, Russia has conducted a policy neither pro-Abkhaz nor pro-

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Darchiashvili, David, “The Russian Military Presence in Georgia: The Parties, Attitudes and Prospects”, *Caucasian Regional Studies*, Vol: 2, No. 1, 1997.
<http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/crs/eng/0201-04.htm>.

Georgian. This is a widespread and very common argument in the overall literature of the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict and it is supported throughout this thesis.

The school of thought that is in line with this thesis constitutes an important part of the literature on the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict. They argue that Russia in order to realize its interests in its near abroad was just manipulating the conflicts. Moreover, the main outstanding characteristic of these studies are their emphasis on the inconsistency and ambivalent policy of Russia derived from the chaotic nature of her domestic politics.

George Tarkhan Mouravi in his article titled as “Abkhazian-Georgian Conflict in a Regional Context” argues that Russian role is very determining in the fate of the conflicts in South Caucasia thus, all conflicts in the region are directly related with Russian military presence.²³ He argues that “Russia is still perceived as an external arbiter, a father-figure, whose force is decisive in the final outcome of this game”²⁴. Mouravi defines Russian policy as below:

To my mind, if a definition of Russian policy is needed or indeed possible, it is rather 'post-imperialist'; this notion refers to a declining power which tries to compensate for inevitable retreats by some new engagements, feels the need to protect compatriots left "out there" but desperately lacks the resources to do so, and attempts to prevent spill-over from various violent conflicts while being itself a major source of instability.²⁵

Ghia Nodia argues that “Russia did not have a coherent policy in the region due to the lack of a certain center in Russian government to define Russian foreign policy on the conflict”²⁶. He added that “Russian instinct was to retain as much power and influence with its military presence in the region and thus, to manipulate ethnic conflicts emerged as an important tool to retain influence”²⁷. Svante Cornell,

²³Gia Tarkhan Mouravi, “The Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict in a Regional Context”, Bruno Coppieters, Ghia Nodia, Yuri Anchabadze (eds.), *Georgians & Abkhazians The Search for a Peaceful Settlement*, Brussel: Vrije Universiteit, August, 1998, <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/Georgians/chp0602.html>

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶Ghia Nodia, “The Conflict in Abkhazia: National Projects and Political Circumstances”, Bruno Coppieters, Ghia Nodia, Yuri Anchabadze (eds.), *Georgians & Abkhazians The Search for a Peaceful Settlement*, Brussel: Vrije Universiteit, August, 1998, <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/Georgians/chp0201.html>

²⁷ *Ibid.*

in a similar way, argued that there was a dichotomy in Russian policy towards Georgia.²⁸ However, he added that “Russia’s policy has resulted with the intervention of Russia to the internal affairs of Georgia to the degree it has been necessary to bring Georgia back under some form of Russian control”²⁹. Thus, in a general sense Russia’s policy was to ensure Russia’s continued dominance over the region. Bruno Coppieters argues that “the geo-political aspect of the Abkhaz-Georgian Conflict can be well explained with Russia’s imperial policy based on ‘divide and rule’”³⁰. While describing this as an attempt of Russia to retain its hegemony on its southern borders, he adds that both sides in the conflict depend on Moscow but have a deep distrust towards her policies and intentions.³¹ James Graham argues that “Russia’s policy towards ethnic conflicts was in a great extent determined by the conflicting nature of Russian domestic politics”³². Russia’s primary aim was to secure the large military presence of Russia-arms, soldiers and bases in Georgia.³³ Thus, both changing domestic and external factors have been determinant in the conduct of Russia’s policy towards the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict.³⁴ Catherine Dale also argued that “Russia’s policy towards the region was shaped by the dynamics of Russian domestic politics which were far from being uniform and consistent”³⁵.

These studies explain Russian involvement with Russian strategic interests in the region and the changing chaotic domestic political atmosphere in Russia. Rather

²⁸ Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethno-political Conflict in the Caucasus*, UK: Curzon Press, 2001. p. 360.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.362.

³⁰ Bruno Coppieters, “The Roots of the Conflict”, Jonathen Cohen (ed.), *Accord: a Question of Sovereignty: the Georgia-Abkhazia Peace Process*, September, 1999.
www.c-r.org/accord/geor-ab/accord7/roots.shtml

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² James Graham, “Russia’s Policy Towards Ethnic Conflict in Independent Georgia”,
<http://www.historyorb.com/russia/georgia.shtml>

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Dale, Catherine, “Turmoil in Abkhazia: Russian Responses”, RFE/RL Research Reports, Prague Headquarters, Vol.2, No.34, 1993.

than arguing that Russia has conducted a pro-Abkhaz or pro-Georgian stance or a policy of bringing peace to the region, they intensify their argument on Russia's interests in the region. Furthermore, in almost all these studies Russia was described as, even if not the sole, the main determining factor for the fate of the conflict.

As a theoretical framework, this argument has its legitimation in political realism. Political realism explains Russian involvement in the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict in a more proper way than any other IR theory. In Political Realism, which is also called 'power politics', states are accepted as the given actors of the international system.³⁶ The decisions and acts of states always serve to the national interests of the states and all are seen as the outcome of rational thought.³⁷ The International system, in which the states act, is seen as "a state of international anarchy which implies the fact that there is no world government that has an overall authority over other states"³⁸. Political realism is about realization of power. The main aim of all states in international system is to acquire power and this struggle of power takes the form of a zero-sum game between the states.³⁹ As a brief definition, "political realism is a theory first about the security problems of the sovereign states"⁴⁰. The normative core of realism is state survival and national security and Realists believe that "the goal of power and the uses of power are a central preoccupation of political activity"⁴¹. The conduct of foreign policy is "an instrumental activity based on the intelligent calculation of one's power and one's interests as against the power and interests of rivals and competitors."⁴²

³⁶ Raymond Aron, "Peace and War: A theory of International Relations", New York: Doubleday&Company, 1966, in <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/aron.htm>.

³⁷ Hans J. Morgenthau, "[Six Principles of Political Realism](#)," *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978, in <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/morg6.htm>

³⁸ Tim Dunne; Brian C. Schmidt, "Realism", (Ed.) Woods, Ngaire, *Explaining International Relations Since 1945*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, p.153.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁴⁰ Robert Jackson, George Sorensen, *Introduction to International Relations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 101.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.103.

⁴² *Ibid.*

After such a brief introduction to political realism, how it shaped and defined Russian involvement in the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict will be clarified. As argued throughout the paper, Russia has many geo-strategic, geo-political and economic reasons in the South Caucasus.

This region is the ‘soft underbelly’ of the Russian Federation.⁴³ Any destabilization or lose of control of Russia would mean lose of power and control of the region for Russia. As argued in the thesis, the main aim of Russia’s intervention in the post-Soviet conflicts in the region is to keep its domination and control in the South Caucasia which would serve Russia to be at least a regional power and keep the control of the ex-Soviet territories.

Russian policy in the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict in the first years may seem far from the implementation of Realism. The point that Russian policy was inconsistent, full of ambiguities and lack a constant platform may seem challenging to the implementation of political realism. Nevertheless, during this period Russia was in a process of transition and tried to retain its power. During the first years, Russia conducted a policy of negligence towards the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict. This was also the period during which ‘Westernizers’ dominated the foreign policy of the Russian Federation. Rather than pursuing domination in the ex-Soviet territories, good relations with the West were put at the center of the Russian foreign policy.⁴⁴ By the words of Andrei Kozyrev, “the country’s greatness was determined not by the scale of its empire but above all by the level of its people well being”⁴⁵. Russian interest was defined as to integrate Russia to the institutions of the developed western world.⁴⁶ As argued by Svante Cornell, “This school hence espouses a vision of a European Russia, economically integrated into the Euro-Atlantic world and on a part

⁴³ Svante Cornell, “Military and Economic Security Perspectives”, *Strategic Security Dilemmas in the Caucasus and Central Asia*, , Vol.14, No.3, Washington: NBR Analysis, October 2003, p.12., <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/pub/NBR.pdf>

⁴⁴ Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers*, A Study of Ethno-political Conflict in the Caucasus, UK:Curzon Press, 2001, p. 336.

⁴⁵ Andrei Kozyrev, ‘Preobrazhennaya Rossiya v norom mire’ (Transformed Russia in a New World) in *Izvestiya*, 2 January 1992, in Cornell, *op.cit.*,p.336.

⁴⁶ Cornell, *op.cit.*,p. 336.

with its Western partners, which would be a magnet for the 'less developed' states of the former Soviet Union.⁴⁷

Eurasianism which carries strong similarities with neo-realism emerged as the criticism of Westernizers and constituted the core of Russian foreign policy in the following years.⁴⁸ According to Eurasianists, the success of Russia's transition is dependent upon the restoration of Russia's role in the world and, geopolitics is stressed as a defining factor of international relations.⁴⁹ It was argued that the period of 'romantic wishful thinking' lasted too much and led to an impermissible confusion of normative goals with national interest which led to a significant damage to the latter.⁵⁰ Thus, Russian policy except the beginning of the war in Abkhazia was and is still today based on the realization of its geo-strategic, political and economic interests in the region.

Stephen Shenfield argued that "playing one group against the other" constituted the basis of Russian foreign policy.⁵¹ Russia by preventing the *de facto* territorial integrity of Georgia and the *de jure* independence of Abkhazia ensured a fragile balance in its policy between Georgia and Abkhazia. With this attitude, Russia aimed to get Georgia under its control and Abkhazia to be an instrumental tool of pressure against Georgia. Again argued by Hill and Jewett, "a lasting peace is not in Russia's interests and Russia provided Abkhazia with enough power to force Shevardnadze to turn to Moscow for assistance and Russia ultimately assisted Georgia, not out of sympathy for Shevardnadze, or for a desire for peace but because it had exacted the necessary conditions from Georgia"⁵². Alexei Zverev argued that "in line with a consistent Russian policy of supplying both sides in a conflict, at a

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.337.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.338.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.339.

⁵⁰ Peter W. Schulze, 'Die außenpolitische Debatte in Rußland: Rußland un der Unstrukturierte post-sowjetische Raum', in *International Politik und Gesellschaft*, no.4, 1995, p.263, in Cornell, *op.cit.*, p.339.

⁵¹ Stephen D. Shienfield, 'Armed Conflict in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union' in Thomas G.Weiss (ed.), *The United Nations and Civil Wars*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995, p.43, Cornell, *op.cit.*, p.344.

⁵² Hill and Jewett, 'Back in the USSR', p.60, in Cornell, *op.cit.*, pp.351-352.

time when Russian-supplied war planes were bombing Georgian-held Sukhum, other Russian units continued to supply the Georgian Army”.⁵³ Even, the process after 11 September and the gradual retreat of Russia from the region and change in its policy indicate that changing Russian interests have directed Russian foreign policy in the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict. Considering the so-called common aim of “fighting against terrorism”, to have good relations with the West and to make Russia a reliable ally for the West stands out as a more important and vital interest of Russia.

Concerning the methodology of this thesis, the main sources have been secondary sources like books, articles, past and current news related to the subject and primary sources such as official documents of the UN, agreements and ceasefires in the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict, and interviews done with Abkhazians living in Turkey and Abkhazia. The literature review has been consisted of a theoretical review of Soviet Nationalities policy and the collapse of the Soviet Union as well. I tried to examine all different and conflicting views in the literature. The major difficulty I faced was to find a middle way between the materials that are completely pro-Georgian and pro-Abkhazian. The major limitation has been the lack of any fieldwork and survey in the region. If realized the results of such a fieldwork would reflect to my thesis in a positive way.

The scope of this thesis consists of five main themes. First, a historical background of the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict in light of the pre-Soviet and Soviet eras and the Soviet nationalities policies will be examined and how the collapse of the Soviet Union initiated the emergence of ethnic conflicts will be explained; secondly, the emergence and nature and different aspects of the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict and the main characteristics of Georgian and Abkhaz nationalism will be explained. Thirdly, reasons of Russian involvement and Russian policy formation in the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict in light of the domestic political turmoil in Russia will be examined. The different policy practices in Russia will be outlined in consideration of their different interests and priorities. Fourthly, Russia’s overweighed role in the peace process compared with the role of the UN will be explained. Lastly, Russian role after the Rose Revolution will be explained with a special focus on Russia’s role in the Abkhaz elections.

⁵³ Alexei Zverev, ‘Ethnic Conflicts in the Caucasus 1988-94, in Bruno Coppieters (ed.), *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, Brussels: VUB Press, 1996, p.53, in Cornell, *op.cit.*, p. 349.

In the second chapter, the historical background of the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict is examined in consideration of the pre-Soviet and Soviet eras. After explaining the extent of Abkhaz-Georgian relations during the pre-Soviet era, Russian policy in the region will be outlined. Following that, the main characteristics of Soviet Nationalities Policy under different Soviet leaders will be explained. Then, its impact on South Caucasia and on the Abkhaz-Georgian relations during the Soviet period will be explained. Later on, the nationalities policy of Gorbachev and the “identity and legitimacy crisis” the Soviet Union went through will be outlined in order to identify their impact over the emergence of the post-soviet conflicts.

In the third chapter, the emergence of the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict will be explained in consideration with the internal political developments in Georgia resulted with the emergence of radical nationalistic groups. It will be argued that the emergence of radical Georgian nationalism paved way for the mobilization of nationalism among different ethnic groups in Georgia- for example among Abkhazians. Additionally, the indifference of Gorbachev towards the threat ethnic problems constituted will be a point of consideration. Thus, how the inter-ethnic relations get a strained character and paved the way for war has been explained. The nature and the main characteristics of the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict will be clarified. In this respect, it will be pointed out that Abkhaz-Georgian conflict has many different aspects such as territorial, ethnic and political. Lastly, the main characteristics of Georgian and Abkhaz Nationalism will be explained in order to outline the conflicting arguments of Abkhazians and Georgians.

In the fourth chapter, Russian overweighed role will be explained first by underlining the geo-strategic, geo-political and economic reasons of Russian involvement. Later on, the nature, ambiguities and dilemmas of Russian policy during the war will be explained in light of the chaotic and divergent domestic political atmosphere in Russia. How the different views and policies of Russian Foreign and Defense Ministers, of some groups in the Parliament and Russian military created difficulty for the formulation of a coherent policy will be explained. Moreover, it will be argued that the lack of a well articulated policy on the Russian side was related to the lack of a coherent policy in the Near Abroad- the Trans-Caucasus.

In the fifth chapter, Russian role in the Abkhaz-Georgian peace process will be analyzed in a comprehensive and chronologic way. The parallel processes led by both the UN and Russia will be explained in a comparative way. Whether they have been complementary or conflicting processes will be examined. How Russia acted as a mediator and even as an independent participant of the conflict and prevented the UN to play an effective role will be examined. It will be added that the UN was aware that, without Russia there could be no real development and in each stage of the peace process it has had to integrate Russia. This will be realized with the examination of the peace process under three periods: the periods between 1992-1993, 1993-1997 and 1997-2003.

In the sixth chapter, the process after the Rose Revolution will be examined. The change of power in Georgia and relations with Abkhazia, the changed nature of the relations between Georgia and Russia, the presidential elections in Abkhazia and Russia's policy towards it will be explained. Following that, how all these affected the peace process will be analyzed. The main problematic points such as the lack of consensus over the political status of Abkhazia and the main emphasis over the confidence building measures between the sides will be outlined.

To conclude, it is argued that Russia had the power but lacked the will of achieving peace in the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict. Russian involvement in the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict has been enough to freeze the conflict but not to achieve political progress. It is underlined that Russia does not carry the anxiety of providing progress but rather support the status-quo. Russia aims to realize its own interests and does not care with the well being of the sides.



<http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/georgia.pdf>

Figure 1.1: General Map of Georgia, UN Cartographic Section (UNCS), August 2004.

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGINS OF THE ABKHAZ-GEORGIAN CONFLICT

In this chapter, the origins of the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict will be explained during the pre-Soviet and Soviet periods. Considering the pre-Soviet era, it is argued that Abkhaz-Georgian relations were in a great extent determined by Russian policies towards the region and the different reactions and perceptions of the sides towards Russia. First, the relationship between the sides throughout history and the geo-strategic importance of South Caucasia for Russia will be examined. After that, the main principles of Soviet nationalities policy in light of the fact that there were different implementations under different Soviet leaders will be explained. Implications of Soviet nationalities policy in South Caucasia, specifically in the Abkhaz-Georgian relations will be explained. As a concluding point, nationalities policy of Gorbachev, the collapse of the Soviet Union and its effect on the emergence of the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict will be explained.

2.1. Abkhaz-Georgian Relations in the pre-Soviet Period

Abkhaz-Georgian relations date back to many centuries ago. The point that both Abkhazians and Georgians lived in neighboring territories, each of them in its own state and sometimes in a single state throughout these centuries brings out the question of whether they are quite unrelated peoples or vice versa. Thus, as argued by B. G. Hewitt:

“In order to understand the context of the territorial dispute, it is necessary to begin with a consideration of the ethnic affiliations of the peoples concerned.”⁵⁴

While Abkhazians are mostly related to the Northwestern Caucasus family- to the Circassians (Cherkess) and Ubykhs Georgians do not have any close ethnic

⁵⁴ B. G. Hewitt, “Abkhazia: a problem of identity and ownership”, John Wright (ed.), *Transcaucasian Boundaries*, London: UCL Press, 1996, p. 190.

affiliation with them but rather they are south Caucasian people⁵⁵. However, this situation did not prevent the “interaction and the constitution of a single inter-state system of diplomacy and warfare between Abkhazians and proto-Georgian principalities”⁵⁶. Though both Georgians and Abkhazians linguistically belong to the Ibero- Caucasian language family, while Georgians belong to the South Caucasian group (Kartvel, Migrel, Svan, Laz), Abkhazians belong to the North-western Caucasian group (Abazins, Adyghe, Shapsugh, Ubykh).⁵⁷ The formation of a single inter-state system first occurred in the 10th century with the unification of the ‘Abkhazian and Georgian Royal dynasties’⁵⁸ under the name of “The Kingdom of Abkhazians and Kartvelians”⁵⁹. This Kingdom lasted until the Mongol invasion in the 13th century. After that, the Kingdom was separated to Abkhazian and Kartvelian Principalities. While Georgia has disintegrated into a number of principalities which in the 19th century were incorporated to the Russian Empire one after the other, in the 16th century Abkhazia had a formal dependency to the Ottoman Empire till 1810.⁶⁰ During this period Abkhazia remained under the jurisdiction of the Ottoman Empire, it did not lose its autonomy. Even, till 1864 when it was annexed by the Russian Empire, Abkhazia managed to keep its political autonomy.⁶¹

From the Georgian perspective, Abkhazia’s annexation by the Russian Empire was perceived as one part of Georgia falling into the realm of the Russian Empire.⁶² In a general sense, referring to the treaty of Georgievsk signed with Russia

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

⁵⁶ “How far back does the conflict go?”, Stephen D. Shenfield (ed.), *The Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict: Past, Present and Future*, Issue No: 24, JRL Research Analytical Supplement, May 2004, <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/8226.cfm#4>

⁵⁷ Svetlana Chervonnaya, *Conflict in the Caucasus: Georgia, Abkhazia and the Russian Shadow*, Glastobury:Gothic Image Publication, 1994, pp.9-10.

⁵⁸ Viacheslav A. Chirikba, “Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict and its Aftermath”, Mehmet Tütüncü (ed.), *Caucasus: War and Peace*, Haarlem: SOTA, 1998, p. 72.

⁵⁹ Konstantin Ozgan, “Abkhazia- Problems and the Paths to their Resolution”, Ole Hoiris, Sefa Martin Yürükel (eds.), *Contrasts and Solutions in the Caucasus*,Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1998, p. 185.

⁶⁰ Chirikba, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

⁶¹ Ozgan, *op. cit.*, pp. 185–186.

⁶² John F.R. Wright, "The Geopolitics of Georgia", John F.R. Wright, Suzanne Goldenberg, and Richard Schofield (eds.), *Trans-Caucasian Boundaries*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996, p. 136.

by King Erekle II in 1783, the annexation of Georgian principalities by Russia was argued to be voluntarily in order to be protected against the Ottoman Empire-Islam.⁶³

At that point, it is crucial to mention the strategic importance Trans-Caucasus had for the Russian Empire and other regional powers of the period-the Ottoman Empire and the Persian Empire. Till the 18th century, the region experienced the struggle of power between the Ottoman Empire and Persians. It was in the 16th century that the western part of Georgia (Abkhazia) fell under the jurisdiction of the Ottoman Empire while eastern part fell under the domination of the Persians. In the 18th century, Russia emerged as a regional power and the balance of power changed in the region. The different reactions of Abkhazians and Georgians to the Russian conquest had marked the beginning of the differentiation of these two distinct people.⁶⁴ While for Georgia, Orthodox Christian Russia seemed as a natural ally against Muslim expansion, Abkhazians resisted to Russian expansion and so were the target of deportations.⁶⁵ Even, it is not a coincidence that the Abkhazians who were exiled had been mostly Muslims.⁶⁶

Thus, a crucial event occurred in 1864 when the Russian conquest in Abkhazia faced with the resistance of Abkhazians and other northwest Caucasus peoples. Putting down this resistance, the Russian conquest led to great population movements.⁶⁷ While before the 'Great Exodus',⁶⁸ there were about 150.000 of Abkhazians, according to the first official all-Russia census, there remained 58.697

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.136.

⁶⁴ "How Far Back Does the Conflict Go?", Stephen D. Shenfield (Ed.), *The Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict: Past, Present, Future*, No.24, JRL Research & Analytical Supplement, May 2004, <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/8226.cfm#top>

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers, A Study of Ethno-political Conflict in the Caucasus*, UK: Curzon Press, 2001, p. 146.

⁶⁷ Gueorgui Otyrba, "War in Abkhazia, The Regional Significance of the Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict" in Roman Szporluk (ed.), *National Identity and Ethnicity in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1994, p. 283.

⁶⁸ Chirikba, *op.cit.*, p. 73.

Abkhazians which consisted 55.3% of Abkhazia's 106.000 populations.⁶⁹ The number of other ethnic groups in Abkhazia were 25.875 Georgians (24.4% these were mainly Mingrelians), 6.552 Armenians (6.1%), 5.135 Russians (5.6%) and 5.393 Greeks (5.0%).⁷⁰ Following that, the second deportation of the Abkhazians occurred in 1877-78 when the Ottoman-Russian War took place. As a result of the 1864 and 1877-78 deportations of Abkhazians, approximately about 70 % of the Abkhazians fled out of Abkhazia.⁷¹

From a Georgian perspective, on the other hand, Russia had betrayed in its alliance. It was argued that Russia conducted a policy of dividing the homogeneous nations. In this regard it had divided Georgians into sub-ethnic groups and thus, promoted the minorities in the territory in order to weaken Georgia.⁷² While schools were opened for Mingrelians and Svans, for Abkhazians Russian was promoted and alienation was created between Abkhazians and Georgians which would continue during the Soviet period in an intensive way.

The second point was shaped by the settlement policy of the Russian Empire. The lands left behind by Abkhazians were resettled by Russians, Ukrainians from Russia, Armenians and Rums from the Ottoman Empire and Kartvelians (Georgians) and Mingrelians, Svans and Laz from Georgia.⁷³ As a result, till the late 1910's, the number of Abkhazians in Abkhazia decreased while the number of other peoples, specially the Georgians, increased.

It was argued by Achugba that during this process of resettlement the Georgian intelligentsia began to get a colonial mentality.⁷⁴ In 1873 Georgii Tsereteli- a Georgian writer and columnist- wrote in 'Droeba' that the whole Caucasus was the

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Kuzey Kafkaya Derneği Yayınları Basın Yayın Komisyonu, *Abhazya Gerçeği*, Ankara: Kafdağı Yayınları, 1992, p. 10.

⁷² Cornell, *op.cit.*, p. 146.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁷⁴ T.A. Achugba, "The Ethno-Demographic Aspect of the Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict", 14 June 2005, <http://www.socsci.uci.edu/istudies/peace/progs/conf/Achugba.doc>

native land of the Georgians or 'Georgian land'.⁷⁵ In the Georgian newspapers- 'Shroma' and 'Droeba', the mass resettlement of the Georgians was considered as 'one of the most wonderful events in the life of the Georgian nation'.⁷⁶ This process of mass Georgian resettlement was also accompanied by some Georgian measures of assimilation. In the majority of the churches and church schools classes were taught in Georgian.⁷⁷ In addition, Georgian priests used to change the names of the newborn and repeatedly baptized Abkhaz babies.⁷⁸ A very important implementation was the falsification of the Abkhaz history by arguing that Abkhazia was not Georgia but just a province of Georgia and that Abkhaz language and people are in fact Georgian.⁷⁹

As a result of the deportations and resettlement policy of the Russian Empire and Georgian intelligentsia, though they were unrelated people by nationality, they speak different languages and have different traditions, Abkhazians and Georgians were alienated to each other

Thus, though to date back the origins of the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict to the pre-Soviet era is not true, during that time, it is true that there happened some crucial events that affected the fate of the conflict today.

2.2. Evolution of Soviet Nationalities Policy

Soviet nationalities policy, though had some common principles, differentiated in certain periods under the implementation of different Soviet leaders. These different implementations paved way for unexpected results to arise.

The nationalities policy of Lenin is very important in order to understand the impact of the Soviet legacy over the inter-ethnic relations in Caucasus.⁸⁰ This derives

⁷⁵ 'Droeba', 1873, No: 399 (in Georgian), in T.A. Achugba, "The Ethno-Demographic Aspect of the Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict", 14 June 2005, <http://www.socsci.uci.edu/istudies/peace/progs/conf/Achugba.doc>.

⁷⁶ 'Shroma', 1882, No: 15 (in Georgian), in T.A. Achugba, "The Ethno-Demographic Aspect of the Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict", 14 June 2005, <http://www.socsci.uci.edu/istudies/peace/progs/conf/Achugba.doc>.

⁷⁷ Achugba, *op.cit.*, <http://www.socsci.uci.edu/istudies/peace/progs/conf/Achugba.doc>

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Cornell, *op.cit.*, p.39

from the fact that, the hierarchical-nationality based territorial structure of the Soviet Union was grounded on the 'Leninist Nationalities Policy'.⁸¹ Though for ideological reasons a federal state structure was opposed, for practical reasons and by necessity, the Soviet Union had to be organized in a federal structure.⁸² The Bolshevik regime, at that time, emerged from the Russian Civil War and to ensure its survival and get the support of different nationalities, a federal state structure was a compulsion.

This showed that Lenin was aware of the threat the emergence of nationalism would constitute. The ultimate aim was to provide the melting of these different ethnic identities and to create the 'Soviet people'.⁸³ Thus, Lenin believed that by granting rights and giving political and cultural autonomy, he could have created a unified Soviet society.

On the other hand, the ethno-federal structure of the Soviet Union was as explained below. As argued by Rogers Brubaker:

“The Soviet systems of ethno-territorial federalism divided the territory of the state into a complex four-tiered set of national territories, endowed with varying degrees of autonomy and correspondingly more or less elaborate political and administrative institution”.⁸⁴

Soviet nationalities policy was based on different degrees of status granted to different ethnic groups. Only 53 of the over one hundred Soviet nations were officially identified with a particular territory and so afforded rights by virtue of their national-territorial status- the so called “titular nationality”.⁸⁵ There were mainly four levels of autonomy granted. Among them 15 national groups were given the highest status of Union Republic within which Autonomous Republics and regions were established. While the Union Republics were the constituent parts of the Soviet Union, the autonomous republic had autonomy within these Union Republics.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.39.

⁸² Ian Bremmer, “Reassessing Soviet Nationalities Theory”, Viktor Zaslavsky, “Success and Collapse: Traditional Soviet Nationality Policy”, Ian Bremmer, Ray Taras (eds.), *Nations and Politics in the Soviet Successor States*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, in Cornell, *op.cit.*, p.39.

⁸³ Cornell, *op.cit.*, p. 39.

⁸⁴ Rogers Brubaker, “Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Eurasia: An Institutional Account”, *Theory and Society*, Vol. 23, Netherland, Kluwer Academic Publisher, 1996, p. 52.

⁸⁵ Airat R. Alkaev, *Ethno-political Crisis on Transition to Violence, Legitimacy and Identity in the Republics of the Former Soviet Union*, Dudas: Peace Research Institute Associates, 1994, p.74.

Oblasts or regions, on the other hand, had no constitution but a more limited cultural and social autonomy. Okrugs constituted the fourth level with a lesser degree of autonomy. However, change in the political status of these administrative units was something experienced-as was the case in Abkhazia.

After Stalin had come to power, a change occurred in the nationalities policy of the Soviet Union. Stalin nationalities policy was in a great extent based on coercion and served to increase the power of the center while decreasing the power of the autonomies.⁸⁶

During this period, Stalin's policies of industrialization and collectivization were accompanied by a 'cultural revolution'⁸⁷ by which the creation of a more developed and educated Soviet people were aimed. By means of industrialization, economic development was expected to have combined with Russification in the medium term and Sovietization in the long run⁸⁸. It was believed that modernization would produce the dilution of ethnicity and the weakening of local nationalism⁸⁹. It was during Stalin's period that the Russification of native languages, promotion of Russian language and Russian schools was realized.

Stalin's policy was based on placing Russians to party cadres in the whole Soviet Union and settling Russians and other Slavic people to other republics. Although this policy was intended in order for different nationalities to come close to each other, it caused isolation of other non-Russian nationalities. Even, this policy was mostly implemented by the center without taking care of the interests of masses. These policies caused the autonomous structures to have just limited autonomy in cultural and social spheres but not actual autonomy in a political sense.⁹⁰ Thus, the actual power remained in the centre, in Moscow.

The persecution of national elites, on the other hand, was one of the policies of Stalin implemented to break anything representing the past from today and thus to

⁸⁶ Cornell, *op.cit.*, p.42.

⁸⁷ Ben Fowkes, *The Disintegration of the Soviet Union, A Study in the Rise and Triumph of Nationalism*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997, p. 62.

⁸⁸ Pedro Ramet, "Migration and Nationality Policy in Soviet Central Asia", *Humbolt Journal of Social Relation*, Vol.6, No. I, Nekrich: A. M., 1978, p.79.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Cornell, *op.cit.*, p. 42.

reverse the process of indigenization.⁹¹ Considering the crucial role national elites have in nation-building and in the emergence of nationalism, the problematic nature of former Soviet republics in nation-building seems more understandable. ‘National delimitation’⁹², on the other hand, constituted another important policy of Stalin by which dissension was sowed among the Caucasus people. The borders between ethnic communities were drawn and changed in a way not corresponding to the demographic realities. Furthermore, the purging of some nations by the end of the World War II affected the ethnic relations of today in the former Soviet territories. Even, it will not be wrong to suggest that, the conflicts emerged with the collapse of the Soviet Union have their roots in Stalin’s nationalities policy.

Following the death of Stalin, Khrushchev and his colleagues thought that they should have given the Soviet system a new basis of legitimacy.⁹³ This showed its first reflection in the nationalities policy of de-Stalinization. Rather than forced Russification, flourishing of nations was argued to be committed.⁹⁴ This would be accompanied by encouraging the ‘coming together’⁹⁵ of nations. By this way, to achieve equilibrium between the dominant Russian nationality and other nationalities was argued to be possible. This was also reinforced with a certain degree of decentralization in the federal system and by economic reforms.

After Khrushchev, Brezhnev came to power and implemented a more different nationality policy than his predecessor. According to Brezhnev the ultimate aim was to provide a ‘harmonious development’⁹⁶ by maintaining the ethno-territorial stability. Within this concern, the objectives of the Party were outlined as ‘to increase the material and cultural potential of each republic’⁹⁷. Each republic would at the same time help to provide the ‘harmonious development’ of the country

⁹¹ Fowkes, *op.cit.*, p. 68.

⁹² Cornell, *op.cit.*, p.42.

⁹³ Helene Carrere d’Encausse, *op.cit.*, p. 51.

⁹⁴ Graham Smith, “Nationalities Policy from Lenin to Gorbachev”, Graham Smith (ed.), *The Nationalities Question in the Soviet Union*, New York: Longman, 1990, p.7.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Pravda*, 7 November, 1964 in, Smith, *op.cit.*, p.9,

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.10.

as a whole. Brezhnev aimed to create the 'Soviet people'⁹⁸. He was against the abolishment of the federation as well as of the right of the union republics to secede. He thought that the coming together of the nations was an objective process and any artificially acceleration of this process would cause dangerous results for the Soviet Union.⁹⁹

Later on, Andropov came to power and adopted a more integrationist policy. Stating his commitment to federalism, the free development of each republic and nationality within the boundary of the Union, he argued that the goal of the nationalities policy was not only the brotherhood of nations, but also their merging.¹⁰⁰

Carrere d'Encausse indicates the determinants and parameters of the Soviet nationalities policy as follow:

Stalin's successors gave up the idea of a complete Russification of all Soviet nations. Like Stalin, however, they tried to preserve a basically national centralized state. Like Stalin, too, his successors thought that the Russian nation should play a central role in the organization of the entire system and that the Russian culture should occupy a preeminent position. What differentiated them from Stalin was their belief that societal development per se would lead to the desired unity, without any need to resort to force or violence¹⁰¹

To sum up, as well as the fact that the nationalities policies were not on the top political agenda of these Soviet leaders, their main concern was to promote and accelerate the homogenization of the Soviet society. To realize that, unlike Stalin, not by coercive means but rather by more flexible policies towards autonomies, the domination and control of Russians were tried to be established. However, this did not prevent the indeliberate results of the Soviet nationalities policy to emerge which is the emergence of national feelings.

⁹⁸ Dina Zisserman-Brodsky, *Constructing Ethno politics in the Soviet Union: Samizdat, Deprivation, and the Rise of Ethnic Nationalism*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003, p. 28.

⁹⁹ *Pravda*, 5 October, 1977. in, Smith, *op.cit.*, p.10.

¹⁰⁰ Yu. Andropov, 'Shest' desyat let SSR', *Kommunist*, No: 1 (1983), p.8., in Smith, *op.cit.*, p.1.

¹⁰¹ Zisserman-Brodsky, *op.cit.*, p. 31.

2.3. Soviet Nationalities Policy in the South Caucasia and Abkhaz-Georgian Relations

Whatever the ultimate aims of the Soviet nationalities policy were, each part of the Soviet Union was affected in different degrees. South Caucasia was one of the most culturally and socially independent parts of the Soviet Union.¹⁰² It was also the most linguistically and culturally diverse region.¹⁰³ These outstanding characteristics of South Caucasia caused the outcomes of the Soviet nationalities policy to be outstanding, as well.

As argued by Ronald Grigor Suny, the dominant process in South Caucasia was the ethnic consolidation and internal cohesion of the major nationalities with an increased homogeneity.¹⁰⁴ Another argument on Soviet nationalities policy in South Caucasia is that, during the Soviet era, South Caucasia illustrated two processes that appears to have gone on simultaneously: the ethnic consolidation of the larger nationalities- those with national political units; and the uneven adaptation of distinct ethnic groups to the common aspects of Soviet society and culture.¹⁰⁵

Another important argument is the dual legacy inherited from the Soviet Union¹⁰⁶. By this dual legacy, it is referred to the not overlapping situation of the institutionalization of nationhood and nationality in territorial-political terms (national republics) and in cultural terms (nationalities). That is to say that, territorial polity referred to nationhood but not nations.

The formation of national territorial administrations served to the promotion of ethnic cohesion. This ethnic cohesion, while on the one hand was reinforced with the creation of state apparatus-symbols of nation states- it was, on the other hand, reinforced with the creation of the institutional basis for the formation of indigenous

¹⁰² Ronald Grigor Suny, "Transcaucasia: Cultural Cohesion and Ethnic Revival in a Multinational Society", Bessigner, M., (ed.), *The Nationalities Factor in Soviet Politics and Society*, Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 1990, p.228.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

¹⁰⁵ Suny, *op.cit.*, p.248.

¹⁰⁶ Brubaker, *op.cit.*, p.11.

ethnic leadership¹⁰⁷. The formation of indigenous ethnic leadership was, in a way, the result of the state policy of the early Soviet period.¹⁰⁸ This policy served to the establishment of solid demographic bases (migration movements), building up of national cultural institutions, and education of communist and intellectual cadres from the dominant nationality, education in national language and economic development¹⁰⁹.

The Soviet nationalities policy was mainly based on the formation of territorial-national administrations with the policy of indigenization. However, since autonomous units were created within Union republics with problematic border divisions-that is the not overlapping situation mentioned above- it will not be wrong to argue that “far from ruthlessly suppressing nationhood, the Soviet regime institutionalized it”¹¹⁰ and left behind ethnic problems that continues today.

Around the overall assumption that Soviet nationalities policy reinforced the ethnic cohesion among titular nationalities, its effects on Georgian-Abkhaz relations are explained below:

The period, during which the Menshevik power had the control in Georgia, increasing attempts of Georgianization and tensions with the minorities were argued to be the case. As Jones has noted, the events of the time played a crucial role in reinforcing stereotypes on all sides today.¹¹¹ He added that ‘the experience of Georgian rule reinforced the minorities’ alienation from the new Georgian state and led Georgians to view the territories as a potential fifth column’¹¹². In the same way, Abkhaz historian Geurghi Otyrba argues that “The Mensheviks ruled Abkhazia with an iron hand until the Bolsheviks established control in 1921. Whereas, Georgian

¹⁰⁷ Mark Saroyan, “Beyond Nation State: Culture and Ethnic Politics in Soviet Transcaucasia”, *Soviet Union/Union Sovietique*, Vol.15 No. (2-3), p.222.

¹⁰⁸ Ben Fowkes, *Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict in the Post-communist World*, New York: Palgrave, 2002, p.71.

¹⁰⁹ Suny, *op.cit.*, p.229.

¹¹⁰ Aklaev, *op.cit.*, p.73.

¹¹¹ Cornell, *op.cit.*, p. 148.

¹¹² Stephen F. Jones, “Georgia: the Trauma of Statehood”, Ian Bremmer, Roy Taras (eds.), *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 509. in Cornell, *op.cit.*, p. 148.

sources tend to state that Abkhazia was given full rights to manage its internal affairs.”¹¹³ Georgia, after a short period of independence between 1918 and 1921, came under the jurisdiction of the Soviet Union on 14 February 1921¹¹⁴. After that, the practice of the Soviet nationalities policy- which is national-territorial administration and ‘indigenization’¹¹⁵- was experienced in Georgia. While Abkhaz SSR with an equal status entered the South Caucasus Federation in 1922, in February 1931, the status of Abkhazia SSR by Stalin was diminished to an ASSR status. This act was regarded as illegal by the Abkhaz side and constituted a critical point in the relations of the sides.

While looking through the relations between Abkhazia and Georgia, it is crucial to make a distinction among certain periods. Before Abkhazia was part of Georgia SSR as an autonomous republic, with the 1925 Constitution it was argued that the institutionalization of Abkhazian political identity was initiated.¹¹⁶ During this period, Abkhazia experienced all outcomes of indigenization, in a more general term, of the Soviet nationalities policy. After the change in the status- especially between 1937 and 1953 under Stalin and Beria- majority- minority relations gained an intensified and strained character. This period is important to understand the “Georgianization”¹¹⁷ process in Abkhazia.

During Stalin years, Nestor Lakoba- the communist leader of Abkhazia was poisoned.¹¹⁸ It is argued by the Abkhaz side that a systematic Georgianization occurred. As well as Georgianization in Abkhaz language, geographic places,

¹¹³ Gueorgui Otyrba, “War in Abkhazia: The Regional Significance of the Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict”, Roman Szporluk (ed.), *The International Relations of Eurasia, National Identity in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, Armonk: ME Sharpe, 1994, p.284., in Cornell, *op.cit.*, p. 148.

¹¹⁴ Spyros Demetriadou, “Rising From the Ashes? The Difficult Re (Birth) of the Georgian State”, *Development and Change*, Vol.33, No. 5, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002, p.866.

¹¹⁵ Helene Carrere d’Encausse, *op.cit.*, p.47.

¹¹⁶ Georgi M. Derluguian, “The Tale of Two Resorts: Abkhazia and Ajaria before and since the Soviet Collapse”, *The Myth of "Ethnic Conflict": Politics, Economics, and "Cultural" Violence*, Beverly Crawford and Ronnie D. Lipschutz., (eds.), California: University of California Press, 1998, p.266. <http://repositories.cdlib.org/uciaspubs/research/98/8>

¹¹⁷ Chirikba, *op.cit.*, p.78.

¹¹⁸ Bruno Coppieters, “In Defence of the Homeland: Intellectuals and Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict”, Bruno Coppieters, Michel Huyseune (eds.), *Secession, History and the Social Sciences*, Brussels: VUB University Press, 2002, p.91.

alphabet, history and culture also underwent this process. From 1937 till 1954, Abkhazian publications were to be published only in Georgian.¹¹⁹ Abkhaz schools were closed from 1944 to 1953.¹²⁰ Abkhazian officials were faced with a purge and instead Mingrelians were replaced.¹²¹ In the same period, in the government, party and other Soviet organs, almost no Abkhaz took place. Another element of Georgianization, on the other hand was the immigration movements¹²². The immigration of Georgians, Russians and Armenian had changed the demographic situation completely in a dramatic way.

¹¹⁹ Vasilij Avidzba, 'Literature&Linguistic Politics', in Hewitt (ed.), *The Abkhazians*, Richmond: Surrey Curzon Press, 1999, pp.94-96. in Coppieters, *op.cit.*, p.92.

¹²⁰ George Hewitt, "Guests" on their own territory", *Index on Censorship*, Vol. 1, No.90, p.23., in Coppieters, *op.cit.*, p.92.

¹²¹ Coppieters, *op.cit.*, p.92.

¹²² Ufuk Takvul, *Etnik Çatışmaların Gölgesinde Kafkasya*, İstanbul: Ötüken Yayınları, 2002, p.65.

Table 1. Population by nationality in Abkhazia - changes from 1886 to 1989

Nationality	1886	1897	1926	1939	1959	1970	1979	1989
Total	68,8	106	212	311,9	404,7	487,0	486,1	525,1
Abkhaz	59,0	58,7	55,9	56,2	61,2	77,3	83,1	93,3
Georgian	4,0	25,8	67,5	92,0	158,2	199,6	213,3	239,9
Ethnic Georgian	0,5	1,9	19,9	-	-	-	-	-
Mingrelian	3,5	23,8	41,0	-	-	-	-	-
Svan	0,0	0,1	6,6	-	-	-	-	-
Russian	1,0	6,0	20,5	60,2	86,7	92,9	79,7	74,9
Armenian	1,3	6,5	30,0	49,7	64,4	74,9	73,3	76,5
Greek	2,0	5,4	27,1	34,6	9,1	13,1	13,3	14,7
Other	1,5	3,9	11,0	19,2	25,0	29,2	23,5	25,8

Source: The General Census (in thousands of people)¹²³

The analysis of the table shows us that, between 1937 and 1953 due to the immigrations from the Western part of Georgia, the Georgian population in Abkhazia increased from 91.067 to 158.221. The increase in Abkhaz population, on the other hand was about 5.000 people. Although all these immigration movements were also part of the planned economy, and the industrialization and collectivization policies of Stalin, by the Abkhaz side all was regarded as an attempt of Tbilisi to get the direct control of Abkhazia. Since Beria and Stalin were Georgian, all these attempts were seen as the act of Tbilisi rather than Moscow.

All these policies of Georgianization were reinforced literarily with the publications on the origin of Abkhazians. In 'Pavle Ingoroqva's book', Abkhazians were denied to be indigenous to Abkhazia.¹²⁴ It is argued that Abkhazians had

¹²³ Achugba, *op.cit.*, <http://www.socsci.uci.edu/istudies/peace/progs/conf/Achugba.doc>.

¹²⁴ Coppieters, *op.cit.*, p.93.

migrated from North Caucasus but argued that they were in fact Georgian.¹²⁵ This argument was adopted by other Georgia scholars. All these caused Abkhazians to think that Georgian authorities would challenge the rights and privileges of the Abkhaz titular nation on its territory. In this respect, the first appeal of Abkhazians to Moscow for secession occurred in April 1957.¹²⁶ Though this was rejected, it caused Tbilisi to distract from such a strict policy.

After the death of Stalin an outstanding improvement in the position of Abkhazians occurred. The Abkhazia of the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and especially of the 1980 no longer looked like the Abkhazia of 1936-1938 or 1944-1949.¹²⁷ The repressions on Abkhaz language and culture were partly thrown away. The use of the Abkhaz language was restored in 1956; however it still remained a minor language¹²⁸. Abkhazian language was introduced at the Sokhumi Pedagogical Institute. Although in 1956, the Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party admitted that they followed an erroneous policy towards ethnic minorities, this moderate turn in the policy did not last long.¹²⁹ Towards the end of the 1960's, Georgian policy again gained a strained character. In return, Abkhazian intellectuals and students protested and made a second appeal of secession to Moscow which was rejected.¹³⁰ The fact that Abkhazians made regular appeals to the Soviet Union every 10 years showed that permanent tension in Abkhaz-Georgian relations was maintained.¹³¹

During the late 1970's, the problems between Abkhaz and Georgians remained strained and this situation increased day by day. According to the 1979 census, while Abkhazians constituted 17.1 % of the population, 43.9 % of the population was consisted of Georgians¹³². This created a situation in which the titular

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ Chervonnaya, *op.cit.*, p. 33.

¹²⁸ Hewitt, *op.cit.*, p.130.

¹²⁹ Coppieters, *op.cit.*, p.94.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.94.

¹³¹ Chervonnaya, *op.cit.*, pp. 32-33.

¹³² Ufuk Takvul, *op.cit.*, p.65.

nationality of an autonomous Republic-Abkhazians- became a minority. Another related problematic issue was education in national language. Though more than 75 % of Abkhazians but just 1.4 % of Georgians knew Russian as the second language, the language in education was turned to Georgian. Since Abkhazians had limited access to higher education except the local Sokhumi Pedagogical Institute, this created another strained situation between the sides¹³³. This situation points out how the division between these two groups was deep. However, this division has more to do with the lack of interaction between the nations. According to one estimate, almost 25% of Abkhaz and 44 % of Georgians (in 1979) living in Abkhazia could not communicate with each other.¹³⁴ Beyond the official nationalities policy of the Soviet Union, the daily social and economic life was also strongly affected by the ethnic differences and consciousness of the people. At the macro level, cities and regions were mostly multi-ethnic in character with the existence of personal inter-ethnic interaction such as mixed marriages. At the micro level, on the other hand, nationalities lived in villages and towns compactly. In other words, agricultural and economic life was organized by nationality.¹³⁵ That is to say that, macro integration was held together with micro differentiation.¹³⁶

The development of bilingual education in Georgia and the abolishment of Georgian as the state language and giving equal status to all languages caused the Georgian intelligentsia to show an opposition. All these attempts were regarded as a Russification attempt of Moscow and thus were rejected. In December 1977 in Abkhazia, 130 intellectuals and party officials accused the Georgian authorities for the Georgianization policy they implemented to Abkhazia and this again caused a demand on the Abkhaz side for secession to Moscow.¹³⁷ Although it was again

¹³³ Derlugian, *op.cit.*, p.269.

¹³⁴ Monica Duffy Toft, "Multinationality, Regions and State Building: The Failed Transition in Georgia", Hughes, James, Sasse, Gumendolyn, (eds.), *Ethnicity and Territory in the Former Soviet Union-Regions in Conflict*, London: Frank Cass, 2002, p.130.

¹³⁵ "The Dynamics and Challenges of Ethnic Cleansing the Georgia-Abkhazia Case", *UNHCR*, Writenet Reports, 1 August, 1997., <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/publ/opendoc.htm?tbl=RSDCOI&id=3ae6a6c54&page=pub>.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Coppieters, *op.cit.*, p.95.

rejected, this tensioned situation caused Moscow to intervene and to make some concessions to the Abkhaz side. Important concessions were made to the Abkhaz side in personnel and cultural policy. From the Georgian point of view, Abkhazia was considered as having a privileged status comparing with other autonomous parts of Georgian SSR.¹³⁸ It was argued that:

“Moscow introduced an “Abkhazization” policy that granted ethnic Abkhaz cultural freedom and a disproportionate share of government posts within Abkhazia, which heightened Georgian resentment”.¹³⁹

From the Georgian perspective, all was seen as the result of the Soviet policy. It was argued that the multicultural society in Georgia and the concessions made to Abkhazia were all Russian attempts of Russification and thus was seen as a threat to Georgian culture. As well as growing nationalist tendencies on the Abkhaz side, on the Georgian side also nationalist tendencies mostly as a reaction to Russia took place.¹⁴⁰ On the Georgian side, in June 1987 artists and scientists addressed to Gorbachev with a declaration signed by 800 writers and argued that “the right of a people to a particular territory was a sacred right and thus there was just one landlord and all others were guests”.¹⁴¹ Abkhazians, on the other hand, in 1988 with the effect of democratization this time, sent their so-called ‘Abkhazian letter’ to the Soviet Communist Party.¹⁴² They wanted the re-establishment of Abkhazia’s Union status which was downgraded in 1931. This act was marked as unjust and the Georgian rule during the Soviet era as well as the Menshevik rule between 1918 and 1921 was named as colonialist. Although with the concessions made to Abkhazians in 1978, they got a secured position in the administration of the republic and local economy- %67 of the government ministers and %71 of obkom department were Abkhazians, from Abkhazian perspective the demographic situation was seen as a successful attempt of Georgia to incorporate Abkhazia and as a violation of Abkhazia’s

¹³⁸ Cornell, *op.cit.*, p.157.

¹³⁹ Catherine Dale, “Turmoil in Abkhazia: Russian Responses”, *RFE/RL Research Reports*, Vol.2, No.34, Prague Headquarters, 1993.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Coppieters, *op.cit.*, p.96.

¹⁴² Cornell, *op.cit.*, p.160.

sovereign rights, destruction of Abkhaz ethnic identity and assimilation of Abkhazians into Kartvelian identity.¹⁴³

To sum up, towards the end of the 1980's the politization of ethnicities both on the Abkhaz and Georgian side got an intensified character.

2.4. Soviet Nationalities Policy during Gorbachev Era and the Collapse of the Soviet Union

The overall accepted argument in explaining the emergence of the post-Soviet conflicts is that, the *perestroika* and *glasnost* policies of Gorbachev had led the oppressed hatreds of different nations come to surface and thus caused the conflicts to emerge. Whether it is the collapse of the Soviet Union that first paved way to conflicts or is the ethnic conflicts that brought the end of the Soviet Union is not clear. Anyway, the point that Gorbachev was not aware of the existence of a Soviet nationality problem in the Soviet Union created the major factor in the emergence of the conflicts. Combined with the *perestroika* and *glasnost* policies, the identity and legitimacy crisis, the failure of the Soviet nationalities policy created an available political, social, cultural and economic atmosphere for the emergence of the post-Soviet conflicts.

Gorbachev, after coming to power in March 1985, inherited many socio-economic and political problems to deal with. However, he ignored the danger that the nationalities problem can lead.¹⁴⁴ He even failed to anticipate that his reform policies would cause the nationalities question to come to surface.

Due to many problems in economic, social, cultural and political spheres, national and ethnic tensions started to emerge. After the emergence of these ethnic and national tensions, Gorbachev became aware of the danger that the Soviet system faced and of the compulsion that they had to revise their attitude to the nationality problems. It was understood that nationalities problems were not at the peripheral but at the heart of the reform, itself.¹⁴⁵ Although Gorbachev declared that the nationalities

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.158.

¹⁴⁴ Gail W. Lapidus, "Gorbachev's Nationalities Problem", *Foreign Affairs*, 2004, p. 95.

¹⁴⁵ *Pravda*, January 28, 1987., in Lapidus, *op.cit.*, pp: 98-99.

problems were anymore a vital problem of Kremlin, he did not formulate and follow a coherent nationalities policy but rather thought that his reform policies of glasnost, perestroika and democratization could have been a solution. However, by the beginning of the 1980's, it became clear that traditional ways of managing the multi-ethnic Soviet system was no more possible.¹⁴⁶

Gorbachev's main reference while dealing with the nationalities problems was return to past, to the period of Lenin. While command-administrative system during the Stalinist and post-Stalinist period was held responsible for the nationalities problems, the Leninist principles of a Soviet Federation based on the self-determination of each republic was regarded as a solution. Based on that, Gorbachev argued that *perestroika* means 'fully implementing in practice the principles on which Lenin based the union of Soviet republics'.¹⁴⁷ This was proposed with the slogan of 'Without a strong union there are no strong republics, without strong republics there is no strong Union'.¹⁴⁸ However, Gorbachev did not become successful in dealing with the nationalities problem.

Glasnost, perestroika and democratization policies of Gorbachev have brought the ethnic affiliations and so ethnic tensions to the political agenda. As a result of these policies, the liberalization of the political, economic and social life gave path to nationalities problems to be discussed in media and some demonstrations to occur. With perestroika and glasnost, the decrease in central power came together with legal expressions of oppositions and political protests and led to the self-expression of nationalities problems.

Glasnost had the first and foremost effect over the nationality issues. It was by the effect of Glasnost that public discussions were legitimated on the issues which had previously been a taboo to the Soviet people.¹⁴⁹ This legitimization of public discussions opened way for more criticism and freedom of expression. More

¹⁴⁶ Lapidus, *op.cit.*, p.94.

¹⁴⁷ Gorbachev's television speech, the text of which is reproduced in *Soviet News*, 5 July 1989, p.218., in Smith, *op.cit.*, p.16.

¹⁴⁸ Smith, *op.cit.*, p.17.

¹⁴⁹ Lapidus, *op.cit.*, p.99.

important than all was a recovery of a more accurate account of Soviet history.¹⁵⁰ All these implications of Glasnost led Soviet people to be aware of the facts that had been once kept from them. All these caused resentment on the part of the Soviet people which had suffered from Soviet policies and thus an arousal of national affiliations occurred.

By democratization, Gorbachev's ultimate aim was to bring some democratic elements in the functioning of the Party and the Soviet Union. By this way, the Party was aimed to be filled with progressive personnel supporting the reforms of Gorbachev. However, Gorbachev also permitted the emergence of some unofficial organizations. By the grass-root political activities extending, in October 1987, in the newspaper of the CPSU youth- *Komsomol'skaya Pravda*- it was reported that informal groups were "growing as fast as mushrooms in the rain."¹⁵¹ As a result of the democratization policy, the power of Supreme Soviet was in a great extent transferred to the republics. This soon caused nationality based organizations to emerge and have demands challenging the unity of the Soviet Union.

At that point, it is important to mention of the "identity and legitimacy crisis"¹⁵² emerged in the former Soviet Union. With the democratization process and decrease of the central power, while the identity crisis emerged with the fall of the supra-national ideology - that is the Soviet Nation, the legitimacy crisis aroused with the fall of the hierarchical order and relations between Union Republics, Autonomous Republics and regions¹⁵³. This made the emergence of ethnic conflicts unpreventable.

To sum up, during the Soviet era, it was believed that the Soviet nationalities policy by means of modernization and the ideology of communism would dilute national identities and loyalties and a multinational society based on equality, prosperity and harmony would be achieved. However, towards the end of the Soviet Union, the economic, social and political problems when combined with the reform

¹⁵⁰ James Graham, "Gorbachev's Glasnost", <http://www.historyorb.com/russia/glasnost.shtml>.

¹⁵¹ "New Thinking: Foreign Policy under Gorbachev", *Russia*, US. Library of Congress. <http://countrystudies.us/russia/17.htm>

¹⁵² Aklaev, *op.cit.*, p. 77.

¹⁵³ Bruno Coppieters, "The Roots of the Conflict", Jonathen Cohen (ed.), *Accord: A Question of Sovereignty The Georgia-Abkhazia Peace Process*, September 1999, www.c-r.org/accord/geor-ab/accord7/roots.shtml.

policies of Gorbachev caused decentralization in the federal structure and the resentment of the nationalities to come surface.

CHAPTER III

SOURCES OF ABKHAZ-GEORGIAN CONFLICT

The sources of Abkhaz-Georgian conflict dates back to history. Though it was by the democratization and modernization policies of Gorbachev that hastened the process, the collapse of the Soviet Union was more because she could not deal with ethnic problems. Concerning the emergence of the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict, the radical nationalist groups that come out as a result of the democratization policies of Gorbachev played an important role. The policies of these nationalist radical groups when combined with political chaos in Georgia paved way for the ethnic relations to get a strained nature. Under these circumstances, since the Soviet Union could not deal with these ethnic tensions and was unaware of the seriousness of the nationalities problem, the emergence of the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict became inevitable. In this section, this process will be explained in detail and later on, different aspects of the conflict will be analyzed. In this respect, historical arguments and characteristics of Georgian and Abkhaz nationalism will be put forward.

3.1. Emergence of the Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict

After Gorbachev came to power, in Georgia a change of power on the republican level took place. While Eduard Shevardnadze was the foreign minister of the Soviet Union, a conservative leader in Georgia as the head of the republic was effective in preventing the effects of perestroika.¹⁵⁴ Thus, on the first years of the Gorbachev era, the effects of the reform policies were very slow in Georgia.¹⁵⁵ In 1987, after the policies of democratization, the political atmosphere in Georgia started to change where national and regional organizations started to come to surface. These organizations were mainly used for the revival of the Georgian

¹⁵⁴ Cornell, *op.cit.*, p. 158.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

culture, language and national identity.¹⁵⁶ Though, they were not openly secessionist at the beginning, they intended to prepare the ground for an independent Georgia whenever the conditions would be available for that.¹⁵⁷

As a result of these reforms policies in Georgia, two opposing groups emerged, the old guard and nationalists communists.¹⁵⁸ Among the nationalists, there were some radical groups such as National Democratic Party and Society of St. Ilia the Righteous headed by Gamsakhurdia and Irakli Tsereteli.¹⁵⁹ In a very short time, the emergence of these radical nationalist groups caused the inter-ethnic relations to get a strained character. For example, Anzor Totadze-head of the Interethnic Relations Department of the Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party (GCP) argued that:

“The creation of an Abkhazian SSR was a mistake from the very start. Abkhazia did not deserve this status, for two principal reasons. First, the large indigenous Georgian population in Abkhazia is larger than the Abkhazian population. Second, Abkhazia never achieved the minimum population threshold of one million required to attain the status of autonomous republic under the Soviet system”.¹⁶⁰

On 19 March 1989, at a meeting held in Lykhny, the last petition signed by almost 30 thousand Abkhazians (including 5,000 Russians, Greeks, Armenians, and Georgians) was sent to Moscow in order to restore Abkhazia’s status as Abkhazia SSR.¹⁶¹ *Aidgilara*- Abkhazian People’s Forum played a major role in this appeal requesting the restoration of the status of the Abkhazian SSR of 1921-1931.¹⁶² Svetlena Chervonnaya argued that the formation and programme of *Aidgilara* was

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Eduard Ozhiganov, “The Republic of Georgia: Conflict in Abkhazia and South Ossetia” Alexei Arbatov, Abram Chayes, Antonia Handler Chayes and Lara Olson, (eds.), *Managing Conflict in the Former Soviet Union: Russian and American Perspectives*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997, p.371.

¹⁵⁹ Cornell, *op.cit.*, p.159.

¹⁶⁰ *The White Book on Abkhazia*, p.14., in Arbatov, *op.cit.*, p. 372.

¹⁶¹ Alexei Zverev, “Ethnic Conflicts in the Caucasus 1988-1994”, Bruno Coppieters (ed.), *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, , Brussel: VUB University Press, 1996., <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/ContBorders/eng/ch0103.htm>.

¹⁶² Chervonnaya, *op.cit.*, p. 60.

different than other popular fronts, movements in the Soviet Union.¹⁶³ While all was opposed to the governing structures, Aidgilara with its objectives was in line with the CPSU. This was reacted by Georgian protests in Tbilisi in 19 April 1989.¹⁶⁴ These protests in Tbilisi soon turned to massive demonstrations for Georgian independence.

In March and June 1989, Supreme Soviet of the Georgian SSR passed some resolutions declaring that Soviet control in Georgia was imposed in 1921 by the overthrow of the Georgian Democratic Republic and that the government institutions created after 1921 was illegal.¹⁶⁵ Based on this argument, the creation of Abkhazian SSR in 1921 was also declared to be null and void.¹⁶⁶

The first conflicts started when the Georgian department of Abkhaz State University was turned to one part of Tbilisi State University in July 1989. These conflicts lasted for two weeks and ended with the death of 22 people.¹⁶⁷ Later on, the Supreme Soviet of the Georgian SSR and the Abkhazians authorities asked the Soviet Interior Ministry to send troops to Abkhazia to reestablish law and order. However, there was an ambiguous and vacillating policy of the Soviet elites by which Georgian nationalists were encouraged and Abkhazians were undermined.¹⁶⁸ While the presence of the Soviet troops somehow managed to restore order, it was a relative success and there was no progress in solving the inter-ethnic conflicts.

While the situation remained relatively calm between July 1989 and July 1990 after that, there occurred some developments. The First Caucasus Mountainous People Assembly was organized in Sukhum on 25-26 August 1989 and it declared its support for Abkhazia's independence. In August 1990, the Georgian Supreme Soviet adopted changes in the election law by which the participation of locally based parties to elections was prohibited. In 25 August 1990 following the policies of Georgianization, Abkhazian parliament declared its sovereignty but stated that she

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.59.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 374.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Takvul, *op.cit.*, p.67.

¹⁶⁸ Ozhiganov, "The Republic of Georgia: Conflict in Abkhazia and South Ossetia", *op.cit.*, pp.373-374.

would remain part of USSR.¹⁶⁹ Abkhazians, at that time, left the door open to restructure its relations with Georgia on a federal basis. Nevertheless, all these were perceived as attempts challenging Georgian territorial integrity and as violations of Georgian constitution.

At that point, the tension between different ethnic groups was taking place simultaneously with the civil war in Georgia. While radical groups aimed to hold separate elections, Gamsakhurdia did not join to them but instead concentrated on Georgian presidential elections. The elections were held on 28 October 1990 and Gamsakhurdia won the elections which took place in a chaotic political atmosphere with questionable electoral methods.¹⁷⁰ Gamsakhurdia was distinguished by his nationalist policy based on the understanding of “Georgia for Georgians”¹⁷¹. He based his campaign on the protection of Georgians’ rights in Abkhazia and Ossetia.¹⁷² Moreover, in Georgia due to the lack of a national army, the emergence of paramilitary organizations such as the Mkhedrioni (Horsemen) led by Jaba Ioseliani were tolerated by Gamsakhurdia.¹⁷³ Nevertheless, he was aware of the threat these paramilitary organizations could one day constitute for his position.¹⁷⁴

Considering this political chaos in Georgia, relations between the Georgian government and minorities received a more tense nature. Minorities were anxious about the policies of homogenization, Georgianization and Christianization and protests took place against these policies.¹⁷⁵ As a result, for Abkhazians remaining within an independent Georgia with a quasi-state structure was unthinkable.¹⁷⁶ Georgian, on the other hand, saw Abkhazians with other minorities as tools of Russia

¹⁶⁹ Takful, *op.cit.*, p. 68.

¹⁷⁰ Cornell, *op.cit.*, p. 162.

¹⁷¹ Viacheslav A. Chirikba, “Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict and Its Aftermath”, (ed.), Tütüncü, Mehmet, *Caucasus: War and Peace*, Harlem: SOTA, 1998, p.72.

¹⁷² Cornell, *op.cit.*, p.163.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.162.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ Gia Tarkhan Mouravi, “The Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict in a Regional Context”, Chapter 6 Part 2, Bruno Coppieters (ed.), *Georgians&Abkhazians The Search for a Peaceful Settlement*, Chapter 2 Part 1, Brussel: Vrije Universiteit, August, 1998, <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/Georgians/chp0602.html>.

¹⁷⁶ Cornell, *op.cit.*, p.163.

in its policy of destabilizing and preventing Georgian independence.¹⁷⁷ The demands of Abkhazians were seen as artificially constructed by Russia. In this respect, on 16 November 1990, the new Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Georgia sent an appeal to the Paris Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe stating Georgia's intention to restore its independence.¹⁷⁸ In February 1991, this was followed by the abolishment of the system of local Soviets on the territory of Georgia.¹⁷⁹

An important cornerstone in the escalation of the conflict was the All-Union referendum of the Union treaty proposed by Gorbachev in March 1991.¹⁸⁰ While Georgia declared that the referendum was null and void, Abkhazians favoring the preservation of the Soviet Union, voted for its continuation. While 60% of Abkhazia's population voted for the referendum, 97.65% percent of them was in favor of the preservation of the Soviet Union.¹⁸¹ Following that, on March 1991 Georgia held its own referendum and declared its independence in April 1991 as a unitary state with by abolishing the autonomous status of all three autonomous republics.¹⁸² 90.5 percent of the electorate participated in the elections and 98.93 percent of the votes supported Georgian independence. In Abkhazia, on the other hand, the rate of support for Georgian independence was 59.84 percent while the level of participation was 61.2 percent.¹⁸³ After the election of Vladislav Ardzinba as president and the parliamentary elections in 1991, the Abkhaz side attempted to negotiate a solution with Tbilisi. In June 1992, Ardzinba sent a draft treaty to the Georgian State Council in which a federative or confederative solution to the problem safeguarding Georgia's territorial integrity was suggested.¹⁸⁴ This

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ Arbatov, *op.cit.*, p.376.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Gueorgui Otyrba, 'War in Abkhazia: The Regional Significance of the Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict', Roman Szporluk (ed.), *The International Relations of Eurasia, National Identity in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, New York: ME, Sharpe, 1994, p.286.

¹⁸¹ TASS, April 1, 1991., in Arbatov, *op.cit.*, p.376-377.

¹⁸² Cornell, *op.cit.*, p. 164.

¹⁸³ Arbatov, *op.cit.*, p. 377.

¹⁸⁴ Otyrba, *op.cit.*, p. 287.

suggestion was rejected by Georgia. As a response to Georgia's decision to reinstate the 1921 Georgian constitution in which there was no reference to the status of Abkhazia, the Abkhaz Parliament replaced the 1978 Constitution in which Abkhazia was part of Georgia, with the 1925 Constitution in which Abkhazia was a Union Republic of USSR.¹⁸⁵ In practice, Abkhazia declared its independence. By this act, it was argued that there remained no state-legal relations between Abkhazia and Georgia.¹⁸⁶

In this chaotic environment, in December 1991, a military coup occurred led by the head of the Georgian National Guard, Tengiz Kirovani.¹⁸⁷ Gamsakhurdia was no more in office. First a Military Council led by Sigua-Kitovani and Ioselonia was set up and later in March 1992 Eduard Shevardnadze was brought to power as the head of the State. Since the conflict among Georgian factions could spread to the Abkhaz territory, this created a real threat for the Abkhaz side. After Shevardnadze came to power, he succeeded the international recognition of Georgia in March 1992, meaning the recognition of the borders claimed by Georgia and thus the inclusion of Abkhazia within Georgia.¹⁸⁸

In return of Abkhazia's declaration of itself as a sovereign state and its intention to conduct its relations with Georgia on equal basis as two sovereign states, Georgian reactions came on 14 August 1992 with the military action of Kitovani-head of a paramilitary group in the pretext of searching for a government minister kidnapped by Zvadists- supporters of Gamsakhurdia-, and of putting an end to the ongoing sabotage on the railway line.¹⁸⁹ Shevardnadze called the declaration of Abkhazia as a serious mistake and said:

“I am afraid that the consequences may be serious. We must look for a way out of this dead end”.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ State-Legal Relations Between Abkhazia-Georgia, 31.12. 2002, http://www.unpo.org/news_detail.php?arg=03&par=715

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ Otyrba, *op.cit.*, p. 287.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ Takvul, *op.cit.*, p.69.

¹⁹⁰ ITAR-TASS, July 25, 1992., in Arbatov, *op.cit.*, p. 379.

Abkhaz parliament declared this act of Georgia as an occupation since it was argued to be against the agreement between Georgian State Council and Abkhaz government delegation in April 1992.¹⁹¹ While Abkhazia declared that entering to Abkhazia was prior to permission according to this agreement, this act would be seen as illegal. Kitovani later declared that this military operation took place to stop the secessionist moves of Abkhazians.¹⁹² The main fighting took place on 14 August 1992 when Georgian Army units invaded the territory of Abkhazia.¹⁹³ Just after one day, Shevardnadze stated that they have done the right thing and underlined that this military operation was necessary to defend the interests of the Abkhazia Autonomous Republic against banditry and to ensure the secure road, rail communication links to western Georgia.¹⁹⁴ This was an attempt of Georgia to legitimize or justify its action. This attempt of Shevardnadze found legitimation in the UN mission report in which it was stated that:

When it became clear to the Georgian government in mid-1992 that the police were unable to prevent the ongoing sabotage and robbery, the government decided to send around 2.000 Georgians soldiers to Abkhazia for the purpose of protecting railroads and other means of communication. Mr. Shevardnadze stated that the Republic of Georgia had a sovereign right to move troops within its territory. He told the mission that he had telephoned Mr. Ardzinba and had informed him of these measures.¹⁹⁵

At the beginning of the war, Georgian forces occupied Sukhum and Abkhaz leadership had to leave the capital city and move to Gudauta. About half of the Abkhazian population including different ethnic groups had fled out of Abkhazia. Abkhaz leadership ordered the mobilization of all the adult population for war. Volunteer groups were formed in North Caucasus and sent to Abkhazia and soon the fighting between the sides gained the characteristics of a guerilla war.¹⁹⁶ Although no

¹⁹¹ Takvul, *op.cit.*, p.69.

¹⁹² Otyrba, *op.cit.*, p.288.

¹⁹³ Edmund Herzig, *The New Caucasus Armenia Azerbaijan and Georgia*, London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, p.77.

¹⁹⁴ "The Georgian Council of State Discusses the Situation in Abkhazia", ITAR-TASS, August 15, 1992., in Arbatov, *op.cit.*, p.379.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.379-380.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.381.

official reply was received, the Confederation of Mountain Peoples sent an ultimatum to the Georgian government demanding the withdrawal of all Georgian troops from Abkhazia by August 21, 1992.¹⁹⁷ Although on 3 September a cease-fire was negotiated between Russia, Georgia and Abkhazia in the Moscow meetings, this was not implemented. While the Georgian side blamed Russia for the breaking of the ceasefire, the pro-Georgian situation towards the end of the war reversed. This was anyway realized with the support of North Caucasians and Russia. Concerning the role of the North Caucasians, it can be well argued that Yeltsin found itself in a difficult situation. Support for Georgian territorial integrity meant the loss of whole North Caucasus for the fact that this would lead to their alienation from Russia.¹⁹⁸ This was followed by a second temporary ceasefire succeeded by the mediation of the Russian Foreign Ministry on 9 July 1993.¹⁹⁹ Due to the uncompromising attitudes of the sides, the draft agreement was never signed. The hostilities between the sides went on and it was for the third time that a ceasefire was agreed among the sides with Russia's mediation. On 27 July 1993, the Sochi agreement was signed between the sides.²⁰⁰ Though with this agreement some certain common points were reached- the demilitarization of the conflict zone within ten to fifteen days after the ceasefire and the formation of a joint commission of Abkhaz and Georgian officials to settle the conflict, this ceasefire also did not work.²⁰¹ Meanwhile, the civil war in Georgia between Gamsakhurdia's forces and Shevardnadze's was going on in an intensified way. Thus, on 7 September, the offensive of the Gamsakhurdia's forces to Abkhazia caused the fighting to get a bitter nature and it was on 27 September, 1993 that Abkhazian forces captured Sukhumi and got the control of whole Abkhazia.²⁰² In the end, a paradoxical situation emerged. Georgia was defeated but by way of diplomacy it achieved its international recognition. On the other hand, though Abkhazia was the

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ Interview with the vice president of the Confederation of the Mountain Peoples, Gennadi Alania, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, October 6, 1992., *Ibid.*, p.382.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.385.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.386.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.387.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

winner of the war, its independence was not recognized and, thus, is not an independent state today.

In the emergence of the Georgian-Abkhaz War, as argued by Spyros Demetrieu, one of the key factors was the pro-independence movement's espousal of a discourse that defined statehood as in terms of an exclusively Georgian community²⁰³. The emergence of this exclusive pro-independence movement in Georgia was the result of the fragmentation of political authority in Georgia, especially between 1988 and 1990 as well as it was a reaction against Russia. The collapse of the Georgian Communist Party (GCP) had left a political vacuum all pro-independent parties attempted to fill. So, after the collapse of GCP, there remained no center to manage inter-ethnic tensions and increasing violence. This initiated the politicization of ethnic identities. By the end of 1990, conflict between the autonomous regions and Georgian political actions had resulted in mutually exclusive visions on the future of the political system in Georgia²⁰⁴.

All the above explanations are important in order to indicate that the war in Abkhazia was held simultaneously with a civil war in Georgia among the pro-Gamsakhurdians and governmental forces. In 1992, after Abkhazia had declared its independence, the Georgian security officers were kidnapped by Gamsakhurdia and taken to Abkhazia. This had created a legitimate ground for Georgian forces to enter into Abkhazia and caused the tension to turn into war with the reaction of the Abkhaz side. Both the war in Abkhazia and the rule of Gamsakhurdia catalyzed further fragmentation among political authority and caused politics to become militarized.

To sum up, the emergence of the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict was determined by the increased ethnic tension between Abkhazians and Georgians mostly derived from the emergence of the radical nationalist groups that in a very short time got a militarized character.

²⁰³ Spyros Demetrieu, *op.cit.*, p.863.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.869.

3.2. Aspects of the Abkhaz-Georgian Conflict

The Abkhaz-Georgian conflict consists of the ethnic, political and territorial aspects. In this respect, it is important to define what kind of a conflict it is.

Though in defining the conflict, the term “ethnic conflict” is used, none of the side is eager to use this concept, but rather prefer to define it as a “political one”²⁰⁵. According to Georgians, the term “political” means that the conflict is about statehood and more particularly about the independence and territorial integrity of the state²⁰⁶. Abkhazians are not seen as an ethnic community being fought against but rather as separatists. However, according to Abkhazians, the conflict is about self-determination and struggle against those who want to deprive them from their territories. Thus, this understanding refers to Abkhazians’ view of Georgians as “colonial settlers” and invaders and of the war as the national liberation struggle against foreign invaders.²⁰⁷

The Abkhaz-Georgian conflict is a struggle about the nation state and the status of particular groups that call themselves “nation” in the modern world of nation states²⁰⁸. Ghia Nodia argued that it is the project of nation states that defines the parties not vice versa. That is to say that, Georgians and Abkhazians do not exist as communities outside their political projects but are “constructed” as communities because they are mobilized around certain issues and they can only sustain themselves as communities to the extent that they succeed in carrying out these projects²⁰⁹.

Secondly, the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict is a territorial conflict.²¹⁰ While Georgians claim that Abkhazia is a territory of Georgia and so they should exercise authority over it, Abkhazians claim that throughout history Abkhazia has always

²⁰⁵ Ghia Nodia, “Causes and Visions of Conflict in Abkhazia”, Berkeley Program in Soviet and post-Soviet Studies Berkeley, University of California, Winter 1997- 1998, p.4.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.4.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.4.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.10.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.10.

²¹⁰ Liana Kvarchelia, “Vision From Abkhazia”, November 7, 1996, www.abkhazia-georgia.parliament.ge/Publication/Abkhaz/liana-kvarchelial.htm

belonged to Abkhazians. Since such claims are generally based on an arbitrary use of historical facts, throughout this paper the arguments of the sides are stated out by taking this fact into consideration.

In addition to the political and territorial aspects, why the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict has been mostly defined as an ethnic one; whether it is really an ethnic conflict or not, should be identified. An ethnic conflict can be defined as a conflict whose reason is the ethnic hatred between different ethnic communities and that the primary aim of the sides is to realize the ethnic cleansing of the other.²¹¹ Concerning the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict, none of the sides' primary aim was to ensure the complete ethnic extermination of the other side. It is the distinction between ethnic conflict and ethnic violence that should be clarified.²¹² It is true that ethnic violence existed between the sides but this does not mean that it was an ethnic conflict. As Ghia Nodia argued, ethnic violence is just one stage in the development of the conflict and thus it should be clearly distinguished from the term ethnic conflict.²¹³ What the ethnic conflicts mostly lack is the political motivation of the sides. In the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict, unlike it is in other ethnic conflicts, the sides have political motivations which are self-determination, independence and territorial integrity. Therefore, while it would not be true to define the conflict as an ethnic one, it is true that the conflict has an ethnic aspect.

To sum up, the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict is a political and territorial conflict based on different claims of the sides over the territory they argue to be their own. Thus, to identify characteristics of Georgian and Abkhaz nationalism of both Abkhaz and Georgian side is essential in order to understand the extent of Abkhaz-Georgian relations. By putting out the arguments of the sides on self-determination, nation-state building and territorial integrity, the ethno-political-territorial aspect of the conflict will have been explained in detail. Furthermore, as well as internal dynamics that constitute some certain aspects of the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict, there are some external factors such as the Russian involvement that explains some other aspects of

²¹¹ Ghia Nodia, "Causes and Visions of Conflict in Abkhazia", Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies, Berkeley, University of California, Winter 1997-1998, p. 4.
http://ist-socrates.berkeley.edu/~bsp/publications/1997_02-nodi.pdf

²¹² *Ibid.*, p.9.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

the conflict such as its geo-strategic dimension. Since Russian involvement constitutes the core of the conflict and also of this thesis, it will be a point of consideration in the following parts of the thesis in a more detailed way.

3.3. Characteristics of Georgian Nationalism

The Georgian concept of *nation* is based on language, religion and common descent and emerged as a consequence of the modernization of the region at the end of the 19th century.²¹⁴ At first, it was Orthodox Christianity that provided an available ground for this 19th century Georgian nationalism. Ethnic Georgians who adopted some other religion, even if they continued to speak in Georgian tongue-were no longer considered as Georgian²¹⁵. However, it was in the 19th century that language gained a priority over religion and by this way Georgian nationalism gained a secular characteristic. All was realized by the initiative of Ilya Chavchavadze (the father of Georgian nationalism) which based Georgian nationalism on Fatherland, Language and Faith.²¹⁶

At that point, it is faced with an important concept in Georgian nationalism, which is *high culture*.²¹⁷ According to Ernest Gellner, Georgians, by referring to the concept of *high culture*, defined their country as the realm of Georgian high culture-the area where Georgian was the language of literacy and elites culture.²¹⁸ Based on this argument, Abkhazia is considered as a part of Georgian territory. The main argument of the Georgian side is pointing out the discrepancy between the Abkhazian high culture and popular Abkhaz ethnic culture. They argue that, although ethnic Abkhazians were culturally unrelated with Georgians but instead close to North Caucasians, the Abkhaz aristocracy was culturally and politically related with Georgian culture. The existence of the inter-state system throughout history either in

²¹⁴ Coppieter, *op.cit.*, www.c-r.org/accord/geor-ab/accord7/roots.shtml.

²¹⁵ Ghia Nodia, *op.cit.*, <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/Georgians/chp0201.html>.

²¹⁶ Nodia, "Causes and Visions of Conflict in Abkhazia", *op.cit.*, http://ist-socrates.berkeley.edu/~bsp/publications/1997_02-nodi.pdf p. 17.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

the form of a single unified state or separate units helped Georgians to legitimize their argument that medieval Abkhazia Kingdom was part of Georgia. Since, there was no Abkhazian alphabet or language, Georgian was used as the language by this Abkhaz aristocracy. This argument, in a way, is closely related with the feudal structure of the Abkhaz society based on certain classes.²¹⁹ Thus, while the ethnic Abkhazians were ethnically unrelated to Georgians, it was the Abkhaz aristocracy that Georgian made a reference to.

The fact that the Abkhaz language received a literacy language status later than Georgian language, just in the early days of Soviet rule, should be taken into consideration. Although there was an Abkhaz language spoken among ethnic Abkhazians, it was just as a result of the Soviet modernization policy that a written alphabet was constructed. Even, the development of the written language had not been smooth.²²⁰

Georgian nationalism as a serious political movement gained momentum with the break-up of the Russian Empire and later with the failure of the South Caucasia Federation in 1918. In fact, Georgians see the developments of 1989-90 as the continuation of the process started in 1905.²²¹ The emergence of Georgian nationalism in the Gorbachev era had its roots in the beginning of the 20th century. The independent period between 1918- 1921 constituted an important point of reference for the period after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Another important characteristic of Georgian nationalism is claimed to be its Western orientation.

Regarding all, Russian factor constituted a major factor in the evolution of Georgian nationalism. Since for Georgians, nationalism meant independence from Russia, both the Abkhaz and the Oset problems are regarded within this context. This perception of Georgia thus prevented to look at the problems in a more correct way. It is also worth looking at the Georgian propaganda in media, whereby the image of Abkhazians was overlapped with “enemy”, “the other”, “new comer”, “separatist”, etc.²²² In general, the theory of *hosts and guests*²²³, which was put forward by the

²¹⁹ Murat Papşu, *ATLAS*, March 2004, p.109.

²²⁰ George Hewitt, *The Abkhaz Language*, www.abkhazia.org/home_res/lang.html.

²²¹ Ghia Nodia, *op.cit.*, <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/Georgians/chp0201.html>

²²² Natella Akaba, “Historical and Psychological Aspects of the Georgian-Abkhaz War”, www.apsny.org/pitsunda11.html

Georgian intelligentsia is widespread in Georgia and has defined the attitude of Georgians to non-Georgians for a long time. As a step beyond this argument, Irakli Tseveleli (Georgian nationalist) said that:

Those whom we call Abkhazians are not Abkhazians. The Abkhazians were a Georgian tribe. The presents Abkhazian are the descendants of Kabardinians and Balkar who came to Georgia in the mid-19th century.²²⁴

To conclude all, with reference to the concept of “high culture” the argument of Georgians is that, “We only want what belong to us, but what does belong to us, we will never give up”²²⁵. In this respect, Abkhazia is considered as part of Georgia. By this way, it is clearly seen that even if Abkhazians identity is recognized, it is the territory of Abkhazia that is the case of the issue for Georgian nationalism.

3.4 Characteristics of Abkhaz Nationalism

The emergence of Abkhaz nationalism also goes back to the late 19th century. However, unlike Georgian nationalism, the historical and ethnic background of Abkhaz nationalism is not based on a *high culture*. So, the awakening and assertion of Abkhaz nationalism in the Soviet era is argued to be surprising, given the historical weaknesses of Abkhaz identity²²⁶. Since Abkhazians were ethnically kin to North Caucasians, ethnic-linguistic nationalism required Abkhazians to realize their national project within the pan-Circassian movement²²⁷. In a way, the Independent Republic of the Caucasus after the collapse of the Russian Empire and in the post-Soviet period the political movement named as the Confederation of the Mountainous Peoples of the Caucasus consisted part of the Abkhaz national project.

Considering the Soviet period, on the other hand, it was within the territorial-

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ *Ibid*

²²⁵ Ghia Nodia, *op.cit.*, <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/Georgians/chp0202.html>.

²²⁶ Revaz Gachechiladze, “Demographics and Ethnic Conflict: The case of Abkhazia”, *Contemporary Caucasus Newsletter*, January 1997, www.ist-socrates.berkeley.edu/~bsp/caucasus/newsletter/1997-03.pdf

²²⁷ Konstantin Ozgan, *op.cit.*, p.186.

administrative structure created in the Soviet Union that the Abkhazian statehood was established.²²⁸ Unlike Georgians, the main reference of Abkhazians for legitimizing their claim of independence has been their SSR status within the Soviet Union granted in 1921. Thus, though this statehood affiliated in the Soviet Union was symbolic and mostly remained in rhetoric, it helped to the institutionalization of nationalism. The main argument of the Abkhaz side is that Abkhazia is the territory that belongs to them, they have been living there for centuries and so they were not newcomers as argued by the Georgian side.

After the end of the Soviet Union, as a result of a pragmatic policy, Abkhaz nationalism seems to depend more on the Russian Federation in order to get rid of the threat of Georgian nationalism. Moreover, in order to show out the motives behind Abkhaz nationalism, to make certain references to history sounds necessary:

Initially, the year ‘1864’ is a very important date in the history of Abkhazians. It is when they were, as a result of their resistance to the Russian rule, deportated to the Ottoman Empire. Since an important number were deportated, this event is considered by some to be one the main motives of today’s nationalism.²²⁹

Secondly, the period between 1918-21 when Abkhazia was occupied by Georgian Democratic Republic (Mensheviks) and faced oppressive policies is regarded as another important motive. It is worth to indicate that rather than political independence, the main task of Abkhaz nationalism is to ensure the survival as a distinct ethnic group.²³⁰

Thirdly, the Stalin era from 1931 to 1957 during which “Georgianization” took place tends to be another most important motive behind Abkhaz nationalism.²³¹. An attempt to explain the conflict as if everything was running in a peaceful manner till the dissolution of the Soviet Union is too much superficial. The process explained above, partly explains how the Abkhaz ethnic identity transformed itself to Abkhaz nationalism. All attempts of Georgianization were thought to derive from Georgians

²²⁸ Nodia, “Causes and Visions of Conflict in Abkhazia”, *op.cit.* , p. 22.
http://ist-socrates.berkeley.edu/~bsp/publications/1997_02-nodi.pdf

²²⁹ Kuzey Kafkasya K lt r Derneđi, Basın Yayın Komisyonu, *Abhazya Ger eđi*, Ankara: Kafdađı Yayınları, Ekim 1992, p.10.

²³⁰ Nodia, *op.cit.*, p. 21.

²³¹ Kuzey Kafkas K lt r Derneđi Basın Yayın Komisyonu, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

rather than the Soviet Union. It was against the fear perceived from Georgia that Abkhaz nationalism was developed and Russia was perceived as a protector against that.

Beyond all, another feature of the Abkhaz nationalism today is its characteristic of looking for survival as an ethnic group- as a nation for today. One of the reasons that lies behind the must for political independence can be best explained with regard to these previous experiences. The main characteristic of the Abkhaz national project, since they are a minority in their own land and just few in numbers, is to prevent assimilation in any way. Based on that, they define their struggle as a war of independence- that is self-determination.

To sum up, Georgian and Abkhaz nationalism have both conflicting remarks with each other. This confirms that, their formation is the result of the artificial use and construction of history. They are thus, formed to legitimize their arguments. However, in whatever way they are constructed, while Abkhaz nationalism is in a great extent formed against Georgian aggressive nationalism, Georgian nationalism is constructed against Russia. In this regard, as much as the internal aspects of the conflict, the major external factor of the conflict-that is Russia-comes to agenda, which will be a point of deep consideration in the following parts of the thesis.

CHAPTER IV

THE RUSSIAN FACTOR IN THE ABKHAZ-GEORGIAN CONFLICT

The Russian factor in the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict caused many debates to emerge about Russia's role in the emergence and evolution of the conflict. While many scholars tended to explain the conflict and its results solely and completely with Russian involvement, it has also been argued that a middle way should be found in explaining it.²³² Though Russian involvement can not explain the conflict as a whole, it has a great weight that can not be ignored. There is no doubt that Russian involvement in the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict has been determined by realist motives in Russian foreign policy. For Russia, there is not any problem of Abkhazia but instead there was just geo- politics based on realist policies which aimed to ensure its control of the Trans- Caucasus. In this respect, first Russian National Security and Foreign Policy Concepts and Military Doctrines are explained in consideration of their effects to Russian policy towards South Caucasia and ethnic conflicts in the region. Then, reasons of Russian involvement and Russian policy formation during the war will be explained in consideration of the internal political dynamics in Russia.

4.1 Russian National Security Concepts and Military Doctrines

After the end of the Soviet Union, Russia developed a pro-Western policy. The main aim of Russia was to be part of the Western world. As argued by Jyotsna Bakshi, during the initial period, Russia wished to be part of the Western security system.²³³ The West was seen as a friend, ally and no more as a threat to Russian

²³² Ghia Nodia, "The Conflict in Abkhazia: National Projects and Political Circumstances", Bruno Coppieters, Ghia Nodia and Yuri Anchabadze, (eds.), *Georgians&Abkhazians The Search for a Peaceful Settlement*, Brussel: Vrije Universiteit, 1998.
<http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/Georgians/chp0203.html>.

²³³ Jyotsna Bakshi, "Russia's National Security Concepts and Doctrines: Continuity and Change", *Strategic Analysis*, A monthly Journal of IDSA, October 2000, Vol.XXVI, No. 7.,
http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/sa/sa_oct00baj01.html

security. Concerning ethnic conflicts that erupted in the former Soviet territories, Westernizers sought to ensure the maintenance of peace and stability in the region by encouraging the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) to embrace Eurasia.²³⁴ In his talk with then German Foreign Minister Heinrich Genscher in January 1992, the Russian Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev called for the establishment of a "single security space from Vancouver to Vladivostok".²³⁵ In his speech, President Yeltsin proposed a "pan-European security system" within which Russia's security problems could be managed.²³⁶

After this initial period, Eurasianists became more effective in Russian policy and in 2 November, 1993, the 1993 Military Doctrine was adopted by the Security Council.²³⁷ With this Military Doctrine, though there were no sharp turns in the policy, there occurred shifts in emphasizes and priorities.²³⁸ Russian special national interests and peacekeeping role in the 'near abroad' was emphasized and local wars and regional conflicts arising from ethnic, religious and territorial disputes in the former Soviet territories were indicated to have implications for Russian security in the region where Russia had a special role.²³⁹

The 1993 Military Doctrine was adopted as a result of a transitional period during which Russian statehood and Russian interests and priorities were redefined. Russian policy in the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict overlaps with the period explained above. All explains that Russian policy was shaped by doctrines based on realist motives after 1993. In the 1993 'Near Abroad' doctrine of Russia, Russian spheres of interest were defined as the former Soviet territories.²⁴⁰ It was strongly emphasized that economic and military integration with Russian Federation was a compulsion for

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ Leszek Buszynski, *Russian Foreign Policy After the Cold War*, London: Praeger, 1996, p. 5., in *op.cit.*, http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/sa/sa_oct00baj01.html

²³⁷ Jyotsna Bakshi, *op.cit.*, http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/sa/sa_oct00baj01.html

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ Hasan Kanbolat, "Günümüz Rusyası'nın Kafkasya Politikası", *Geçmişten Günümüze Kafkasların Trajedisi*, Uluslararası Konferans 21 Mayıs 2005, İstanbul: Kafkas Vakfı Yayınları, 2006, p. 186.

the countries in Near Abroad. It was just and only Russia that was responsible for the security and stability of the region and just Russia had the right to intervene in the region.²⁴¹ By this way with the formation of CIS, a loose system like the Soviet Union was aimed to be established.²⁴² However, after September 11, with the US Involvement in the former Soviet territories, the Near Abroad Doctrine of the Russia Federation lost its validity.²⁴³ On 10 January 2000, Russia adopted a new National Security Doctrine in which priorities in Russian security was shifted. In this doctrine, rather than Russian spheres of interest in the former Soviet Union and nostalgia for the Soviet Union, the emphasis was made on the provision of Russian interest in the CIS territories and the fear of disintegration in the Russian Federation related to North Caucasian republics was felt.²⁴⁴ Combined with this fear of disintegration, Russia realized that a definite lost occurred in its influence and domination in the region.

As it will be seen in details in the following parts of the paper, Russian involvement in the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict is more a reflection of these military doctrines on Russian policy. Nevertheless, while shifts occurred in Russian military doctrines, one thing remained unchanged and it was the Russian anxiety to realize its national security in these changing conditions. Thus, political realism sometimes combined with pragmatism continued to be the main theory directing Russian policy.

4.2. Reasons of the Russian Involvement

The reasons of Russian involvement can be classified under three sub-titles which are; geo-strategic, political, and economic.

Geo-strategic factors played a crucial role in determining Russian involvement in the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict. One of the main factors shaping Russian policy towards the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict is that Georgia's strategic

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

²⁴² *Ibid.*

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.187-188.

location- including Abkhazia- is of vital military and economic significance.²⁴⁵ This strategic importance derived from many factors which will be explained below:

The first factor is about the overall strategic importance of Caucasus as a region and strategic borderland for Russia.²⁴⁶ Throughout history, Caucasus served as an external borderland to secure Russia's southern border. For Russia, Trans-Caucasus formed a buffer zone between the North Caucasus and the Islamic world in its south and also a border with Turkey and Iran which were regarded as regional threats to Russian influence in the region.²⁴⁷ Moreover, South Caucasia was a bridge for Russia's relations with Middle East.²⁴⁸

Georgia while in the south has border with Turkey- a NATO member country- in the north it has border with North Caucasus including the breakaway region Chechnya- which is an extremely unstable region.²⁴⁹ Considering the chaotic situation in Chechnya and the close ethnic affiliations of Abkhazians with North Caucasians, Russia got anxious that any reverse reaction to Abkhazians may cause North Caucasus to get a more strained atmosphere. In this context, Trans- Caucasus is still argued to be the "soft underbelly"²⁵⁰ of the Russian Federation. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia's withdrawal from the region caused the previously existing border with Turkey to be lost. Taking into consideration the security problems such as ethnic conflicts, radical fundamentalist groups in the region, Trans- Caucasus has the potential to threaten the security of Russian Federation and, thus, to ensure control over the region stands extremely important for Russia.²⁵¹ Specifically, Abkhazia as well as being headache for Georgia, is a strategic

²⁴⁵ James Graham, "Russia's Policy Towards Ethnic Conflict in Independent Georgia", <http://www.historyorb.com/russia/georgia.shtml>.

²⁴⁶ Dimitrii Danilov, "Russia's Role", Jonathan Cohen, (ed.), *Accord: A Question of Sovereignty, The Georgian-Abkhaz Peace Process*, September, 1999. <http://www.c-r.org/accord/geor-ab/accord7/russia.shtml>

²⁴⁷ Svante E. Cornell, *op.cit.*, p.341.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid*, pp.341-342.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.343.

²⁵⁰ Krzysztof Strachota, "Russian Policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia", p. 122. http://www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/Understand_Russia2.pdf

²⁵¹ *Ibid*.

concern for Russia.²⁵² The strategic importance of Georgia (including Abkhazia) derives from the strategic value it has for the security of Russia's southern flank:

Abkhazia is the weakest link in Russia's counter-terrorist, counter-narcotics program and a precarious ally. Russia's withdrawal of forces and demobilization of its bases would create a security vacuum in Abkhazia, even if CIS peacekeepers remained on hand with minor coordination from Russia.²⁵³

Russian security concerns also include the existence of military bases in Georgia. The presence of Russian military bases dates back prior to the break up of the Soviet Union. During the Soviet era, the South Caucasia Military District (Zakavkazskii voennyi okrug, ZakVO), the 19th Army of Anti-Aircraft Defence and the 34th Air Army of the Soviet Armed were stationed in Georgia.²⁵⁴ Russian military presence also included border-guard troops, ships of the Black Sea Fleet, internal troops and separate army units under Moscow control and three missile brigades with nuclear warheads.²⁵⁵ Georgia, even before the end of the Soviet Union had been a stationing ground for these Soviet forces targeting NATO's southern flank.²⁵⁶ After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the presence of these Soviet troops was perceived to be the main instrument of "Muscovite colonialism".²⁵⁷ In autumn 1991, the status of occupation was officially given to the Soviet forces stationed in Georgia.²⁵⁸ Considering the point that Georgia was getting away from Russian orbit and conducting a pro-Western policy, Russian policy throughout the Abkhaz Conflict was shaped in order to provide a continuing presence of Russian military by the installation of Russian military bases. By means of these bases Russia would provide

²⁵² Christopher Deliso, "A Quiet Battle in the Caucasus: Georgia between Russia and NATO", September 26, 2001. <http://www.antiwar.com/orig/deliso7.html>.

²⁵³ "Russian Withdrawal Risks Warfare in Abkhazia," *Stratfor report*, 31 October 2000, in Christopher Deliso, *op.cit.*, <http://www.antiwar.com/orig/deliso7.html>.

²⁵⁴ David Darchiashvili, "The Russian Military Presence in Georgia: The Parties, Attitudes and Prospects", *Caucasian Regional Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1997. <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/crs/eng/0201-04.htm>

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ Interview with former Chairman of Georgias Supreme Council, A. Asatiani, 18 March 1996, in Darchiashvili, *op.cit.*, <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/crs/eng/0201-04.htm>

and guarantee its control in the region and enjoy political-military leverage over Georgia.²⁵⁹

Another strategic interest derived from the geographic location of Georgia and Abkhazia through which the road and rail links to South Caucasus from Russia lie.²⁶⁰ Furthermore, Georgia -including Abkhazia- as the sole country in the Trans-Caucasus with an opening to Black Sea carries a much more strategic importance for Russian access to warm seas.²⁶¹ This was also related to the Russian military presence in Georgia. The withdrawal of Russian military presence from Georgia would mean loss of control in the Black Sea for Russia.²⁶²

As David Satter has concluded:

The breakup of the Soviet Union deprived Russia of deep water harbors on the Black Sea coast. Such ports, however, existed in Georgia. In the summer of 1992, Abkhazia, the northwest corner of Georgia, was visited by Russian defense and intelligence officials. A short time later, the Abkhazians declared their independence. When Georgian troops tried to crush the revolt, they were defeated by an “Abkhazian “army which appeared out of nowhere and whose ranks were filled with mercenaries recruited by Russian intelligence. This army soon controlled almost all of Western Georgia. Facing military defeat, the Georgian government agreed to lease its Black Sea ports to Russia. In the meantime, Abkhazians engaged in ‘ethnic cleansing’, leaving the Abkhazians as the largest group in the republic. Today, the Russian Coast Guard patrols Georgian waters. There are Russian peacekeepers stationed between Georgia and Abkhazia who have taken few steps either to repatriate Georgian refugees or to help end the conflict. There are also 15.000 Russian troops stationed at military bases in Georgia and Russian border guards patrol Georgian’s southern border with Turkey. The Georgians resent the Russian presence but the Russians are blind to their wishes. ‘They do not respect our interests because they do not feel we are a sovereign state’ as Alex Rondeli, an analyst in the Georgian Foreign Ministry, put it... recently.²⁶³

As it is argued above, Georgia’s strategic location including Abkhazia derived from its position as a strategic borderland, a transit road and a rail way link and its

²⁵⁹ Robert L. Larsson, “The Enemy Within: Russia’s Military Withdrawal from Georgia”, *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 17, No.3, London: Frank Cass, Taylor & Francis Inc., 2004, p.405.

²⁶⁰ Danilov, *op.cit.*, <http://www.c-r.org/accord/geor-ab/accord7/russia.shtml>

²⁶¹ Cornell, *op.cit.*, p. 345.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 345.

border to Black Sea Coasts. All these geo-strategic factors caused Russia to establish control in Georgia by manipulating the conflict with Abkhazia, and by the establishment of military bases in Georgia and the Russian military existence.

Geo-political factors, on the other hand, are strongly related to the geo-strategic factors behind Russian involvement in the Abkhaz-Georgia conflict. Russian geo-political interest to the region can be explained with Russia's "Near Abroad Policy"²⁶⁴. First, it should be underlined that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, South Caucasia has gone under the power struggle of the regional powers- Russia, Iran and Turkey and the US with other Western powers including oil companies. In such a situation, Russia faced with the danger of losing its control in the region which meant the loss of its regional power.²⁶⁵ As argued by Revaz Gachechiladze:

The emerging new geo-political geometry in South-Caucasus fosters anxiety and creates a feeling of imperial nostalgia that considers all post-Soviet territory to be in the sphere of Russian vital interests. Any encroachment by outside powers into Russia's historical sphere of influence is considered intolerable to the Russian political and military elites.²⁶⁶

In Russia, a considerable sense of anxiety exists about losing its decisive role in South Caucasia. The first goal of Russia's Near Abroad policy in South Caucasia is to play the central role in mediating the resolution of the armed conflicts in the Near Abroad.²⁶⁷ It is argued that, "stability along its southern frontier in the area described as the "arc of instability" is in Russia's geopolitical interest".²⁶⁸ Thus, the first goal is the provision of security and stability. The second goal of Russia's Near Abroad policy, on the other hand, is to ensure the reintegration of the South

²⁶⁴ Cornell, *op.cit.*, p.348.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 341.

²⁶⁶ Revaz Gechechiladze, "Geo-politics in the Caucasus: Local and External Players", *Geopolitics*, Vol.7, No.1, Summer, London: Frank Cass, 2002, p.128.

²⁶⁷ Gia Tarkhan Mouravi, "The Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict in a Regional Context", Bruno Coppieters, Ghia Nodia and Yuri Anchabadze, (eds.), *Georgians&Abkhazians The Search for a Peaceful Settlement*, Brussel: Vrije Universiteit, 1998.
<http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/Georgians/chp0602.html>.

²⁶⁸ Jim MacDougall, "Russia Policy in the Transcaucasian Near Abroad, The Case of Azerbaijan", *Demokratizatsia*, p.90.
<http://www.demokratizatsiya.org/Dem%20Archives/DEM%2005-01%20macdougall.pdf>.

Caucasian states in the form of military, economical and political union.²⁶⁹ Concerning Georgia, the main reason of such a policy was probably Georgia's foreign policy orientation towards Western countries and the US while getting out of the Russian orbit. The geo-political motive behind Russian involvement in Georgia derived from the strategic importance it carried for Russia in re-establishing its control in the Trans- Caucasus. After the end of the Soviet Union, Russia lost the control of the region and in order to act as a regional power and prevent the influence of the Western powers, searched ways to control the region. Though Russia had to establish horizontal relations with Trans- Caucasus countries in an equal manner, it chose to see them as territories in its own natural sphere of influence.²⁷⁰

Russia's main concern, as argued by Smith, is the extension of foreign and Western influence in the region which is perceived as a challenge to Russia's influence.²⁷¹ There are two interrelated geopolitical challenges to Russian influence in the region- the NATO enlargement and the drift away from Russia.²⁷² The desire of Georgia to be a member of NATO and leave the CIS Security system was perceived as great challenges to Russia's overweighed presence in the region. As argued by Chernyavskiy, Georgia within the framework of the PfP stated its readiness to adapt its air-defense system to NATO standards and permit NATO to use airfields, training areas and ports.²⁷³ Georgia would even desire NATO involvement for peacekeeping operations in Abkhazia.

Concerning Russia's anxiety to lose its influence in the region and to be replaced by Western military, political and social presence, there emerged two different trends in Russia. Initially, Russia did not want to accept the independence of these states and conducted a policy by which all these newly independent states

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.91.

²⁷⁰ Cornell, *op.cit.*, p.337.

²⁷¹ M.A Smith, "Geopolitical Challenges to Moscow in the Transcaucasus", *Conflict Studies Research Center*, September 1999.
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1999/f67-mas.htm>

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

were seen within Russian sphere of influence. Russia is, thus, defined as the main obstacle for the independence of these states.²⁷⁴

To sum up, geopolitical reasons of Russian involvement can be summarized as the deep anxiety Russia has felt about the threat of losing her presence and influence in its Near Abroad. More specifically, the foreign policy orientation of Georgia towards the West increased Russia's fear of losing these countries to Western orbit.

Economic factors behind Russian involvement are also strongly related to the geo-strategic importance Georgia has for Russia. Economic factors are directly related to the transit route Georgia is through for the transportation of oil from the Caspian Base to the West. At that point, it is essential to explain the importance the Caspian Base to Russia:

The Caspian issue is one of the most important geopolitical problems on the territory of the former USSR. The interests of the world's major states are intertwined there. Strategically, important oil fields and fish stocks are located there. Oil and gas pipelines of vital importance to the Caspian states (including Russia) will originate there.²⁷⁵

Georgia as the only South-Caucasus state having access to open water is currently active in certain projects such as TRACECA (Transportation Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia) that linked Asia to Europe via South Caucasus by bypassing Russia.²⁷⁶ Thus, in the transportation of the Caspian oil and gas to the West, the policy of bypassing Russia caused her to conduct a more assertive policy in the region. Considering the fact that energy resources in Russia's economy are of higher importance, the transportation of the Caspian oil and gas to the West through Russia is an important tool to increase its influence in the region against other external players.

Two pipelines, first the flow from the Azerbaijan Caspian shelf to the West via Georgia, specifically the Black Sea Coast and second from the Tengiz oil field in Kazakhstan to the West and Mediterranean, are strongly affected from the

²⁷⁴ Mitat Çelikpala, "Karadeniz'de Kılıçlar Çekiliyor", November 2005, <http://www.kemalist.org/showthread.php?p=3267>.

²⁷⁵ *Segodnya*, 8 September 1995, 9. Trans. in FBIS-SOV-95-188-S., in MacDougall, *op.cit.*, p.90.

²⁷⁶ Jean Radvanyi, "Transport and Geostrategy in Southern Russia", *La Monde Diplomatique*, June 1998. <http://mondediplo.com/1998/06/11russia>.

instabilities and ethnic conflict in the region.²⁷⁷ Russia wants to prevent the flow of the Baku and Tengiz oil to the West from Georgia to Turkey.²⁷⁸ Considering the Abkhaz conflict and the civil war in Georgia, Russian policy of promoting instability in the region and thus preventing the flow of oil via Georgia is understandable.

During the civil war, the ousting of Gamsakhurdia and the coming of Shevardnadze was in a great extent related to the energy policies of Russia.²⁷⁹ It is not a coincidence that Russia put pressure on Shevardnadze not to build pipeline for the Azeri oil through Georgia to the Georgian port of Supsa. There was even a strong relation of this with the assassination attempt against Shevardnadze after his rejection of the Russian request.²⁸⁰ The Abkhaz conflict and Russia's policy towards it was affected by the energy policies of Russia. Russia by manipulating the conflict in Abkhazia wanted to control access to oil. By this way, as argued by Ariel Cohen:

Russia gained *de facto* control over the long Black Sea coastline in Abkhazia. Moscow also was protecting the Russian Black Sea ports of Novorossiysk and Tuapse and moving closer to the Georgian oil exporting ports in Poti, Supsa, and Batumi. In August 1995, Georgia's beleaguered President Shevardnadze agreed to place four Russian military bases on Georgian soil, thus assuring Russia's control of the oil exporting routes via the Black Sea coast.²⁸¹

Even, in the case of Baku-Ceyhan pipeline, Russia reflected its policy in its attitude in the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict. It is not a coincidence that the re-awakening of the armed conflict took place simultaneously with the suspension of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline in 1998.²⁸²

To sum up, the development and construction of export routes from the Caspian base have been directly effected by the regional conflict, political instability and thus by Russia's policy in the conflicts. Concerning Georgia, all the (proposed) pipelines pass near the regions in Georgia where armed conflict has taken place. For

²⁷⁷ Ariel Cohen, "The new 'Great Game': Oil Politics in the Caucasus and Central Asia", *The Heritage Foundation*, January 25, 1996., <http://mondediplo.com/1998/06/11russia>.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

²⁸² *Ibid.*

example, the Port of Supsa, the terminus of the Western route for the “early oil” from the AIOC, is just 12 miles from a buffer zone between Abkhazia and Georgia.²⁸³

4.3. Russian Policy During the War

Russian policy during the war was strongly and directly shaped by the chaotic and divergent domestic political atmosphere of Russia where different sides argued for different interests.²⁸⁴ This caused Russia’s policy to be inconsistent and full of ambiguities during the war.

The main actors in Russian domestic politics have been the Russian Foreign Ministry, Russian Defense Ministry, some opposition groups in the parliament and Russian military. As a result of these different views in the formulation and conduct of the Russian foreign policy, there was no articulated policy on Russia’s part. The problem about how to formulate a consistent and uniform policy in the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict derived from the difficulty of formulating a coherent Russian policy towards South Caucasia. Russia had no clearly articulated policy in the South Caucasia at the beginning of the conflict.²⁸⁵

Russian involvement to the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict constitutes the most controversial aspect of the conflict. Ghia Nodia argues that:

Where there is no coherent and rational policy, however, instinct takes over, and instinctual behavior may be quite consistent in its own way. In relation to the Caucasus, the Russian instinct was to retain as much power and influence as possible and the military presence was believed to be the major means of doing this.... The most efficient way to maintain influence in the Caucasus appeared to be through the manipulation of the ongoing conflicts there so this became the main direction taken by its policy in the region. The only way to stop these countries from drifting away was by exacerbating their internal

²⁸³ “Georgia- Oil Politics”, 19.06.2005.
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/georgia/oil-politics.htm>

²⁸⁴ Evgeny M. Kozhokin, “Georgia-Abkhazia”, Jeremy R. Azrael and Emil A. Pain, (eds.), *US and Russian Policymaking with respect to the use of Force*, California: Rand Pub., 1996.
<http://www.rand.org/publications/CF/CF129/CF-129.chapter5.html>.

²⁸⁵ Catherine Dale, “The Case of Abkhazia (Georgia)”, Lena Johnson, Clive Archer (eds.), *Peacekeeping and the Role of Russia*, Boulder: Colo, Westview Press, 1996, p. 124.

difficulties: being weak and divided, they would have much less real ability to resist Russian influence.²⁸⁶

The immediate reaction of the Russian government, specifically of Yeltsin, to the rising tension in Abkhazia was to play with time.²⁸⁷ As argued by Dale Catherine, it was almost ten days after the conflict that the Russian Security Council stated its suggestion for a political settlement.²⁸⁸ This situation was a clear indication of the Russian hesitation and lack of a consistent policy. Yeltsin issued an appeal to the Leadership of Georgia and Abkhazia through which Russian support for Georgian territorial integrity was promised. Yeltsin argued that Russia would take all necessary measures to prevent the armed detachments to enter Abkhaz territory.²⁸⁹ At the beginning of the conflict, Yeltsin and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a hesitation followed a pro-Georgian stance. However, by time, as a result of the pressure from the military, there was a shift in Kozyrev's and Yeltsin's policy. As the war progressed, the attacks Russian troops faced moved the official Russian policy closer to the positions of those challenging it.²⁹⁰ As argued by Dale, the Abkhaz conflict emerged as an issue in the Russian domestic political sphere to challenge the government's policy.²⁹¹

Following that, Yeltsin played the role of mediator which resulted in a cease fire signed between Shevardnadze and Ardzinba on 3 September 1992.²⁹² By this ceasefire, Abkhazia was recognized within the internationally established borders of Georgia.²⁹³ This cease fire was not implemented and a second ceasefire was

²⁸⁶ Ghia Nodia, "The Conflict in Abkhazia: National Projects and Political Circumstances", Bruno Coppieters, Ghia Nodia and Yuri Anchabadze, (eds.), *Georgians and Abkhazias, Search for A Political Settlement*, Brussel: Vrije Universiteit, 1998.
<http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/Georgians/chp0203.html>

²⁸⁷ Dale, *op.cit.*, p. 124.

²⁸⁸ Catherine Dale, "Turmoil in Abkhazia: Russian Responses", *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol: 2, No. 34, Prague Headquarters, 27 August, 1993.

²⁸⁹ Journal of *Krasnaya zvezda*, 28 August 1992, p.1., in Dale, *op.cit.*, p.124.

²⁹⁰ Dale, *Peacekeeping and the Role of Russia in Eurasia*, *op.cit.*, p. 125.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.125.

²⁹² Dale, *op.cit.*, p.125.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

concluded again with the mediation of Russian government on 27 July 1993 – the so called Sochi Agreement.²⁹⁴ By this agreement, the disarmament of the sides, the withdrawal of Georgian troops from Abkhazia, the return of the legitimate government to Sokhumi and a tripartite commission to monitor the process was agreed upon.²⁹⁵ This ceasefire was also violated by the Abkhaz side by the illegal use of the military equipment under Russian control.²⁹⁶ While it was not clear which side first violated, the silence of Russian Foreign and Defense Ministry was a sign of Russian covert support to Abkhazians.²⁹⁷ Anyway, appeals of Shevardnadze to Moscow to restore the status-quo were ignored. It was after the failure in the implementation of this ceasefire and pressure from the military that Yeltsin said they would take the necessary steps to defend its citizens in the conflict area.²⁹⁸ On the other hand, the nationalist- communist coalition in the parliament conducted a more pro-Abkhaz policy. The Abkhaz issue turned to a dispute between Yeltsin and his hardline opponents in the parliament.²⁹⁹ The main opposition emerged when on September 25, 1992, the Russian Supreme Soviet issued a statement that made no reference to the territorial integrity of Georgia.³⁰⁰ According to the Supreme Soviet, the Abkhazian separatist movement was seen as a tool to compel Georgian government to enter to CIS and to agree on a military presence in Georgia.³⁰¹ On the other hand, a shift in Yeltsin's policy toward "neo-imperial"³⁰² statehood was tried to be ensured. Also in the parliament there was not any monolithic view within the

²⁹⁴ Kozhokin, *op.cit.*, <http://www.rand.org/publications/CF/CF129/CF-129.chapter5.html>.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁶ Alexei Zverev, "Ethnic Conflicts in the Caucasus 1988-1994", Bruno Coppieters (ed.), *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, Brussels: VUB Press, 1996.
<http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/ContBorders/eng/ch0104.htm>.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁸ Dale, *op.cit.*, p.125.

²⁹⁹ Zverev, *op.cit.*, <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/ContBorders/eng/ch0104.htm>.

³⁰⁰ Dale, *op.cit.*, 125.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

³⁰² Kozhokin, *op.cit.*, <http://www.rand.org/publications/CF/CF129/CF-129.chapter5.html>.

Executive branch. By Russian Defense Minister Grachev, for example, it was argued that:

“Russian troops could not withdraw from Abkhazia and Adzharia because Russia would lose the exit to the Black Sea as a result.”³⁰³

The attitude of the Supreme Soviet was later on followed by the resolutions by which the Georgian government was condemned to solve the ethnic relations by violence and Russian government was asked to stop the delivery of the Soviet weapons to the Georgian government.³⁰⁴

As a response to the pro-Abkhaz resolutions of the Supreme Soviet, Shevardnadze said it was not the decisions of the Supreme Soviet but rather of the Russian president that were binding. However, Yeltsin could not resist much more to the pressure of the parliament and a considerable change occurred in his policy. Russian stance by time became more coercive by compelling Shevardnadze to give concessions in return of having a resolution of the Abkhaz conflict with respect to Georgian territorial integrity.

Another corner stone in the change of Yeltsin's policy was the downing of a Russian helicopter in the Georgian controlled territory. This act was called as a “great provocation”³⁰⁵ and Yeltsin stated that:

Russia is vitally interested in the cessation of all armed conflicts on the territory of the former USSR. And the world community is increasingly coming to realize that the moment has arrived for authoritative international organizations, including the United Nations, to grant Russia special powers as the guarantor of peace and stability in this region.³⁰⁶

These statements of Yeltsin showed that Russia was moving away from its cautious policy. While at the beginning of the conflict the main motivation of Russia was the territorial integrity of Georgia rather than the fulfillment of Russian interests,

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁵ Dale, *op.cit.*,p.125.

³⁰⁶ ITAR-TASS, 1 March 1993. Suzanne Crow, “Russia seeks Leadership in Regional Peacekeeping”, RFE/RL Research Report, No:15, 9 April 1993 in Dale, *op.cit.*p.125.

it was now the Russian interests in the near abroad that constitute the main driving force of the policy.³⁰⁷

To sum up, the policy of the Russian Government was conducted towards an unbalanced and instable path that is from a pro-Georgian policy towards neutrality and later on a pro-Abkhaz stance. This change in the orientation of the Russian government was the direct result of the pressure exposed by the Russian military and the opposition groups in the parliament.

The main opposition to Yeltsin's policy in the parliament was the neo-communist/nationalist camp which argued for a more assertive and pro-Abkhaz policy. During the 1992-93 war, Abkhazia benefited from the direct support of the members of the Russian parliament. Shevardnadze even argued that Abkhazia was receiving direct support from the reactionary and terrorist forces in the Russian Parliament.³⁰⁸ The main theme of the opposition was greater support for Abkhazia and the conduction of a more assertive and active policy. Although there were single personalities opposing, there were also certain groups and blocs opposing to the policies of the government.

Alexander Surkov- Head of the first delegation that visited the conflict zone- argued that the withdrawal of the Georgian troops was a compulsion for the settlement of the conflict.³⁰⁹ Ramadan Abdulatipov- Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Council of Nationalities- advocated sovereignty for autonomous regions and suggested that both side should compromise.³¹⁰

The Civic Union, the Russian Unity Bloc, the Rossiya Group of Deputies, the Russian People's Union all constituted the major groups that formed an opposition. While the policies of the government were defined as "unjustified passivity"³¹¹ by the Civic Union, the Abkhaz problem was seen mostly within the natural realm of Russian influence.³¹² Gennadii Saenko speaking for the bloc of the Communists of

³⁰⁷ Dale, *op.cit.*,p.125.

³⁰⁸ Dale, *op.cit.*,p.124.

³⁰⁹ ITAR-TASS, 25 August 1992 in Dale, *op.cit.*,p.124.

³¹⁰ ITAR-TASS, 25 August and 30 October 1992, in Dale, *op.cit.*,p.124.

³¹¹ Dale, *op.cit.*,p.124.

³¹² Ibid.

Russian faction argued that “the occupation of Abkhazia is an act of terrorism and genocide” and that the Russian government should put a stop to it.³¹³ Sergei Baburin-founder of the Rossiya Group deputies part of Russian Unity and Russian People’s Union- on the other hand, was the deputy who brought the Abkhaz issue on the agenda by arguing that Russian military leadership had a direct hand in the conflict.³¹⁴ He strongly used the conflict in order to discredit Yeltsin and argued that he was not that much sure that Abkhazia was part of Georgia.³¹⁵ Baburin was an important personality actively tried for discrediting Yeltsin position. This pro-Abkhaz tendency and support to Abkhazia was seen with the unofficial visit of some Russian delegations which Baburin led, to Gudauta to meet Ardzinba. It was by the major role played by Baburin that the Supreme Soviet had decided to discuss the Abkhaz issue under a separate section as a result of which certain resolutions were adopted.

While Yeltsin, Andrei Kozyrev and Yeltsin’s advisers took a pro-Georgian stance in the formulation of foreign policy, Ruslan Khasbulatov- the speaker of the parliament- was in an opposite attitude. On September 25, 1992, the Russian Supreme Soviet issued statements and adopted resolutions in favor of Abkhazia. In the statement issued, the introduction of the Georgian forces was argued to be the main cause of the conflict. Violence conducted by Georgia was condemned and the immediate cessation of all military activities, withdrawal of all military formations from Abkhazia was demanded. With the adoption of the resolution, on the other hand, the transfer of military equipment to the Georgian army as part of the ongoing division of Soviet military assets was halted. However, though it was freezed by the parliament’s resolution, the executive authorities did not support the resolution and in semi-legal and illegal ways the arm transfer to Georgia continued.

To sum up, Abkhaz conflict created an available atmosphere for the opposition in the parliament to challenge the government’s policy. The main motivation in implying pressure over the government was to bring Georgia in CIS

³¹³ ITAR-TASS, 26-27 August 1992 in Dale, op.cit.,p.125.

³¹⁴ *Den*, no.35, 1992 in Dale, op.cit.

³¹⁵ *Moskosky komsomolets*, 25 August 1992, p.1 and “Vesti”, Russian Television, 23 August 1992 in Dale, op.cit.,p.125.

and ensure a certain Russian military presence in Georgia. While the reason of the opposition was the domestic political dynamics such as challenges to Yeltsin's position, the ongoing and overweighed thought that Shevardnadze was the main responsible for the collapse of the Soviet Union had also a determining effect over this pro-Abkhaz attitude.

Russian military which is constituted from the Ministry of Defense led by Grachev and the armed forces called as the military *in loco*³¹⁶ had a dominant weight in the formulation of a policy in the Abkhaz Conflict. They had more determining roles than the President and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Before explaining the policy of the Russian military towards the conflict, general conditions of the Russian military just after the collapse of the Soviet Union should be explained. Though the Soviet military had a privileged position and a disproportionate amount of national wealth, after the end of the Soviet Union the situation was reversed.³¹⁷ While examining the role of the Russian military in the Abkhaz Conflict, the establishment of the the Russian Ministry of Defense in May 1992 should be taken into consideration.³¹⁸ Considering the budget restriction the Ministry of Defense faced arms theft, and corruption and bribery increased.³¹⁹ According to the statistics by 1992, 4000 cases of armed theft were reported³²⁰ and Lev Rokhlin- the president of the parliamentary Defence Committee, argued that:

“Senior officers were selling substantial parts of vital military equipment and the large munitions deposits in the South Caucasia were simply empty.”³²¹

In the light of all, Russian military conducted a pro-Abkhaz policy unlike the official Russian policy of neutrality favoring the territorial integrity of Georgia. The

³¹⁶ Andrea Mörike, “The Military as a Political Actor in Russia: The Cases of Moldova and Georgia”, *The International Spectator*, Volume XXXIII, No.3, July-September 1998. http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/iai/iai_98moa01.html.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

³²⁰ N. Burbyga, “Kradeny avtomat mozjno kupit’ za 100 tysyach”, *Izvestia*, 3 June 1992; B. Van Voorst and Y. Zarakhovich, “Unease in the Barracks”, *Time*, 5 April 1993. in Mörike, *op.cit.*, http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/iai/iai_98moa01.html.

³²¹ *Time*, Vol. 148, No. 17, 1995. in Mörike, *op.cit.*, http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/iai/iai_98moa01.html.

views of the Russian Defense Ministry and military *in loco* differed and it was the views of the military *in loco* that dominated and directed Russian Defense Ministry in a great extent.³²² While at the beginning of the conflict, Grachev argued that military operations would not be carried out in Abkhazia and Russian forces in the region would remain absolutely neutral, it was first argued by the military officers *in loco* that if the conflict threatened Russian citizens or the stability and security in the region, Russia would interfere.³²³ The following statements of the Russian Defense Ministry by Grachev had later on gained a more pro-Abkhaz direction due to the overweight of the military *in loco*. It was argued by Grachev that, the lost of Abkhazia would be the lost of the Black Sea. The interesting point, however, was that while some Russian military forces were supporting the Abkhaz in an unofficial way, Russia officially continued to supply the Georgian National Guard with military equipment.³²⁴ By the words of Alexei Zverev this situation was explained as below:

“Incredible as it may seem (although it was in line with a consistent Russian policy of supplying both sides in a conflict), at a time when Russian supplied warplanes were bombing Georgian held Sokhumi, other Russian units continued to supply the Georgian army.”³²⁵

The direct support of the Russian military to the Abkhaz side was also expressed by a former Russian mercenary- Michael Demyanov- serving the Abkhaz army:

According to one of the commanders of the ground –attack regiment (of the regular Russian army based in Gudauta (Abkhazia), Roman Semgulin, he and his battalion were directly involved in the military operations from the very first day (of the war) when his battalion occupied the territory of Sysovskiy laboratory in south Eshery. He was bragging that lieutenants of the Abkhaz forces were studying anti-tank defense at his military base. It should be noted that this military equipment was not sold to the Abkhazian side but left to the Russian military with a direct objective: to use it against Georgian government forces. Russian soldiers were aiming fire at Georgian government forces and Semigulin was personally supervising these actions. Lieutenant Colonel Kudinov, also a serviceman from the same ground regiment,...

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Dale, op.cit.

³²⁴ Mörike, op.cit., http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/iai/iai_98moa01.html.

³²⁵ Zverev, op.cit., <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/ContBorders/eng/ch0104.htm>.

not only worked out a plan of attack, he was also directing the actions of Abkhaz militaries.³²⁶

By Demyanov, moreover, it was argued that Abkhaz paramilitary groups were directed by Russian generals and active Russian servicemen.³²⁷ Concerning the bombing of Georgian held Sukhumi, it was argued that General Chindarov and Alekseev were actively involved in the bombing of the Georgian towns and villages and were receiving money and order from Moscow. By the words of Chindarov, it as argued that:

“If there is no order from Moscow I can not do anything for you, even if you cover me with gold, because I might get fired for this tomorrow”.³²⁸

Though the orders were coming from Moscow and Sukhumi was bombed, this was strongly denied by Russian Defense Minister Grachev. He argued that Russian had no hand in the bombing and it was Georgians that were killing their own people.³²⁹ The views and general mood of Russian Generals was that, with the collapse of the Soviet Union they had lost too much and they should regain it. They also had a negative attitude against Shevardnadze as the initiator of the break-up of the Soviet Union.³³⁰ However, their real motive seems to fulfill their particular interests even personnel ones.

During the course of the conflict, the Foreign Ministry lacked the capacity to impose its policy on the Defense Ministry though it was the former one that was authorized for the formulation and coordination of the foreign policy. In the same

³²⁶ Lulu Chkenkeli, *There are no two truths (in Russian)*, Tbilisi Publishing House of Citizens Union of Georgia, 1996, pp.26-27. in Irakli Zurab Kakabadze, “Russian Troops in Abkhazia: Peacekeeping or Keeping Both Pieces?”, *Perspectives on Central Asia*, Vol. II, No. 6, September 1997. <http://www.eisenhowerinstitute.org/programs/globalpartnerships/securityandterrorism/coalition/region/alrelations/OtherPubs/Kakabadze.htm>.

³²⁷ Kakabadze, *op.cit.*, <http://www.eisenhowerinstitute.org/programs/globalpartnerships/securityandterrorism/coalition/region/alrelations/OtherPubs/Kakabadze.htm>.

³²⁸ Lulu Chkenkeli, *There are no two truths (in Russian)*, Tbilisi, Publishing House of Citizens Union of Georgia, 1996, pp.26-27, in Kakabadze, *op.cit.*, <http://www.eisenhowerinstitute.org/programs/globalpartnerships/securityandterrorism/coalition/region/alrelations/OtherPubs/Kakabadze.htm>.

³²⁹ Kakabadze, *op.cit.*, <http://www.eisenhowerinstitute.org/programs/globalpartnerships/securityandterrorism/coalition/region/alrelations/OtherPubs/Kakabadze.htm>.

³³⁰ Zverev, *op.cit.*, <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/ContBorders/eng/ch0104.htm>.

way, the Defense Ministry lacked the control of its troops and it was the military *in loco* that had the real decision making autonomy. The political vacuum that was created with the collapse of the Soviet Union in the coordination of a well functioning foreign policy was filled by those who had direct interests in the conflicts –this was the military *in loco* which had gained an independent position far from the being part of a coordinated policy. In other words, Russian military as an institution disintegrating and redefining its loyalties showed little inclination to let the centre dictate its policy.³³¹

To sum up, there was no consensus or division of power among the Foreign Ministry, the Defense Ministry and the armed forces in the formation of Russian policy. The Abkhaz problem was not on the agenda of Russian officials and, thus, did not constitute a priority among Russian foreign policy objectives at that time. As argued by Dov Lynch, the policy during this period was full of inconsistencies, highlighting differences among those taking the decisions and implementing more coercive policies.³³² While Ministry of Foreign Affairs was conducting a more conciliatory line towards the new Georgian government, Ministry of Defense pursued a more strict policy by forcing Shevardnadze to give some concessions in return of Russian help for the resolution of the conflict. In a more clear way, while Ministry of Foreign Affairs argued that Shevardnadze was the best protector of Russian interests, Ministry of Defense supported a more heavy-handed policy towards Georgia. With the start of the peace process, though certain differences continued, a certain common direction in the Russian policy around certain principles emerged.³³³

³³¹ Dale, *Peacekeeping and the Role of Russia in Eurasia*, op.cit., p.125.

³³² Dov Lynch, *The Conflict in Abkhazia: Dilemmas in Russian 'Peacekeeping' Policy*, London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1998, p.23.

³³³ *Ibid.*, p.24.

CHAPTER V

RUSSIA AND THE ABKHAZ- GEORGIAN PEACE PROCESS

In this chapter the main characteristics of Russian involvement will be identified with a parallel analysis of the UN attempts during the peace process. The peace talks between the sides under the auspice of UN, OESC and Russia from 1993 till 2001 resulted with over 350 meetings and 400 document signed.³³⁴

The international aspect of the Abkhaz-Georgian peacekeeping process started with the establishment of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG). However, the major role expected from UN in the resolution of the conflict has been strongly limited with the role of Russia as a regional hegemon.³³⁵ Though Russia within this process was given the role of “facilitator”³³⁶, she created difficulties for UN to play an effective role. While UN was aware that it had to incorporate Russia in any way to the peace process, Russia kept on acting as an independent participant and either mediator in the peace process. Thus, there always emerged the necessity for UN to accede the special role attributed to the Russian Federation.

5.1. “A Carrot and Stick Approach” (1992-1993)

During this period, although Russian role dominated the peace process, this did not happen in a coordinated and well organized way. While full independence of Abkhazia would not be supported, a “carrot and stick approach”³³⁷ towards Georgia

³³⁴ Fehim Taştekin, “An Abkhazia Photograph: No War No Peace But Extreme Tension”, *Abkhazia Report of the Caucasus Foundation*, October 2001.
http://www.kafkas.org.tr/ajans/abkhazia_photograph.htm

³³⁵ Susan Stewart, “The Role of the United Nations in the Abkhaz-Georgian Conflict”, *The Journal of Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, Issue 2, Germany: University of Mannheim, 2003, p.25.

³³⁶ “Report of the Secretary- General Concerning the Situation in Abkhazia, Georgia”, S/1997/558, 18 July 1997.
<http://www.hri.ca/fortherecord1997/documentation/security/s-1997-558.htm>

³³⁷ James Graham, *op.cit.*, <http://www.historyorb.com/russia/georgia.shtml>.

would be implemented. The basis of Russia's policy during this period was to prevent Abkhazia's full independence in return of ensuring Georgia's strong dependence to Russia. However, Russian initiatives in the peace process were conducted with a parallel process conducted by the United Nations.

During this process, there occurred a certain division of labor between the Foreign and Defense Ministry. While the Russian Foreign Ministry would ensure the coordination with the UN, the Defense Ministry would control the monitoring of the Sochi cease fire.³³⁸ Certain common principles of Russian policy in this period can be outlined as:

- “Until the resolution of the conflict, no bilateral relations with Georgia would be conducted.
- The status of Russian forces would be linked with conflict resolution.
- While the international organizations should participate, the conflict resolution would be dominated by Russia.
- The creation of a fully independent Abkhazia was rejected.”³³⁹

In the light of all, the United Nation's Observer Mission (UNOMIG) in Georgia was established in August 1993 by the UN Security Council Resolution 858.³⁴⁰

After Georgian defeat in the war, the negotiation process between Georgia and Abkhazia started in December 1993 in Geneva under the UN auspices and with the mediation of the Russian Federation.³⁴¹ On 1 December 1993 in Geneva, the negotiations resulted with the “Memorandum of Understanding”³⁴² signed between Georgia and Abkhazia. Abkhazia and Georgia agreed that as long as the peace talks continued for the complete political settlement of the conflict, they would not use or threat to use force against each other. A consensus was reached on the formation of

³³⁸ Dov Lynch, *The Conflict in Abkhazia, Dilemmas in Russian 'Peacekeeping' Policy*, London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1998, p. 24.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

³⁴⁰ Stewart, *op.cit.*, p.11.

³⁴¹ Viacheslav A. Chirikba, “The Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict: In Search of Ways Out”, Bruno Coppieters, Ghia Nodia, Yuri Anchabadze (eds.), *Georgians&Abkhazians The Search for a Peace Settlement*, Brussel: Vrije Universiteit, 1998. <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/Georgians/chp0301.html>.

³⁴² Taştekin, *op.cit.*, http://www.kafkas.org.tr/ajans/abkhazia_photograph.htm.

expert groups for preparing advices for the exchange of the prisoners of war, the return of Georgian refugees and the political status of Abkhazia.³⁴³ Nevertheless, it was the Sochi agreement that prepared an available ground for this Memorandum. As stated above, the cease fire -the so called Sochi Agreement- between the sides was signed under the auspices of the Russian Federation on 27 July 1993.³⁴⁴ It was in compliance with this ceasefire agreement that the mandate of UNOMIG was defined and limited. This was the first time at the beginning of the peace process that Russia's overweighed role had come to surface. It was by the help of Russia's direct role in the cease fire that the peace process between the sides could be able to start. Though Russian Foreign Ministry had sought some UN involvement in the peace process, this was limited with the extent Russia would accept.³⁴⁵ The desire for a Russian-brokered settlement was indicated by Russia.³⁴⁶ Thus, UN participation was effectively limited by Russian role.

Despite the existence of a certain division of labour between the Russian Foreign Ministry and Russian Defense Ministry, both have different policy conducts towards Georgia. The Russian Foreign Ministry supported the existence of Shevardnadze's strong political position and promoted the peaceful resolution of the conflict. The Russian Defense Ministry, on the other hand, implemented pressure over Georgia and, by means of some certain threats, compelled Georgia to accede to Russian demands.³⁴⁷ The Russian Defense Ministry related the withdrawal of Russian troops with the resolution of the conflict.³⁴⁸

³⁴³ Murat Papşu, "Gürcistan-Abhazya Anlaşmazlığı, Dünü Bugünü Çözüm Önerileri", http://circassianworld.5u.com/gurcistan_abhazya.html

³⁴⁴ Pauline Overeem, "Report of a UNPO Coordinated Human Rights Mission to Abkhazia and Georgia", November/December 1992, p. 16.
http://www.unpo.org/Downloads/Abkhazia_Georgia_report_1992.pdf.

³⁴⁵ Lynch, *op.cit.*, p.25.

³⁴⁶ Marrack Goulding, letter to Ardzinba on 2 July 1993, cited in Hill and Jewett, *Back in the USSR*, p.53., in Lynch, *op.cit.*, p.26.

³⁴⁷ Lynch, *op.cit.*, pp.25-26.

³⁴⁸ *Diplomaticheskii vestnik*, April, 1992., in *Ibid.*, p.26.

The Russian Foreign Ministry aimed to ensure a stable Georgia friendly to Russian interests.³⁴⁹ They supported Shevardnadze in order to prevent an anti-Russian leader to come to power in Georgia. Within this respect, the Russian Foreign Ministry, unlike the Russian Defense Ministry, initiated the UN mediation in the peace process. Russia was against the rise of instability and political extremism in Georgia which could constitute a threat to its own stability.³⁵⁰

James Graham argued that the Russian Defense Ministry aimed to ensure the continued presence of large number of Russian soldiers, arms and personnel.³⁵¹ Since the Defense Ministry was not in full control of these military personnel in Georgia, the uncontrolled military commanders in these problematic republics chose to support these autonomous regions-so called separatists. Abkhazians were supplied by Russian arms given, stolen or bought from Russian military, and by means of these Russian military support, Abkhazians found the necessary power and confidence to realize an offensive and defeat Georgia.³⁵²

Both the offensives of the Zviadist forces and Abkhazians created the danger of disintegration for Georgia. It was argued that Russian Defense Ministry and certain local Russian troops had supported or at least let Abkhazians to make such an offensive, and combined with the Zviadist offensive, Georgia had no choice except acceding to Russian demands.

The different policy conducts of the Russian Foreign Ministry and Russian Defense Ministry are clearly seen after August 1992 when the military relations between Georgia and Russia deteriorated. During this period, Russian military interventions took place in Georgia simultaneously with the Moscow summit between Yeltsin and Shevardnadze.³⁵³ It seemed as if there were two different and opposite Russian policies towards Georgia. This points out that the Russian Foreign Ministry and Russian Defense Ministry were independent from each other.

³⁴⁹ Graham, *op.cit.*, <http://www.historyorb.com/russia/georgia.shtml>.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*

³⁵² *Ibid.*

³⁵³ Lynch, *op.cit.*, p.26.

Shevardnadze's reaction to these opposite policy conducts of Russia was in a balanced way. While Shevardnadze declared its criticism against Russian military involvement, he avoided to do the same thing for Yeltsin and the Russian Foreign Ministry. As a criticism, he argued that:

Why are Russian 'peace-keeping troops operating on Georgian territory' now that the Soviet military district to which these troops were formerly subordinate no longer exists? Who authorizes their actions and what kinds of actions are authorized?³⁵⁴

Shevardnadze was aware that Georgia for building its arm forces was depended on Russia. Shevardnadze was faced with a strong opposition in the parliament. The nationalist opposition in the parliament demanded the withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgia and this resulted in the breaking off talks with Russia in December 1992 with the resolution of the Georgian Parliament.³⁵⁵ In this respect, Shevardnadze argued that:

"This does not mean that we are slamming the door. We are pragmatists and understand that Russia and Georgia will always find themselves in a sphere of mutual interest."³⁵⁶

The period between the late 1992 and 1993 was a process during which Russia's overweighed role dominated the peace process and UN involvement remained superficial and in the extent Russia allowed. Thus, the parallel and in a great extent unrelated processes conducted by the UN and Russia caused the peace process to get a complex nature. During this period Russian policy was consisted of the two different policy conducts of the Russian Foreign Ministry and Russian Defense Ministry. It was more the "carrot and stick approach" of the Russian Defense Ministry that determined Russian policy. Russia in return of training Georgian National Guard and preventing Georgia's disintegration, ensured Georgia to join to CIS and guaranteed a large military presence in Georgia.³⁵⁷ This was

³⁵⁴ *Izvestiya*, December 21, 1993, in Evgeniy Kozhekin, "Georgia- Abkhazia", *op.cit.*, http://www.rand.org/pubs/conf_proceedings/CF129/CF-129.chapter5.html

³⁵⁵ Lynch, *op.cit.*, p.25.

³⁵⁶ Kozyrev, *Izvestiya*, 30 June 1992., in Lynch, *op.cit.*, p.25.

³⁵⁷ Graham, *op.cit.*, <http://www.historyorb.com/russia/georgia.shtml>.

achieved by means of coercive measures such as reducing the natural gas it was transferring to Georgia and implementing restrictions on visa practices.³⁵⁸

5.2. Isolation of Abkhazia (1993 and 1997)

Following the end of 1993, a more coordinated policy between the Russian Foreign Ministry and the Russian Defense Ministry emerged aiming to guarantee Russian interests. Between late 1993 and late 1996 Russia policy was based on some certain principles:

- “To ensure Georgia’s position in CIS and in the Collective Security system.
- To deploy Russian peacekeeping troops in the region, with an international UN mandate in order to promote conflict resolution.
- To place pressure on Abkhazia to compromise with Georgian demands.”³⁵⁹

Based on these principles, this period was in a great extent determined by Russian-Georgian relations named as a ‘misconstrued bargain’³⁶⁰. While Russian support shifted to Georgia, Abkhazia faced a policy of isolation.

However, there were differences between the two countries’ perceptions over the nature of this bargain. According to Russia, Russia would give up supporting Abkhazia support Georgia against the Zviadist forces in order to prevent the total collapse of the Georgians state, support the development of Georgian armed forces and view a peacekeeping operation in Abkhazia, however, this peacekeeping operation could not mean a guarantee of restoring Georgian territorial integrity.³⁶¹ In return, Georgia would agree on the installation of four military bases, have Russian troops on its borders with Turkey and join to CIS. According to Georgia, Tbilisi acceded to Russian military demands in exchange of a Russian commitment to resolve the Abkhaz conflict in accordance with Georgian terms- to implement

³⁵⁸ Yelda Demirağ, “Russia’s and the US’s Oil Policies in Middle Asia”, 19 April, 2004., <http://www.turks.us/article.php?story=20040419230623932&mode=print>.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁶¹ *Ibid*, pp.27-28.

coercive pressure on Abkhazia, to ensure the rapid return of IDP's and the restoration of Georgian territorial integrity.³⁶²

Georgia faced with the danger of losing its territorial integrity had no chance except redefining its relationship with Russia. Shevardnadze indicated his fear and compulsion by stating that:

“We have to cooperate with Russia....otherwise Georgia will collapse and disintegrate”³⁶³

In October 1993, Shevardnadze issued a decree by which Georgia joined to CIS. In September, he signed the CIS documents, economic union agreement, Charter and Collective Security Treaty.³⁶⁴ He allowed Russia to install three military bases for an indefinite time period, leased the port of Poti and Bombara airfield to Russia and the Russian Group of Forces in the Transcaucasus started to support Georgia.³⁶⁵

One of the most important documents, after the Sochi Agreement was the “Declaration on measures for Political Settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz Process” signed on 4 April 1994 in Moscow.³⁶⁶ This declaration was signed by the conflicting sides, the representatives of Russia, the UN and the OSCE in the presence of the Russian Foreign Minister, the UN Secretary-General and many Western Ambassadors.³⁶⁷ According to this cease fire document, a framework for the state-legal relations of the sides was reinstated. While Abkhazia was going to fulfill some of its state responsibilities, it would also delegate some of its authorities- foreign policy, foreign economic policy, customs, border guard arrangements, transport,

³⁶² *Ibid*, p.28.

³⁶³ Georgian Radio, 10 November 1993, SWB SU/1844, F/2-4., in Lynch, *op.cit.*, p. 28.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.28.

³⁶⁵ *Diplomaticeskii vestnik*, No.1-2, 1994; and Itar-Tass, 9 October 1993, SWB SU/1816, C/2., in *Ibid.*, p.28.

³⁶⁶ “Declaration on Measures for a Political Settlement of the Georgian/Abkhaz Conflict signed on 4 April 1994”, *U.N. Doc. No. S/1997/397, annex I*, Washington: United Nation Information Center, 24 February 2000.
http://www.usip.org/library/pa/georgia/georgia_declar_19940504.html

³⁶⁷ Chirikba, *op.cit.*, <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/Georgians/chp0301.html>.

communication, civil and human rights and the rights of ethnic minorities- to the federal organs.³⁶⁸ By this way, the framework of a future common state was outlined.

This document was followed by the Moscow Agreement signed on 14 May 1994 by which the establishment of a peacekeeping operation was agreed on.³⁶⁹ While Georgia wanted the peacekeeping forces to be deployed as a guarantee for the return of IDP's, Abkhazia wanted the demarcation of the territory along the Inguri River. For Russia, the main priority was to keep its control over the whole process. UN was confronted with a *fait accompli* and, thus, acceded this agreement by which a monitoring role was assigned for UN military observers.³⁷⁰ The CIS Peace Keeping Force (CISPKF) which was in a great extent Russian would replace the Russian forces that had separated the parties since November 1993. With the existence of the CISPKF, the separation of the conflicting sides and the provision of the security for the return of IDP's were aimed. Within this respect a Security Zone of 12 kilometers on each side of the Inguri River and a more 12 kilometers extended further to form a Restricted Weapons Zone, were formed.³⁷¹ Compared with the symbolic role played by UN and UNOMIG, almost the whole control of the ceasefire was in the hands of Russia. By the time UN became involved in the process of conflict resolution; Russia had already started to act as a co-mediator as well as a participant to the conflict. The role of Russia constituted a major challenge to the so-called major role of the UN that the UN had to incorporate the agreements signed with or under the auspices of Russia to its peace process. Although the CISPKF was monitored by UN military observers, all was anyway a violation of the UN Charter because Russia borders the conflict zone and Russia could hardly be perceived as impartial.³⁷² This situation underlined that the UN though knew that Russia could never be impartial, had no chance of playing this mediating role without Russia.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁹ Danilov, *op.cit.*, <http://www.c-r.org/accord/geor-ab/accord7/index.shtml>.

³⁷⁰ Stewart, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

³⁷¹ Chirikba, *op.cit.*, <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/Georgians/chp0301.html>.

³⁷² Irakli Zurab Kakabadze, "Russian Troops in Abkhazia: Peacekeeping or Keeping both pieces?" *Perspectives on Central Asia*, Vol. II, No. 2, September 1997, <http://www.eisenhowerinstitute.org/programs/globalpartnerships/securityandterrorism/coalition/regionalarrelations/OtherPubs/Kakabadze.htm>.

The May 1994 Agreement overall was a good example of showing the dominant role of Russia. The establishment of the CISPKF was agreed by Abkhazia and Georgia and the Russian Federation without even consulting the UN.³⁷³ The UN Secretary General pointed out that as they were lacking the political will to send UN peacekeepers into the region the UN was powerless to take the control of the process.³⁷⁴

Nevertheless, it was argued that Russia although had the power to achieve a resolution to the conflict, she was lacking the will.³⁷⁵ Keeping this point in mind, the role of Russia and its impact over the peace process should be clarified more. On July 1995, Russia as the mediator of the conflict suggested the sides to negotiate over a settlement protocol which would constitute the base for the following steps of the negotiation process. Within this protocol, instead of the term “union state”, the term “one federative state” was started to be used.³⁷⁶ The use of this term had some certain results. First, it means that even Russia agreed with the alternative term suggested by Georgia. Second, there emerged the problem of defining the separate and common jurisdictions of the sides. As a response to that, on 22 August 1995, the Abkhaz Parliament decided that this protocol could not be accepted and took the decision that Abkhazia was a sovereign state subject to international law.³⁷⁷

This rapprochement between Russia and Georgia was strongly protested by the Abkhazian side. Since 1995, the result has been the naval and land blockade of Abkhazia and the closure of its borders by the CIS.³⁷⁸ Moreover, Abkhaz passports were not recognized by Russia and Abkhaz citizens were deprived from their right to travel. The written prohibition of the Russian Federation against the free movement of Abkhazian citizens was signed by the Russian deputy Foreign Minister Boris

³⁷³ Stewart, *op.cit.*, p.12.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.14.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁸ Konstantin Ozgan, “Abkhazia: Problems and Paths to their Resolution”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Abkhazia*, 1998.
<http://www.abkhazia-georgia.parliament.ge/Publications/Abkhaz/Ozgan.htm>.

Pastuklav on August 30, 1995, which is still in action today.³⁷⁹ Since 1997, on the other hand, Russia had also cut the telephone lines ,and thus, the communication with the outside world. All these had resulted with the complete isolation of Abkhazia and also with its complete dependence on the Russian Federation. Though the decision of isolation was implemented with the initiative of Georgia in the CIS, unless Russia wanted such a decision could not have been taken.

During 1996, on the other hand, no real progress occurred in the negotiation and peace process between Abkhazia and Georgia. The peace talks held on 10-12 September 1996 between Abkhazia and Georgia in Moscow, resulted in the disagreement of the sides.³⁸⁰ While the Abkhaz side insisted on the equality of the sides, Georgia insisted on the federative state structure. However, the proposal prepared and suggested by Russia was based on the territorial integrity of Georgia.³⁸¹ The result of all was the rejection of the proposal by the Abkhaz side. While the disagreement between Abkhazia and Georgia continued over the political status of Abkhazia and the return of refugees, the attitudes of the sides were surprising. Beyond expectation, Georgian ambassador Lordkipanidze argued that CIS peacekeeping force should be given police force and the mandate should be extended to the whole Abkhazia.³⁸² Abkhazia, in a reversed way, opposed to the expansion of the mandate and to the extension of the zone of action to the whole Abkhaz territory and perceived this act tantamount to the occupation of Abkhazia.³⁸³ This showed that change in the extent of relations affects the perception and attitude of the conflicting sides towards Russia.

The year 1996 was also important for the fact that “Friends of Georgia” were introduced in the mediation process which consisted of the USA, the Russian Federation, France, Germany and Great Britain.³⁸⁴ Although this concept was

³⁷⁹ Viacheslav A.Chirikba, “Abkhazia: Review of the Events for the Year 1996”, 31.01.1997, http://www.unpo.org/news_detail.php?arg=03&par=713.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

³⁸² ITAR-TASS, 15.02.1996., in Chirikba, *op.cit.*, http://www.unpo.org/news_detail.php?arg=03&par=713.

³⁸³ Chirikba, *op.cit.*, http://www.unpo.org/news_detail.php?arg=03&par=713.

³⁸⁴ Stewart, *op.cit.*, p.15.

renewed as “Friends of the Secretary-General on Georgia”, Abkhazia perceived this as the pro-Georgian stance of the UN.³⁸⁵ The Abkhaz side argued that “Friends of the Secretary-General on Georgia” did not have a neutral stance and were supporting the territorial integrity and the return of Georgian IDP’s/refugees to the Gali district whose status was indefinite. Ardzinba refused to meet officially with them.³⁸⁶ Since the UN has been on the line of supporting the territorial integrity of its member states, this caused the peace process to be blocked. As it will be seen in the following phases of the peace process, the UN’s insistence on the principle of “territorial integrity” and, thus, its role in making the territorial integrity of Georgia unquestionably minimized the role of the UN compared with Russia.

During this period, the rapprochement of Russia and Georgia, thus, resulted in the isolation of Abkhazia. Moreover, Abkhazians understood that though they are strongly dependent on Russia and Russia would never be a permanent ally for them.

5.3. Increased Tension with Georgia (1997- 2003)

During this period, the complaints of Georgia towards Russia continued and intensified. Shevardnadze argued that Russian peacekeepers in Abkhazia with their current status were quite useless and Russia had failed to fulfill certain obligations it had towards Georgia.³⁸⁷ As argued by Lynch, Shevardnadze made Georgia’s view of the bargain with Russia clear:

“Strategic partnership implies not only the deployment of military bases in Georgia but also the advent of a specific result in terms of realistic cooperation, which in our case is the restoration of the country’s territorial integrity.”³⁸⁸

Despite the existence of Russian peacekeeping forces, till 1998 there was a very limited return of refugees except the ones returned to the Gali region which

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.16.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁷ Georgian Radio, 15 April 1997, SWB SU/2895, F/1-2., in Lynch, *op.cit.*,p.32.

³⁸⁸ Georgian Radio, 4 April 1997, SWB SU/2888, F/2-3., in Lynch, *op.cit.*,p. 32.

numbered 53.000.³⁸⁹ In the light of the May 1998 events, both sides had criticisms and discontent about the role of the CISPKF. While Abkhazia criticized it for not preventing the ongoing activities of the Georgian guerillas, the Georgian side blamed Russia for not providing security for Georgian refugees. Georgia aimed to replace this Russian force with an international one in order to diminish the influence of Russia. As a response to this overall criticism, General Sergei Korobko, the CISPKF Commander-in-Chief argued that both sides regarded the peacekeeping force as an instrument for achieving their own military and political goals.³⁹⁰ All these aroused the question of whether Russia was really a neutral mediator and with a balanced approach or not.³⁹¹ This period in the peace process was this time a sign of the disrapprochement between Georgia and Russia and its impact over the peace process.

Georgia refused to ratify the military agreements with Russia. While Georgia on the one hand, Georgia was trying to diminish its dependence on Russia by diversifying possible external sources of support, deterioration of its relations with Russia continued. In late October 1997, Georgian Foreign Minister Menagharishvili stated that:

We Georgians already doubt the effectiveness of CIS though we still hope that it will eventually accomplish its peace mission and help Georgia restore its territorial integrity. Should this not be accomplished, Georgia will leave the CIS.³⁹²

By 1998, it became clear that there was an increased instability in the region, especially in the Gali district.³⁹³ As a result of the May events in which Georgian guerillas attacked the Gali region, the peace process got a strained nature and the sides almost come on the eve of war as was the case in 1992. This backward step in the peace process was tried to be normalized with the start of talks between the sides again under the auspices of Russia, UN and OSCE. First, by the talks in Athena on 16-18 October 1998, then in Istanbul on 7-9 June 1999 and lastly on 15-16 March

³⁸⁹ “Abkhazia”, 27.04.2005,
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/abkhazia.htm>

³⁹⁰ Danilov, *op.cit.*, <http://www.c-r.org/accord/geor-ab/accord7/index.shtml>.

³⁹¹ Chirikba, *op.cit.*, <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/Georgians/chp0301.html>.

³⁹² Kontakt Tbilisi, 23 October 1997, SWB SU/3059, F/2., in Lynch, *op.cit.*, p.36.

³⁹³ Stewart, *op.cit.*, pp.16-17.

2001 in Yalta, it was returned back to the negotiation process and the issues on which a consensus was not reached on, were brought again onto the table.³⁹⁴

All these talks should be analyzed within the changed context of policies and interests after the 11 September. The reflections of the 11 September events onto the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict and peace process resulted in a definite decrease in Russia's presence in the region. As argued by Rick Fawn, US military presence in Georgia after September 11 added a new momentum to the triangular relationship among Abkhazia, Georgia and Russia.³⁹⁵

While the US presence in Georgia (26 February 2002) was first established with the Georgia 'Train and Equip' Program (GTEP) for a 20 months period to combat with terrorism and with no more than 200 US personnel, this was perceived by Abkhazia as a direct threat to its security.³⁹⁶ The biggest fear of Abkhazia since the end of the war has been to face with any Georgian attack. A strong Georgian army was something Abkhazia could not accede in any way.³⁹⁷ Russian reactions to the US presence, on the other hand, have been a reluctant retreat from Georgia. While Russia tried to maintain its influence in Georgia, as argued by Putin, to be a 'reliable ally' for the West has been more important for Russia.³⁹⁸ In this respect, further Russian involvement in Abkhazia would not serve to this aim.

After 11 September, Georgia's rapprochement to the West, its vision for NATO membership and its increased military capability caused Russia to understand that nothing would be as easy as it was in 1993. Combined with the anti-terrorism alliance of the US and Russia after September 11, Russia has stood to gain much from its realignment with the US.³⁹⁹

In this context, in the Istanbul Talks on 6-7 June 1999, the sides agreed on the formation of certain commissions to work for the improvement of a trusty

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.20.

³⁹⁵ Rick Fawn, "Russia's Reluctant Retreat from the Caucasus: Abkhazia, Georgia and the US after 11 September 2001", Rick Fawn, (Ed.), *Realignments in Russian Foreign Policy*, London: Frank Cass, 2003, p. 136.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.137.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.140.

³⁹⁸ ITAR-TASS, 27 September, 2001., in *Ibid.*, p. 145.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.147.

atmosphere between the sides, increase the economic cooperation, prevent terrorist activities on both sides of the border, work for the secure return of the Georgian refugees and solve the passport problems of Abkhazians had. Briefly, the talks were stated to have passed in a friendly atmosphere and in a positive way.⁴⁰⁰

One of the main attempts of the UN in the peace process was led by Dieter Boden on 24 November 1999 with the preparation of the “Boden Document”.⁴⁰¹ Although this document was expected to bring in a new momentum to the peace process, it was based on the previous principles on which the UN was based. In this document, the political status of Abkhazia was defined under the context of Georgian territorial integrity.⁴⁰² Furthermore, insistence on the simultaneous settlement of the security issues, return of refugees and economic and social issues was another factor that blocked the peace process. Though the “Bodin Document” was transmitted to the sides just in December 2001, it was rejected by the Abkhaz side.⁴⁰³

The attitude of Russia concerning this document is worth to take into account. Based on the “Boden Document”, on 29 July 2002, the UN Security Council gave the critical 1427 Resolution in which it was decided that Abkhazia could never be an independent state and, thus, should join Georgia.⁴⁰⁴ Russia played a key role in this UN Security Council Resolution to be accepted. Nevertheless, though Russia supported this document, it was unwilling to put pressure on Abkhazia for the start of negotiations over its status as long as there continued to exist so many sensitive political issues between Moscow and Tbilisi.⁴⁰⁵

The period between 1995 and 1999 can be well analyzed as a period of disappointment. UN could not achieve any noteworthy results and this was due the

⁴⁰⁰ “Abhazya ve Gürcistan arasındaki İstanbul Görüşmeleri”, 1999”, http://www.kafder.org.tr/bilgibelge.php?yazi_id=218

⁴⁰¹ Stewart, *op.cit.*, p.19.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, p.19.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁴ Fehim Taştekin, “Rusya, hakikaten Abkhazya’yı sattı mı?”, 15.08.2002, http://www.kafkas.org.tr/ajans/2002/agustos/15.08.2002.rusya_abhazyayi_satti_mi.htm

⁴⁰⁵ Bruno Coppieters, “The Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict”, *Journal of Ethnicpolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, 2004, p.11. <http://www.ecmi.de/jemie/download/1-2004Chapter5.pdf>

insistence on the political status of Abkhazia and the return of IDP's instead of more practical problems and solutions.

During the Yalta Talks in March 15-16, 2001, the sides committed again that they would not use or threat to use force against each other till there would reach a settlement. Referring to the May 1998 events, they both argued that they lacked the necessary security guarantees for the continuation of the peace. Thus, they agreed on the role of CISPKF and the UN monitoring force in providing the stability.⁴⁰⁶

The tension among the sides increased again as a result of a UNOMIG helicopter being shot down over Abkhazia (Kodori) on October, 2001.⁴⁰⁷ While on 11 October just tow days after the event, Georgian parliament adopted a resolution to replace the CISPKF with an international peacekeeping mission, one week later Abkhazia demanded for a closer association to the Russian Federation.⁴⁰⁸ In more detail, Abkhazia's demand for closer association with Russia referred to the attempt of establishing a political framework within which Abkhazia could be incorporated into the Russian Federation.⁴⁰⁹ The Abkhaz side argued that they aimed at incorporation into Russia's legal system which would mean a unified legislation, a single currency as well as joint border and custom services.⁴¹⁰ Nevertheless, Russian response to this Abkhaz demand was not immediate. Later on, Putin outlined Russia's position on behalf of Georgia's territorial integrity. He said:

We believed in the past and continue to believe today that our position on this issue will not change: Georgia's territorial integrity must be assured. In this connection, Russia regards difficulties in relations between Abkhazia and Georgia as Georgia's internal political problem.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁶“Yalta Deklarasyonu”, *Abhaz-Kafkas Dayanışma Komitesi*, 15-16 Mart 2001, , <http://www.abhazya.org/komite/arsiv/9.htm>.

⁴⁰⁷ “Georgia Helicopter Shooting still Shrouded in Mistery”, Q&A with Ermina Van Hoyer, 12/08/2001, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/qanda/articles/eav120801.shtml>.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁹ Patricia Heffernan, “Abkhazia Seeks to Escape from Georgian Sphere of Influence – into Russia's “Associate member status” with Russia preferred over annexation by Georgia”, 15 October 2001, <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/5492-11.cfm>.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*

It is very clear that there has been ambivalence in Russia's policy and most importantly a clear-cut difference between the official and de facto policies. In other words, this meant to play one side against the other.

In 2002, the introduction of the US military into Georgia as a result of the problems derived from the Pankisi Valley and for the support to Georgian military reform showed the symbolic opposition between Russian support for Abkhazia and US support for Georgia.⁴¹² The timing of US military existence in Georgian territory was overlapping with the period after September 11. Thus, the sensitiveness of the US to terrorist activities and its rapprochement with Georgia caused Russia to be anxious and this directly effected Russia's policy in the peace process. In April 2002, the tension got a more strained character when CISPKF deployed troops and heavy equipment in the Kodori valley without informing UNOMIG.⁴¹³

Towards the end of 2002, except the partly reopening of the railway connection between Sochi and Sokhumi on 25 December 2002, the process could be named as uneventful.⁴¹⁴ While this act meant further linkage between Abkhazia and Russia, it disturbed Georgia. This was also accompanied by the increasing number of Abkhaz applying for Russian citizenship.⁴¹⁵ This time, this crisis was solved between Georgia and Russia with the Sochi agreement signed between the sides in March 2003 to which Abkhaz Prime Minister had just partly attended.⁴¹⁶ The problem was solved with the agreement reached over the reopening of the railway between Sochi and Tbilisi in parallel with the substantive return of Georgian IDP's to the Gali region.⁴¹⁷ Additionally, working groups in order to deal with the IDP's, communication systems and energy problems were formed.⁴¹⁸ With this agreement

⁴¹² Coppieters, *op.cit.*, p.12.

⁴¹³ Stewart, *op.cit.*, p. 21.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.22.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁶ Zaal Anjaparidze, "Tbilisi Weighes Response to Abkhazia's Latest Shift towards Moscow", *Jamestown Foundation*, <http://www.kvali.com/kvali/index.asp?obiectivi=show&n=149>

⁴¹⁷ Stewart, *op.cit.*, p.22.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Georgia showed its readiness to accept a leading role for Russia provided that such an agreement would facilitate a settlement on Abkhazia and would be complementary to the UN-led mediation process.⁴¹⁹ Concerning this agreement, Alasania argued that Russian side regarded their attitudes towards the Abkhaz authorities as subordinate to the bilateral relationship between Russia and Georgia.⁴²⁰ To sum up, this period was determined by the disrapprochement between Russia and Georgia. However, Russia again showed its ambivalent policy by supporting decisions against Abkhazia. All in a way may be partly explained with the shift in Russian policy after 11 September.

⁴¹⁹ Coppieters, *op.cit.*, p.13.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER VI

RUSSIAN ROLE IN THE ABKHAZ CONFLICT AFTER THE ROSE REVOLUTION

After the Rose Revolution, a new era in the relations between Georgia and Abkhazia began. Saakashvili knew that normalization of its relations with Russia would lead to a regulation of the Abkhaz question.⁴²¹ Greater involvement by the US and NATO was expected to lead in the long run to a realignment of forces that would be to their advantage.⁴²² The main priority of Saakashvili was declared to ensure the territorial integrity of Georgia⁴²³. During this process, the chaotic presidential elections in Abkhazia and Russian role in the elections were important indicators of Russian policy over the peace process.

6.1. Saakashvili and Abkhazia after the Rose Revolution

Saakashvili's first declarations about the future of the relations with Abkhazia were based on quite radical statements referring to the restoration of Georgian territorial integrity. On 28 September, Saakashvili indicated that:

“What the stratagems, whatever passports are given Abkhazia, whatever steps are taken, Abkhazia is Georgia”. Abkhazia has been Georgia for the past two millennia, it is Georgia today and it will remain Georgia as long as Georgia exists.”⁴²⁴

He continued and added that:

⁴²¹ Cory Welt, “After the Rose Revolution: Building Georgia's Future”, *Remarks by Prime Minister of Zurab Zhvania at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (Summary)*, 26.04.2004, <http://www.georgiaemb.org/DisplayDoc.asp?id=338&from=docs>.

⁴²² Bruno Coppieters, “Conflict Resolution at the Periphery: The Europeanization of the Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict”, Brussel, Vrije Universiteit, , April, 2005, p.8. <http://www.dur.ac.uk/chinese.politics/Public%20lectures/Professor%20Coppetiers.pdf>.

⁴²³ “After the Rose Revolution: Building Georgia's Future”, *op.cit.*, <http://www.georgiaemb.org/DisplayDoc.asp?id=338&from=docs>.

⁴²⁴ Jean Christophe Peuch, “Georgia: Seperatist Region Gears up for Prediential Polls, 30 September 2004, <http://rferl.org/featuresarticle/2004/09/a40d58ba-b489-4bfb-bf38-3c9c63f6f789.html>.

As long as I live, I will not reconcile myself to accepting the break up of Georgia. This is precisely why I am offering our Abkhaz and South Ossetia brothers to open talks without delay with a view to restoring single state relations among ourselves⁴²⁵

Saakashvili was aware that progress in the peace process depends on the development of good relations with Russia. Moreover, Georgia is not definitely looking for Russia to solve the problem but to stop providing the Abkhazian separatists with any sort of military and economic support.⁴²⁶

Beyond these radical declarations, Saakashvili's policy towards the Abkhaz problem was based on the federal links he wished to have with the separatist region. Saakashvili declared that he would unveil a detailed peace plan for the resolution of the Abkhaz Conflict and thus would ensure the territorial integrity of Georgia by peaceful means.⁴²⁷ Saakashvili argued that, first, the Abkhaz and Georgian sides should reach a common point and then, the Russian side could get involved in the resolution of the conflict. However, this has never been the case.

In this detailed peace plan, issues on the status of Abkhazia, the distribution of power, the governance and election system, the return of refugees, citizenship, security and economy was regulated. It briefly referred to the formation of the two member federal state in which Abkhazia would get the greatest autonomy and have all the attributes of a sovereign state except independence.⁴²⁸ However, the Abkhaz side had never been eager to talk and negotiate over the status of Abkhazia and stated that its independence status would never be a point of discussion. Saakashvili offered Abkhazia the greatest autonomy and the guarantee of cultural autonomy and in return of Abkhazia would have federal links with the central government.⁴²⁹ He stated that:

⁴²⁵. Jean Christophe Peuch, "Georgia: Saakashvili Offers to Open Reunification Talks with Abkhazia, South Ossetia", *RFE/RL*, 26 May 2004, <http://rferl.org/featuresarticle/2004/05/79dd6140-81e4-469c-9d93-9b0419b28163.html>

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*

“I also want to address the Abkhaz and urge them once again to enter talks in an effort to build up federative relations (with Georgia) that would give them vast and internationally guarantees of autonomy”.⁴³⁰

Abkhaz Prime Minister Raul Khadjimba on 28 September argued that Abkhazians have already made their choice and that the status of the north western Caucasus republic should not be a matter of discussion, anymore.⁴³¹ The Foreign Minister Sergei Shamba added that:

“In our society, you would find neither a political force nor a single political leader who sees Abkhazia as being part of Georgia.”⁴³²

Russian existence in the region makes Abkhazia confident that they will not be subdued against their will into a federal structure with Georgia. There is a strong belief in Abkhazia that Russian geopolitical interests will make a close alliance with Abkhazia compulsory.⁴³³ According to the Georgians, on the other hand, the success of any re-unification plan can only be possible without any Russian endorsement. While Georgian side insists that Abkhazia will be brought back into Georgia by using peaceful means, the Abkhaz side fears of the high possibility of the use of force by the Saakashvili administration in pursuit of his agenda.⁴³⁴

To sum up, during this period, the attitudes of the sides towards each other were not positive. The main determinant in the relations was the disagreement over the political status of Abkhazia; however Russia continued to have a dominant role in the relations between the sides.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴³¹ Jean Christophe Peuch, *op.cit.*,
<http://rferl.org/featuresarticle/2004/09/a40d58ba-b489-4bfb-bf38-3c9c63f6f789.html>.

⁴³² Jean Christophe Peuch, “Georgia: Saakashvili offers to Open Reunification Talks with Abkhazia, South Ossetia”, *RFE/RL*, 26 May 2004,
<http://rferl.org/featuresarticle/2004/05/79dd6140-81e4-469c-9d93-9b0419b28163.html>

⁴³³ Coppieters, *op.cit.*, p.14. <http://www.ecmi.de/jemie/download/1-2004Chapter5.pdf>.

⁴³⁴ Igor Torbakov, “Whiter Saakashvili’s Reunification Efforts in Georgia”, *Eurasia Insight*, 17/05/2004,
<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav051704.shtml>

6.2. Russia and the Presidential Elections in Abkhazia

The presidential elections held on 3 October 2004 in Abkhazia were realized in a very chaotic atmosphere between the two Abkhaz leaders Sergei Bagapsh (a more nationalistic leader) and Raul Khajimba (supported by Russia). First, Sergei Bagapsh was declared as the winner by the Central Election Committee (CEC) without taking into account the results in the Gali region where the majority of the population are ethnic Georgians.⁴³⁵ The CEC argued that elections in this region would be held again on 17 October 2004.

Concerning the decision of re-holding the elections, both leaders -Raul Khajimba and Sergei Bagapsh- complained to the Supreme Court. While Khajimba argued that the elections should be repeated not only in the Gali district but also in the whole country in a reverse way, Bagapsh argued that the 3 October decision of the CEC should be valid and thus the elections even in the Gali region should not be re-hold for the second time.⁴³⁶

Due to the chaotic situation in the country, while Abkhazia was about to go through a civil war, the CEC gave its final decision by signing a protocol and declaring that Bagapsh was the winner with 43,336 of the votes (50.08%).⁴³⁷ This caused the tension to rise more in the country. The supporters of Khajimba gathered and declared that the decision was illegal and had no legal effect. This protest was followed by two meetings in Abkhazia organized by the supporters of Bagapsh and Khajimba separately. Khajimba argued that this would continue until the Supreme Court would give a final decision.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁵ "Moscow's Political Tactics Alienating its Near Abroad", Report Drafted by Molly Corso, *Power and Interest News Report*, 7 February 2005, http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=264&language_id=1

⁴³⁶ Zaal Anjaparidze, "Abkhaz Presidential Elections Already Sparking Protests", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 1, No. 99, October 5, 2004, http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=401&issue_id=3094&article_id=2368638.

⁴³⁷ "Bagapsh Declared President of Abkhazia", *Caucasian Knot*, 12.10.2004, <http://www.eng.kavkaz.memo.ru/newstext/engnews/id/714460.html>

⁴³⁸ "Sokhumi Reportedly Quiet, as Opposition Controls Governmental Offices", *Civil Georgia*, 11/12/2004, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=8325>.

Following all, the former president Ardzinba on 29 of October, signed a decree for the repetition of the elections in the whole republic of Abkhazia.⁴³⁹ Supporters of Khajimba blocked the entrances of the people in the government, president and parliament, and argued that until the CEC took the decree into consideration, they would not stop their action. At that time, on 1 -2 November 2004 both leaders went to Moscow and Khajimba declared that they would find a middle way to reach a common point.⁴⁴⁰ Bagapsh was still saying that he would assume the presidency. After their return from Moscow, the tension did not stop and this time the supporters of Bagapsh occupied the presidential building. Since the tension would not end in any way, an Anti Crisis Council was formed to ensure the peace and tranquility in the country.⁴⁴¹ The Council of the Elders decided to hold a second round of the elections.⁴⁴² As a result of the negotiations conducted with the participation of Russian Deputy Prosecutor General Vladimir Kolesnikov, Abkhazian Prime Minister Nodar Khashba, and Vice Speaker of the Russian State Duma Sergey Baburin, Sergey Bagapsh and Raul Khadzhimba reached an agreement. They would participate in a new presidential election as members of one team: Bagapsh as a presidential candidate, and Khadzhimba as a candidate for the post of vice president.⁴⁴³ The compromise reached showed once more the dominant role of Russia within Abkhazia as well as the strong dependency of Abkhazia on Russia though the existence of an opposition.

⁴³⁹ "Repeated Presidential Election to be Held in Abkhazia", *Caucasian Knot*, 29/10/2004, <http://eng.kavkaz.memo.ru/newstext/engnews/id/721870.html>.

⁴⁴⁰ Giorgi Sepashvili, "Moscow Fails to Solve Abkhaz Crisis", *Civil Georgia*, 04/11/2004, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=8256>.

⁴⁴¹ Anzhela Kuchuberiya, "Public Anti-Crisis Council Created in Abkhazia", *Caucasian Knot*, 15/11/2004, <http://eng.kavkaz.memo.ru/newstext/engnews/id/726261.html>.

⁴⁴² "Abkhazian Council of Elders Declares for Second Round of Elections", *Caucasian Knot*, 17/11/2004, <http://eng.kavkaz.memo.ru/newstext/engnews/id/728220.html>.

⁴⁴³ Anzhela Kuchuberiya, "Bagapsh, Khaszhimba to be One Team", *Caucasian Knots/News*, 6/12/2004, <http://eng.kavkaz.memo.ru/printnews/engnews/id/738662.html>.

The special relationship between Abkhazia and Russia is linked to Abkhazia's dependence on Russia for its main economic and security interests.⁴⁴⁴ Regarding also the existing negative incentives towards Russia, Russia still remains the only state Abkhazia has connections with the outside world. The policy of Russia towards the Trans- Caucasus in general was to promote friendly governments in the targeted states. The Putin regime implemented this policy by taking a pro-active approach towards the political system of its target states and dependencies by trying to influence the outcome of presidential elections which was the case also in Abkhazia.⁴⁴⁵

The main determining factor in the consensus of the two leaders was Russia's policy of closing its borders and cutting off trade with Abkhazia. By this way, Russia cut off the main source of income for Abkhazia and since Tbilisi refuses to allow any trade to Abkhazia to cross its borders, Abkhazia became more dependent on Russia. Nevertheless, considering the results of the elections, Russia was argued to be the only loser. According to an analysis published by the Moscow newspaper *Kommerstant* this situation was stated out as:

“Regardless of how the Abkhaz stand off is resolved the main loser of the Abkhaz election is already known-It is Russia”⁴⁴⁶

Though the complete dependence, specifically economic, of Abkhazia on Russia is ignored, after the elections it was argued that:

Until very recently, Abkhazia was a strong trump card for Russia in its geopolitical game with Tbilisi. However, Moscow has backed the wrong candidate and failed to correct its position in time and that the Abkhaz trump-card is broadly speaking in Georgian hands.⁴⁴⁷

To sum up, Russian role and policy in the Abkhaz elections reflected onto its policy in the peace process. The second blockade of Abkhazia by Russia was just the

⁴⁴⁴ Neil MacFarlane, “Georgian/Abkhaz Peace Process: The Current Situation”, *Geneva Center for Security and for Peace*, 10 June 2003, <http://www.gcsp.ch/e/meetings/Events/Geneva-Series/georgia-June2003.htm>

⁴⁴⁵ “Russia's Slippery Foothold in Abkhazia Becomes a Slide”, Report Drafted by Michael Weisntein, *The Power and Interest News Report*, 29 November, 2004, http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=239.

⁴⁴⁶ Sergei Blakov, “Abkhazia Election Debacle Presents Russia with Difficult Choices”, *Eurasianet*, 21/10/2004, <http://www.kvali.com/kvali/index.asp?obiectivi=show&n=63>

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

repetition of the past. Thus, there has been change neither in the strong dependency of Abkhazia to Russia nor in the dominant role of Russia over Abkhazia. However, Russian policy in this election has invoked the opposition on the Abkhazian side more and Abkhazia once more understood that Russia could not be a permanent ally. This active involvement of Russia in the elections also increased the existing doubt over Russia's impartiality in the peace process.

6.3. Lack of Compromise on Abkhazia's Status

During the internal political turmoil in Abkhazia, the Abkhaz side withdrew from the Geneva peace talks so, a standstill occurred in the Abkhaz-Georgian peace process.

After the end of the election turmoil, Georgia and Russia have stressed the importance of resolving the conflict by political means with a strong commitment to the Sochi Accords of 2003.⁴⁴⁸ In this Accord, it was referred to the safe return of refugees and IDP's to the Gali district, launch of the railway from Sochi to Russia and the reconstruction of Enguri Power Station. Further economic progress would facilitate confidence building between the sides and thus keep the peace building and negotiation process going on. As argued in the official document of the Sochi Accords:

The Presidents of the Russian Federation and Georgia positively assessed efforts aimed at peaceful, political solution of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, and particularly noted the role of the UN and the UN Security Council in this sphere.⁴⁴⁹

Russian officials argued that the Abkhaz problem would be solved within the context of Georgian-Russian relations and by taking into account also the interests of Abkhazia.⁴⁵⁰ The major issues between Georgia and Russia were the return of

⁴⁴⁸ Irina Isakova, "Russia's Policy Towards Abkhazia", Stephen D. Sheffield, (ed.), *The Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict: Past, Present and Future*, JRL Research and Analytical Supplement, No.24, May, 2004, <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/8226.cfm#1>.

⁴⁴⁹ "Information on the developments in Abkhazia, Georgia (February-March 2003)", *Embassy of Georgia to USA*, New York, 23 April 2003, <http://www.georgiaemb.org/DisplayDoc.asp?id=137&from=archive>

⁴⁵⁰ Giorgi Kandalaki, "Abkhazia row with Russia deals new blow to Georgia's Shevardnadze", *Eurasia Insight*, 02/07/03,

refugees and the resumption of rail communication between Abkhazia and Russia.⁴⁵¹ While Georgia was referring to the return of refugees as a pre-condition, Russia's primary consideration was more the cooperation against anti-terrorism and the cross border regime with Abkhazia.⁴⁵² For Russia, any negotiation over the status of Abkhazia has never been the case and the major goal for that moment was to build the confidence building between the sides mostly by means of economic cooperation. Though Russia practically seems to support the *de facto* independence of Abkhazia, it is officially argued that she argues that she supports the territorial integrity of Georgia. Russia does not ignore the possibility that the conflict can also be solved with some kind of federal or confederal governance system though they do not prefer to share the details of it with Tbilisi officials at that point.⁴⁵³

During this process, the role of the UN remained superficial. The main emphasis over the confidence and security building measures during the mediation talks showed that almost no further progress was taken in the peace process.

At the beginning of 2004, both sides declared that they were ready to resume the peace talks for the resolution of the conflict. The Abkhaz side prepared a package of proposals to be submitted to the Georgian side. In this package, Georgia was demanded to abstain from the use of forced methods for the resolution of the conflict, undertake obligations on the fulfillment of the agreements reached before and take effective measures against the actions of the Georgian gangs in Western Georgia.⁴⁵⁴ Nugzar Ashuba -speaker of the Abkhaz Parliament- stated that they were an independent state; they were not inclined to renounce it; they want good neighbourly relations with Georgia, the parties of the conflict to be equal in rights and Georgia to understand this fact.⁴⁵⁵ Thus, for the continuation of the negotiation process, Georgia

<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav020703.shtml>.

⁴⁵¹ Anjaparidze, *op.cit.*, <http://www.kvali.com/kvali/index.asp?obiectivi=show&n=149>.

⁴⁵² Isakova, *op.cit.*, <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/8226.cfm#1>.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁴ "Abkhazia's proposals on resumption of the Georgian-Abkhazian settlement to be delivered to new Georgian president", *RIA Novosti*, 13/01/2004, <http://eng.kavkaz.memo.ru/newstext/engnews/id/624169.html>.

⁴⁵⁵ Anzhela Kuchuberiya, "Speaker of Abkhaz Parliament Expects New Georgian President not to Unleash War", *Caucasian Knot*, 13/01/2004, <http://eng.kavkaz.memo.ru/newstext/engnews/id/624269.html>.

should give up its warlike rhetoric. The Georgian side, on the other hand, stated that Abkhaz-Georgian talks should continue within the framework of the Geneva Process. Beyond emphasizing the role of the UN, Heidi Taliavini underlined the importance of the Russian peace keeping forces in the conflict zone.⁴⁵⁶ It was agreed by the sides that a quadripartite meeting between the representatives of the sides and with the participation of the Russian peacekeeping force command and UNOMIG would be held on January, 2004.⁴⁵⁷ Saakashvili with reference to Russian role, argued that, he was hoping Russian assistance for the return of refugees which would help to resolve the problem of re-establishing the railway service.⁴⁵⁸ It was moreover indicated that:

Russia had played a negative role in Georgia's formative years as an independent state and that was partly connected with the situation in Abkhazia. However, the situation is gradually changing and this is thanks to the current Russian leadership and its new policy⁴⁵⁹

Later on, Georgian Interior Minister Georgy Baramidze defined the role of Russia as "extremely destructive".⁴⁶⁰ He added that Russian peacekeepers were directly involved in contraband business and they were doing nothing to protect the Georgian population in the Gali district. This was replied by the Russian side as groundless and as an attempt discrediting Russian peacekeeping mission.⁴⁶¹

In the mid 2004, the sides agreed that Georgian-Abkhazian meetings would be held in Geneva and Moscow. In Geneva, the meetings would be held under the auspice of the UN while in Moscow with the mediation of Russia the sides would discuss the implementation of the Sochi Accords (2003).

Bagapsh seemed more open to the development of the relations with Georgia. However, this did not change the reality that the rest of the peace process would be

⁴⁵⁶ Anzhela Khuchuberiya, "Speacial Representative of UN Secretary-General in Georgia and CIS Peacekeeping Forces Commander discuss situation in zone of Georgian-Abkhazian conflict", *Caucasian Knot*, 14/01/2004, <http://eng.kavkaz.memo.ru/newstext/engnews/id/624449.html>.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁸ "Saakashvili Hopes for Russian Assistance in Returning Georgian Refugees to Abkhazia", *Rosbalt News Agency*, 29/01/2004, <http://eng.kavkaz.memo.ru/newstext/engnews/id/628510.html>.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁰ "Peacekeeping Force Command consider Georgian Interior Minister's Statement Groundless", *Regnum News Agency*, 06/02/2004, <http://eng.kavkaz.memo.ru/newstext/engnews/id/630600.html>.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*

dominated by the extensive role of Russia. Bagapsh argued that he was ready to negotiate any thing for peaceful political dialogue except the political status of Abkhazia which was declared to be independent. This showed that there would be a long way ahead for any resolution of the conflict.⁴⁶² While this argument of the Abkhaz side was against the UN based Peace plan, Bagapsh argued that the disagreement between the sides should not be an obstacle for the economic cooperation.

UN Secretary General Koffi Annan in his report to the Security Council on 20 January 2005 mentioned that peace talks between the sides should start due to the fact that since the mid last summer there had been almost no progress in the peace process.⁴⁶³ Following that, the Abkhaz and Georgian Foreign Ministers stated that they were ready to start talks in Geneva under the auspices of UN and Group of Friends of Georgia. The main focus of Annan in his report was the short term measures such as the return of displaced persons; however, it was underlined that the dialogue should in fact be ultimately based on the political status of Abkhazia within Georgia.⁴⁶⁴ This was rejected by the Abkhaz side as had been the case before. The need for the re-start of the peace talks based on the Security Council Resolutions, which meant that Abkhazia would remain part of Georgia, was emphasized. While by Bagapsh, Abkhazia's independence was reaffirmed, in return, the Council stressed its commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia.⁴⁶⁵

As a result, Abkhazia and Georgia agreed to send representatives to the Geneva Talks that would be held in April, 2005. Due to the existence of a standstill over the political status of Abkhazia, the sides were more willing to work on more practical problems. Between 21-23 April, the meeting was held in Geneva with the

⁴⁶² Yana Amelina, "Abkhazia's Status not Negotiable", *Rosbalt News Agency*, 05/03/2002 <http://english.pravda.ru/cis/2002/03/05/26802.html>.

⁴⁶³ Robert McMahon, "UN:Annan Expresses Hope for Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict", *RFE/RL*, 21 January 2005, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/01/bdfccc46-e47e-4d8a-b1a8-44b1033e291d.html>.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁵ Robert McMahon, "UN:Security Council Urges Resumption of Georgia-Abkhaz Political Process", *RFE/RL*, 26 January 2005, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/01/e246e1cf-263d-4214-84f2-fc999dae8172.html>.

participation of all sides including the Group of Friends of Georgia.⁴⁶⁶ This meeting served to the promotion of practical cooperation and to create an available atmosphere for a comprehensive settlement. By the words of Alexander Yakovenko, the Speaker of Russian Foreign Ministry, the key elements in the negotiation process was to prevent the use of force and restore the trust between the sides.⁴⁶⁷ This meeting on 26-27 April was followed by the meeting of the Sochi working group held under the auspice of Russia on the return of refugees and internally displaced persons.⁴⁶⁸ As well as the participation of the Abkhaz side, officials from UNHCR and CIS peacekeeping forces were also present in the meeting.

To sum up, no result was reached but the continuation of the talks was emphasized. This showed that the peace process overall consisted of certain periodic emphasizes on confidence and trust building measures and, thus, it was in fact blocked. By preventing the talks over Abkhazia's political status but supporting Georgian territorial integrity Russia served to the deepening of the problem and complicated the resolution of the conflict.

6.4 Ups and Downs in Russian Relations with Abkhazia and Georgia

During this period, the security and economic issues came more on Russian agenda. Considering economic issues, the major importance was attached to the border crossing regime between Russia and Abkhazia and to the railway communication. This rail communication was used as leverage by both Georgia and Russia against each other. While on 10 September 2004, the rail communication between Sukhumi and Russia was reopened unilaterally by Russia, following the chaotic internal situation in Abkhazia it was closed again on 2 December, 2004.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁶ "OCHA Georgia Information Bulletin Apr 2004", *United Nation Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs*, 30 April 2004, <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/OCHA-64DKGK?OpenDocument>.

⁴⁶⁷ "Russia to Help UN Hold Georgian Abkhaz Meeting", *RIA Novosti*, 05/04/2005, <http://en.rian.ru/onlinenews/20050405/39697416-print.html>.

⁴⁶⁸ "Georgia: Constructive Atmosphere in Abkhazia Talks", Q&A with Haidi Tagliavini, *United Association of Georgia*, 3 July 2003, <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/AllDocsByUNID/8658a586f57823e7c1256d590036df60>.

⁴⁶⁹ Giorgi Sepashvili, "CIS Summit reveals Rift in Russo-Georgian Relations", *Civil Georgia*, 17/09/2004, <http://207.218.249.154/eng/article.php?id=7852>.

While by Georgia the railway communication was used in a synchronized way with the return of IDP's and as a lever against Russia, Russia used it more for putting pressure on Abkhazia and for giving the sign that, it had the control and could act unilaterally.⁴⁷⁰

On 16 June, 2005, Georgian side offered the Russian side to ease the conditions for the re-opening of the railway communication.⁴⁷¹ Conducting a more constructive policy, the new Georgian government offered Russia to open the railway in return of ensuring guarantees by the Abkhaz side about the security of the already returned IDP's and refugees. On 4 August 2005 the UN mediated talks between the Abkhaz and Georgian side was held in Tbilisi under the auspice of the UN representative of Georgia. The main focus was on the security and confidence building measures which were regarded important for the return of refugees. These talks were later taken one step further by the 10 August talks in Sokhumi among the Abkhaz leaders and diplomatic representatives in Tbilisi including five members of the Friends of the UN-Secretary General of Georgia and Russia, as well.⁴⁷² The meeting was evaluated as a positive and constructive one for the future of the peace process. The importance of these UN mediated talks was the appeal and the appreciation of the sides for the UN and international help for the resolution of the Abkhaz problem. While the attitude of Bagapsh over the independent political status of Abkhazia continued, his strong emphasis over the economic cooperation between the sides provided the Abkhaz side to be perceived as constructive. Alasania argued that Russian policy in the Abkhaz elections made the Abkhaz side aware that Russia could not be a permanent ally to Abkhazia.⁴⁷³ Although this approach ignored the strong dependency of Abkhazia on Russia, it was argued that Abkhazia would from now on conduct a more active policy. However, whether this is the case or not is not

⁴⁷⁰ Irakli Gagaa, "Resuming Abkhazia Railway Link, Russia strengthens its Hand Versus Tbilisi", 18/06/2005, <http://www.abkhazia.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=49>

⁴⁷¹ Jean Christophe Peuch "Georgia: Authorities indicate Possible Compromise on Abkhaz Railways", *RFE/RL*, 16 June 2005, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/06/33c97601-e1d3-47c0-a945-1c89e581b563.html>.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*

clear. Bagapsh's declaration of 17 August 2005 is worth to take into consideration. Bagapsh stated out that Abkhazia today continues to seek associate membership to Russia.⁴⁷⁴ While this was perceived by the Georgian side as an infringement over their sovereignty, he added that they were adapting their legislation according to the Russian one and within one year all Abkhazians would have Russian citizenship.⁴⁷⁵ However, Bagapsh also said that they were open to political dialogue with Georgia. While this was reflecting the controversy in Bagapsh's declarations, all was followed by a large military exercise in Abkhazia supported by Russia. While this was perceived by Georgia as a violation of the Sochi Cease-fire agreement, Bagapsh argued that Russian military existence in Abkhazia was the same with the US or NATO military existence in Georgia and added that this was just a test to measure the ability of its republic to repel a Georgian incursion.⁴⁷⁶ With this large military exercise, the trust building measures and attempts in the Geneva led peace talks were grounded as almost useless. It created a major drawback in the summer 2005 peace talks held within the framework of Geneva Peace Process and pointed out that Russia still has the potential to destabilize the region and reverse the peace process.

On September 18, 2005 Saakashvili declared that they would not let the annexation of Abkhazia as a Georgian territory and that they would use all peaceful means and if necessary force. This was mostly derived from the negative attitude toward Georgia about the Russian peace keeping forces. In Georgian national military doctrine, Russian peacekeeping forces were defined as a security threat to Georgian security and the biggest fear of Abkhazia was the withdrawal of Russian peacekeeping forces and their replacement by an international one.⁴⁷⁷ According to a resolution adopted by the Georgian Parliament on 11 October 2005, the Georgian government would take measures for the withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers from

⁴⁷⁴ "Abkhaz leader says region moving closer to Russia", *RFE/RL*, 17 August 2005, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/08/ab5ee168-7adf-4994-92b7-328537b3ae77.html>.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁶ Jean Christopher Peuch, "Visiting Abkhaz leader continues to Court Russia", *RFE/RL*, 18/08/2005, <http://www.kvali.com/kvali/index.asp?obiektiv=show&n=423>.

⁴⁷⁷ "Russia Questions Aspects of Georgia's National Military Doktrine", *RFE/RL*, 1 December 2005, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/12/95f28d38-2320-4587-9897-b441ecd04fb1.html>.

the conflict zone in Abkhazia if the performance of the peacekeeping forces does not improve before July, 2006.⁴⁷⁸ In return, the Russian side argued that:

The Russian side considers the resolution a provocative step, directed towards fueling tensions, thwarting the current negotiating format, liquidating a legal base of peaceful resolution of conflicts on the Georgian territory. By putting the blame on Russia for the unresolved problems of Georgia's territorial integrity, the Parliament of this state clearly tries to shift responsibility from a sick head to a healthy one.⁴⁷⁹

This resolution was met with a strong reaction by the Abkhaz side. Sergei Shamba argued that this was a sign of Georgia's aggressive attitude for the resolution of the conflict. He added that the removal of the Russian peacekeeping forces would also prevent the UN military observers to work and the whole peace and negotiation process would be useless.

To sum up, the ups and downs in Russian relations with Abkhazia and Georgia are determined by the shifts in Russian policy. These shifts in Russian policy derive from her intention to realize its interests. For example, the large military exercise in Abkhazia caused a backtrack in the peace process. Russian side argued that any progress in the Abkhaz-Georgian relations could not be realized without the active role of Russia. Russia also indicated that he would not let any military intervention of Georgia to Abkhazia and added that any forcible removal of her leadership would not be acceptable in any way. This statements well indicate that Russia detain both sides, increases the tension and creates a situation in which none of the sides but Russia gain.

⁴⁷⁸ "Moscow Responds to Georgia's Resolution on Peacekeepers", *Civil Georgia*, 12/10/2005, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=10953>.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Throughout the thesis, the motives, means and implications of Russian involvement and how the Russian involvement has been decisive in the fate of the conflict and its afterward have been examined. This conflict still keeps on keeping its frozen conflict status with almost no progress realized on the way of achieving peace. The current situation as well as being the result of the uncompromising attitudes of the conflicting sides, is in a great extent determined by the ambivalent, uncoordinated and inconsistent policy of the Russian Federation with the aim of realizing realize her interests and the continuation of statusquo by deepening the problem. For Russia, thus, there is not a problem of Abkhazia but rather there are policies based on geopolitics conducted in a realistic manner.

In the second chapter, it is argued that the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict did not emerge unexpectedly with the collapse of the Soviet Union, but has its roots in the pre-Soviet and Soviet eras. Despite the fact that Abkhazians and Georgians have completely different ethnic affiliations, relations between each other date back to many centuries ago. Throughout history, they had always been in interaction either in form of a single inter state system or as separate units. Relations between the sides were, as it is today, in a great extent determined by their perceptions and reactions towards Russia and Russian policy towards the region. Russian conquest of the region and its domination in the 18th century changed the balance of power. The deportation of Abkhazians and the resettlement of the territories caused alienation between Abkhazians and Georgians. The relations between the sides and Russian policy in the region during this period help to understand today's conflict better and underlines that Russian involvement in the region launched the beginning of the friction between the sides.

For the Soviet era, it is argued that the outcomes of the Soviet nationalities policy were outstanding in the South Caucasia. The Soviet nationalities policies had different implications for Abkhazians and Georgians. In the Stalin era, relations

between the sides changed in a radical way. Both side experienced Stalin's policy in different degrees. Abkhazians called it as the period of 'Georgianization' in which their political status was shifted from a union republic to an autonomous one. Georgians, on the other hand, without referring to Stalin's policies, argued that during the Soviet era, Abkhazians were always given priorities. All was seen as attempts of Russian side to exterminate Georgian culture. As a result of the Soviet policies, towards the end of the 1980's, the politization of ethnicities both on the Abkhaz and Georgian side got an intensified character. This politization gained momentum in the Gorbachev era as a result of the perestroika and glasnost policies. Moreover, neither Gorbachev nor any other Soviet leader was aware of the seriousness of the nationalities problem. Combined with the legitimacy and identity crisis, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of ethnic conflicts became inevitable.

In the third chapter, it is argued that the emergence of the war was directly related to the emergence of radical nationalist groups in Georgia which caused the ethnic relations to get a strained character. The increased tension between Abkhazia and Georgia and the beginning of the conflict took place simultaneously with the civil war in Georgia. For Abkhazians to remain part of Georgia became unacceptable. The All Union referendum which resulted in Abkhazians' demand to remain within the Soviet Union caused the situation to go to war. Georgia declared its independence and sovereignty assuming that Abkhazia was part of Georgia. In return, Abkhazia also declared its sovereignty and the war became inevitable when Georgian forces-Kitovani, head of a paramilitary group-entered to Abkhazian territories.

During the war, there emerged many dynamics affecting the fate of the conflict such as the role of the North Caucasians and the Russian Federation. The role of Russia was determining as it is the sole reason for the frozen situation of the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict today. The North Caucasians also played a crucial role during the war by fighting with Abkhazians against Georgia and implementing pressure on Russian government to shift its policy on behalf of Abkhazia.

Following that, the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict is defined as a political and territorial conflict based on the different claims of the sides over the territory they argue to be their own. After outlining that the conflict is as a territorial and political

one with an ethnic aspect, characteristics of Georgian and Abkhaz nationalism are outlined in order to clarify the extent of Abkhaz-Georgian relations and arguments of the sides against each other. While Georgian arguments were first based on that, Abkhazians were in fact Georgian, later on, even if Abkhaz identity was recognized, the Abkhaz territory started to be a point of consideration. Georgian nationalism developed around the concept of the Georgian language. The main argument of Abkhazians, on the other hand, is that the territory of Abkhazia belongs to them and their common aim is to ensure their survival as an ethnic group. The main motive behind their wish to be independent is to prevent any threat that would be shown against their existence. While Georgian nationalism was developed against Russia, Abkhaz nationalism was developed against Georgia. This is important to indicate that as well as internal aspects, external factors such as the role of Russia are crucial to understand the characteristics of the conflict. Considering all, it is argued that Abkhaz and Georgian nationalism have completely conflicting arguments with each other and they are without undoubtedly constructed with the artificial use of history.

In the fourth chapter, it is argued that Russia during the war and especially in the first days did not conduct a coherent policy. The main characteristics of Russian policy have implied the inconsistent, ambivalent and incoherent features which were mostly based on the existence of different interests and attitudes of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Russian Military, Russian Defense Ministry and some groups in the parliament. Since Russia was in a transition period and was dealing with different internal problems, the Abkhaz problem was not that much in her agenda. Thus, Abkhaz-Georgian conflict was a true example of seeing the reflections of this chaotic Russian domestic political atmosphere. Within this respect, Russian policy towards the conflicting sides can be summarized with the official support for Georgian territorial integrity on the one hand and the unofficial support (not part of a state policy) for the *de facto* independence of Abkhazia, on the other. Thus, Russia has neither supported the territorial integrity of Georgia nor the independence of Abkhazia.

In the fifth chapter, it is argued that Russia's active role as the facilitator and third party of the conflict in the peace process prevented the UN to be effective. Thus, the role of the UN was counteracted by the two sided policies of Russia. Between the years of 1992 and 1993 a carrot and stick approach was implemented

towards Georgia. There emerged a complicated situation in which Abkhazia mostly with the Russian support defeated Georgia but could not get independence. This was later on followed with a process in which Russia had rejected the idea of Abkhaz independence and a policy of isolation was conducted against Abkhazia by the initiative of Georgia in the CIS. Following the end of the war till 1997, there was a certain bargain and compromise between Georgia and Russia. Georgia's acceptance to join to CIS and her recognition of Russian military presence in its territories took place simultaneously with the isolation of Abkhazia. It was during this process that an embargo to Abkhazia was implemented. This shift in Russian policy was later followed by the deterioration of Georgian-Russian relations. During this period till the Rose Revolution, there was an increased tension in the region. Georgia complained about Russian military presence in the region and argued that they did not serve to the preservation of Georgian territorial integrity and independence as promised. Considering 11 September, with change in the regional conjuncture, there was an observable retreat in the Russian military presence in the region. In regard of the common aim of fighting against terrorism, the construction of an alliance with the West constituted the main priority for Russia rather than taking the Western world against itself. However, in the following periods, Russia did not hesitate to act just in a reverse way.

In the sixth chapter, it is argued that the process after the Rose Revolution, the presidential elections in Abkhazia and Russian role in these elections had direct implications over the peace process. In this process, Russia once again showed that although there occurred a military retreat from the region after September 11, it had some red lines and her policy conduct towards the region would continue under different means than military ones. Russia's policy to Abkhazia during the elections once again revealed that Russia was not eager to give up Abkhazia and was now conducting the policy of controlling the leaders from inside.

While the peace process between the sides was suspended during the political turmoil in Abkhazia, since then there has been no concrete outcome reached. The main uncomprising issue among the sides was over the political status of Abkhazia. For Abkhazia, except independence the question of political status was not debatable. The UN since the beginning, on the other hand, has seen Georgian territorial integrity as granted. Thus, any progress in the talks under the UN auspice by time became

impossible. For Russia, any negotiation over the status of Abkhazia has never been the case and the major goal for that moment was to build the confidence between the sides mostly by means of economic cooperation. However, Russia does not ignore the possibility that the conflict can also be solved with some kind of federal or confederal governance system though they do not prefer to share the details of it with Tbilisi officials at that point. It is very clear that Russian policy has kept its ambivalent characteristics.

Russian role in the peace process has had implications on the Abkhaz-Georgian peace process, on the Russian future role in the region and on the future policy orientations of Abkhazia and Georgia.

Concerning implications on future role of Russia in the South Caucasus, Russia faced with a loss of influence in the region. This mostly derived from the policies and strategies Russia conducted in the region. The coercive policies of Russia either military or diplomatic caused her loss of prestige in the long run in the region.

In regard of these above arguments and questions, it has been argued that:

“Moscow through overplaying its own hand, now finds itself threatened with a permanent loss of influence in Transcaucasus.”⁴⁸⁰

It was argued that Russia’s geo-strategy has suffered major setbacks and that his aim was to restore its position in South Caucasus.⁴⁸¹ Moreover, this loss of influence in the region was part of a bigger struggle between Russia and the US trying to get the control of the Russian periphery- the South Caucasus.

Nevertheless, though there have been strong arguments in support of Russia’s loss of influence, the still existing strong dependency of Abkhazia on Russia and the awareness of the international community that without Russia it is not possible to reach a solution to the problem- even with Russia it is not possible- shows that Russia is a *sine quo non* in the Abkhaz problem and still goes on keeping its dominance in the Abkhaz-Georgian peace process. However, it is clear that Russia with its policy full of ambiguities, inconsistencies and incoherencies does not stand out as a trustworthy ally for any side.

⁴⁸⁰ “Russia’s Slippery Foothold in Abkhazia Becomes a Slide”, *op.cit.*, http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=239.

⁴⁸¹ Michael A. Weinstein, “Ukraine Adds to Moscow’s Setbacks”, *Asia Time Online*, 30 Nov 2004, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/FK30Ag01.html.

Concerning implications over the Abkhaz-Georgian process, it is argued that Russia has a decisive role in the peace process and stands out as an indispensable participant. Though there have also been some involvement of Western states and international organizations in the peace process, they have been mostly the results of Georgian attempts to balance the dominant role of Russia and remained superficial and procedural. However, Russian policies till today, especially in recent developments showed once more time that what has been important to Russia is not the well being of Abkhazian people and the provision of their independence or the provision of Georgian territorial integrity, but the realization of her own interests that was important. Russia does not carry any anxiety to help to resolve the conflict but rather deepened the crisis and detained the sides for any peaceful resolution. Russian policy revealed that Russia had the capability to reverse the peace process and destabilize the region whenever it wishes. The inconsistent policy of Russia was visible during the whole peace process. While on the one hand Russia declared its official support for the territorial integrity of Georgia, on the other, declared that he would not let any act of Georgia in Abkhazia without her consent. Or in a reverse way, while its support for the de facto independence of Abkhazia was the case, in certain times Russia did not hesitate to conduct coercive policies against Abkhazia by implying embargo. Similarly Russia played a crucial role in the UN Security Council resolutions supporting the territorial integrity of Georgia.

Without respect to the implications of Russian policy on Georgia and Abkhazia it is thus argued that Russian policy caused the alienation of Georgia and its rapprochement to the West in search of balancing Russian role. Regarding its effect on Abkhazia, on the other hand, while Abkhaz leader Bagapsh went on emphasizing their intention to have a close association with Russia, Abkhazians once more understood that Russia could not be a permanent ally for them. In the Abkhaz elections, Abkhazia and Abkhazians, though their strong dependency on Russia in all expects, were able to resist to their protector in a certain extent. As a result of my interviews with Abkhazians living there and Turkey, it has become clearer that Abkhaz politicians as well as Abkhaz people were completely aware of their dependence on Russia and they were just conducting a pragmatic policy towards the

‘big brother’.⁴⁸² Unlike the dominant view that they were admiring Russia, most of them argue that ‘Russia was Russia’ and they were all aware of why Russia was backing them at that moment against Georgia.⁴⁸³

To sum up all, the current situation in the Abkhaz- Georgian conflict shows that Russia did not aim at and contribute to the settlement of the conflict but to its deepening and continuation since this situation serves to realization of its interests. Thus, Russia stands out as the main reason of the frozen Abkhaz-Georgian conflict.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸² Interview of Esra Kızılbuğa with Cumhur Bal, General Secretary of the Ankara Caucasian Association, 24.03.2006.

⁴⁸³ Interview of Esra Kızılbuğa Ludmilla, Abkhazian Filolog in Sohkum State University, 22.03.2006.

⁴⁸⁴ Çelikpala, *op.cit.*, <http://www.kemalist.org/showthread.php?p=3267>.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ABHAZYA VE GÜRCİSTAN ARASINDAKİ ATEŞKES ANTLAŞMASI, 3 EYLÜL 1992⁴⁸⁵

Rusya Konfederasyonu Başkanı ve Gürcistan Devlet Konseyi Başkanı, Abhazya Yöneticileri, Kuzey Kafkasya Cumhuriyetleri Yöneticileri ve Rusya Federasyonu Kray ve Oblast Yöneticileri'nin iştirakiyle, Abhazya'da oluşan durumu gözden geçirip, silahlı çatışma sahası haline gelen Abhazya'da en kısa zamanda ateşin kesilmesi, olağanüstü kriz durumunun ortadan kaldırılması ve siyasal düzenin tümüyle sağlanacağı şartların yaratılması amacıyla, BM Tüzüğü ruhuna ve dibacesine; AGİK Nihai Belgesi, Yeni Avrupa İçin Paris Şartı ve 1992 Helsinki Deklerasyonu Prensiplerine bağlılığımızı teyit ederek, Devletlerin toprak bütünlüğü ve sınırların dokunulmazlığı evrensel prensiplerinin her türlü ihlalini kabul edilmez sayarak, insan hak ve hürriyetlerine ve keza ulusal azınlıkların haklarına saygı duyarak, aşağıdaki hususlarda anlaşmaya vardık:

Madde1

Gürcistan Cumhuriyeti'nin toprak bütünlüğü garanti edilir. Çatışmaya katılan tüm silahlı gruplar, 5 eylül 1992 günü saat 12:00'den itibaren ateş kesecek birbirlerine karşı güç kullanmaya son vereceklerdir. Taraflar, ateşkes yürürlüğe girene kadar herhangi bir saldırı eylemine girmeyeceklerini taahhüt eder. Aynı zamanda Abhazya'nın da dahil olduğu Gürcistan ve Rusya Hükümet organlarınca tayin edilecek temsilciler tarafından, kontrol ve teftiş amacıyla bir komisyon oluşturulacaktır. Bu komisyon, ateşkese ve anlaşmanın diğer hususlarına belirleyeceği prosedür çerçevesinde uyulmasını sağlayacaktır. Komisyon üyeleri, komisyona verilen görevlerin yerine getirilmesi amacıyla, çatışma bölgesinde kesin

⁴⁸⁵ Kafkas Abhazya Dayanışma Komitesi, *Abhazya ve Gürcistan Arasındaki Ateşkes Antlaşması*, 3 Eylül, 1992. <http://www.abhazya.org/komite/arsiv/1.htm>

bir denetim sağlamak için, yasa dışı silahlı grupların Abhazya'ya girişini önleyecek ve girmiş olanların silahsızlandırılması, dağıtılması ve Abhazya'dan ayrılmasını sağlayacak gerekli ekiplerle, komisyonu takviye eder. Komisyon, ateşkesten ve birliklerin yer değiştirmesinden sonra, çatışma bölgesindeki Gürcistan Cumhuriyeti Silahlı Kuvvetlerin, bu anlaşmanın amaçlarına ulaşmasını sağlamak (demiryolları ve diğer belirli ünitelerin korunması) için gerekli olduğuna mutabık kalınan seviyeyi aşmamasını denetler. Komisyonun tavsiyeleri, her seviyedeki yetkililerce gecikmeksizin dikkate alınacaktır.

Madde2

10 Eylül 1992 tarihine kadar tutuklular, rehineler, esirler ve diğerleri, karşılıklı olarak "hepsi hepsiyle" ilkesine göre iade edilecektir.

Madde 3

Taraflar her çeşit terör faaliyetini ve rehin almayı yasaklar ve engeller. Suçlular hakkında yasal kovuşturma yapar.

Madde 4

Mal, hizmet ve yasal işlerle uğraşan insanların naklinde kullanılan yollardaki engelleri bertaraf etmek üzere acil önlemler alınır. Kara, hava ve deniz yollarının kesintisiz ve güvenli olarak işlenmesi, sınırların korunması sağlanır. Transkafkasya demiryolunun, belirlenen kısımlarında güvenliğin sağlanmasına, ortak bir mekanizma da kurularak, özellikle dikkat edilecektir. Kontrol ve Teftiş Komisyonu, bu konuyla ilgili gerekli önerileri sunacaktır.

Madde 5

Kaçmak zorunda kalanların devamlı ikamet yerlerine dönmelerini sağlayacak şartlar oluşturulur. Bunlara gerekli destek ve yardım sağlanır.

Kayıp kişilerin bulunması ve Abhazyadan ayrılmak isteyenlerin tahliyesi için önlemler alınır.

Moskova'da imzalanan Ancak Uygulanamayan Ateşkes Anlaşması (devam'2)

Madde 6

İhtilaf sahasında zorbalık ve soygunları durduracak ve önleyecek, suçluları yasa önüne çıkaracak etkili önlemler alınır.

Madde 7

Taraflar, zarar gören bölgelerin onarılması ve ihtilaf sırasında mağdur olan insanlara, uluslararası yardım da dahil olmak üzere, insani yardım yapılması için önlemler alır. Bu tür yardımın yerine ulaştırılması ve dağıtılmasını düzenlemeyi, Kontrol ve Teftiş Komisyonunun koordinasyonunda Kızılhaç örgütleri üstlenecektir.

Madde 8

Taraflar insan hakları ve ulusal azınlık haklarıyla ilgili uluslar arası normlara uymanın gerekli olduğunu, etnik köken, dil ve din farklılığı dolayısıyla vatandaşlara farklı muamele yapmanın kabul edilemez olduğunu, serbest demokratik seçimlerin sağlanmasının gerekli olduğunu teyit eder.

Madde 9

Abhazyanın da dahil olduğu Gürcistan Cumhuriyeti topraklarında geçici olarak bulunan Rusya Federasyonu Silahlı Kuvvetleri kesin tarafsızlığa uyar ve dahili ihtilaflara karışmaz.

Abhazyanın da dahil olduğu Gürcistan Cumhuriyeti'nin tüm iktidar ve yönetim organları, orada konuşlandırılmış Rusya Silahlı Kuvvetlerinin tarafsızlığına saygı göstermek ve askeri personel ile aile fertlerine ve askeri mallara karşı yapılacak yasadışı eylemleri önlemekle yükümlüdürler.

Madde 10

Taraflar, Abhazya'da yasal iktidar organlarının, 15 Eylül 1992 tarihine kadar normal faaliyetine yeniden başlaması için işbirliği yapacaklardır.

Madde 11

Rusya Federasyonu içinde bulunan Kuzey Kafkasya Cumhuriyet, Oblast ve Kray ve yönetim organları, kendi topraklarından kaynaklanan ve bu anlaşma şartlarına uymayan her türlü hareketi engellemek ve önlemek hususunda etkili önlemler alacaklardır. Bu anlaşmayı uygulamak ve bölgede barışı tesis etmekte, işbirliği yapacaklardır. Bun anlaşmayı kendi halklarına anlatmaya gayret edeceklerdir.

Madde 12

Taraflar yukarıda ifade edilen düzenlemeleri desteklemesi ve bunların uygulanmasında işbirliği yapması için, durum tespiti ve gözlemci misyonları göndermek de dahil olmak üzere, BM ve AGİK'e başvururlar.

Moskova, 3 Eylül 1992

Rusya Federasyonu adına imza Gürcistan Cumhuriyeti

B.Yeltsin adına E.Şevardnadze

G.S.Hija

A.V.Kozırev

P.S.Graçev

A.M.Mirzabekow Mutabık Kalanlar

M.M.Magametov V.G.Ardzınba T.İ.Sigua

V.M.Kokov K.K.Ozgan T.K.Kitovani

H.M.Karmokov T.Nadareşvili A.D.Çıkvaide

V.N.Savalyev

V.İ.Hubiyev A.H.Tleuj

S.V.Hetagurov V.N.Dyakonov

A.H.Galazov Y.S.Kuznetsov

A.A.Camirov V.F.Çub

**APPENDIX B: ABHAZYADA ATEŞKES VE ATEŞKESİ KONTROL
ANTLAŞMASI SOÇİ, 27 TEMMUZ 1993⁴⁸⁶**

İhtilafın tarafları, Rusya'nın arabuluculuğuyla aşağıdaki konularda mutabık kalmışlardır;

1- İhtilafın tarafları 28 Temmuz 1993 saat 12:00'den itibaren, bu yılın 20 Mayıs'ında kararlaştırılmış olan ateşkese kesin olarak uyacaklar ve ihtilaf sahasında birbirlerine karşı kuvvet kullanmayacaklardır. Savaş uçakları, topçu, yüzer vasıtalar, askeri teçhizat ve silah kullanılması yasaktır. İhtilaf sahasına (Abhazya topraklarına) ilave askeri birlik ve diğer silahlı gruplar sokulmayacak, seferberlik uygulanmayacak; önceden mutabakat sağlanmadan askeri birlik ve silahlı gruplar yer değiştirmeyecek, silah ve cephane sokulmayacak, askeri altyapı ile ilgili birimler inşa edilmeyecek.

2- 29 Temmuz 1993 tarihinden itibaren, Gürcü-Abhaz-Rus geçici kontrol grupları (3-9 kişilik) çalışmaya başlayacaktır. Bu grupların personeli taraflarca onaylanacaktır. Geçici kontrol grupları ateşkese uyulup uyulmadığını denetleyecektir. Bu gruplar, Sohum, Gulripş, Oçamçıra, Gudauta, Noviy Afon, Tkuarchal, Gagra, Gal'de yerleştirilir. İhtiyaç halinde bu tür gruplar, tarafların onayıyla, başka yerlerde de yerleştirilecektir. Kontrol grupları ihtilaf sahasında kendilerini ilgilendiren her yeri, karşı tarafı haberdar ettikten sonra, görme hakkına sahiptir. Taraflar kontrol gruplarının güvenliğini sağlarlar, iaşeleri için gerekli önlemleri alırlar ve ulaşım aracı temin ederler. Kontrol grupları, çeşitli problemlerle ilgili olarak ahalinin başvurularını inceleyebilirler. Uluslar arası gözlemciler geldikten sonra, kontrol grupları bunlarla sıkı ilişkiye girerler.

3- İhtilafın her bir tarafı, kendi birliklerinin, kontrol gruplarınca tespit edilmiş ateşkes ihlallerini derhal önleyecek etkili tedbirleri alır, kontrol gruplarının tavsiyelerine olumlu yaklaşır. Bu anlaşmada tarafların mutabık kaldığı taahhütlere uyulmaması halinde, BM ve AGİK'e haber verilir.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

4- 5 Ağustos 1993'e kadar, Abhazya'da çözüm için birleşik komisyon kurulur. Komisyon tüzüğü taraflarca onaylanır. Komisyonun çalışmasına, kabul ederlerse, BM ve AGİK'e haber verilir.

5- Taraflar, ihtilaf sahasına uluslar arası gözlemciler ve barış gücünün davet edilmesini gerekli görür. Uluslar arası barış gücünün miktarı ve kapsamı, tarafların da onayıyla BM Güvenlik Konseyi ve Genel Sekretere danışılarak belirlenecektir.

6- İhtilaf sahasının kademeli askeri güçlerden arındırılmasına (demilitarizasyon) başlanır. En kısa zamanda uluslar arası gözlemciler ihtilaf sahasına sokulur ve ateşkes başlangıcından itibaren 10-15 gün içinde, Gürcistan Cumhuriyeti'nin silahlı birimleri Abhazya topraklarından çıkarılır. Aynı süre içerisinde, ihtilaf sahasında bulunan silahlı birimler, gruplar ve şahıslar dağıtılır ve Abhazya'dan çıkarılır. Anayolların, önemli ünitelerin korunması için, 3 Eylül 1993 tarihli Moskova görüşmesi Nihai Belge uyarınca, ihtilaf sahasında yerli halktan, Gürcü tarafının Jandarma birliği teşkil edilir. Bu birlik kışla düzeninde bulunur. Daha sonra bu birlik aşağıda sözü geçen jandarma alayı ile birlikte, Abhazya'nın karma milliyetli jandarma gücüne dahil olur. Abhaz tarafının silahlı birlikleri, jandarma alayına dahil edilir. Bu alay kışla düzeninde bulunur ve nihai çözüme kadar, jandarma görevini yapar (ana yolların, önemli ünitelerin korunması). Abhazyada ateşkes ve ateşkesi kontrol antlaşması bütün yukarıda sözü edilen bu işler, ortak komisyonun nezaretinde yürütülür. Gumista, Psou ve İngur nehirlerine uluslar arası gözlemci yerleştirilir. Ateşkesten hemen sonra ihtilaf sahasında kamu düzenini sağlamak için, kapsamı ve miktarı taraflarca belirlenecek karma milliyetli polis gücü kurulur. Ateşkesin devamını sağlamak ve hukuk düzeninin korunması için uluslar arası barış gücü ve BM'e danışılarak, geçici olarak ihtilaf sahasında bulunan Rusya askeri birlikleri davet edilir. İhtilafın tarafları, çokuluslu ahalinin haklarının korunmasını garanti ederler. Mültecilerin devamlı ikamet mahallerine geri dönmeleri ve kendilerine yardım edilmesi için gerekli tedbirler alınacaktır. Mültecilerin problemleriyle ilgili görevlerin hızla yerine getirilmesi için, ortak komisyon özel bir grup teşkil eder.

7- Abhazya topraklarında geçici olarak bulunan Rus birlikleri kesin olarak tarafsız kalacaktır. Rusya Federasyonu askeri birliklerinin ve sınır birliklerinin geçici ikamet statüsü, çalışma şartları, geri çekilme tarihleri ve biçimi, ayrı anlaşma belgeleriyle

belirlenecektir. Taraflar Rusya askeri personelinin ve aile üyelerinin güvenliğini saęlarlar.

8- 3 Eylül 1992 tarihli Moskova Görüşmesi Nihai Belgesi uyarınca, taraflar, Abhazya'daki yasal hükümet organlarının normal faaliyetlerine yeniden başlaması için gerekli şartları saęlarlar.

9- Taraflar, BM himayesi altında ve Rusya'nın yardımıyla, Abhazya'daki ihtilafın geniş kapsamlı çözüm anlaşmasını hazırlamak için, ara vermeden görüşmelere devam ederler. Bu anlaşmada, barışın korunmasıyla ilgili temel meseleler, ihtilaf sahasının askerden arındırılması, uluslar arası barış gücü kullanılması, ekonomik hayatın düzenlenmesi, hukuk düzeninin korunması, sivil halka karşı suç işleyen kimselerin kovuşturulması, mültecilerin ikamet yerlerine dönmesi, insan haklarına, azınlık haklarına riayet edilmesi, Abhazya'nın politik statüsü ve devlet yapısının garanti edilmesi hususları ifadesini bulacaktır.

10- Bu anlaşmanın tarafları, anlaşma hükümlerini, ateşkes rejimini, taraflardan herhangi birinin çıkarını zedeleyecek hareketler için kullanılmayacağını taahhüt ederler. Gürcistan tarafı adına Abhaz tarafı adına Rusya Federasyonu adına V.Goguadze S.Djindjolia A.Kozirev

APPENDIX C: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE GEORGIAN AND THE ABKHAZ SIDES⁴⁸⁷

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

between the Georgian and the Abkhaz sides
at the negotiations in Geneva

From 30 November to 1 December 1993 in Geneva, the first round of negotiations on a comprehensive settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict took place under the aegis of the United Nations with the Russian Federation as facilitator and a representative of the CSCE.

The negotiations were held in accordance with Security Council Resolutions 849 of 9 July 1993, 854 of 6 August 1993, 858 of 24 August 1993, 876 of 19 October 1993 and 881 of 4 November 1993.

Agreement was reached concerning the following:

1. In accordance with the main provisions of the Sochi Agreement of 27 July 1993 on the cease-fire in Abkhazia and the mechanism for monitoring its observance, the parties commit themselves not to use force or the threat of force against each other for the period of the continuing negotiations to achieve a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia.

2. The parties consider that the maintenance of peace would be promoted by an increase in the zone of conflict of the number of international observers and by the use of international peace-keeping forces subject to agreement by the Security Council and the United Nations Secretary-General.

3. As a gesture of good will, the parties before 20 December 1993 will exchange prisoners-of-war in accordance with the principle of all for all without any preconditions. Urgent measures will be taken to find those missing, for which purpose the parties will give each other the appropriate lists. In addition, measures will be taken for the reburial of the dead.

4. The parties consider it their duty to find an urgent solution to the problem of the refugees and displaced persons. They undertake to create conditions for the voluntary, safe and speedy return of refugees to the places of their permanent residence in all regions of Abkhazia. The apartments, houses, plots of land and property which they left shall be returned to all those refugees who return.

The parties express the hope for participation in the solution to the problem of refugees by the UNHCR.

5. The parties appeal to the international community to render assistance in re-establishing basic supply systems to the population in the conflict zone, and to render all victims of the conflict various types of humanitarian assistance.

6. The parties express the wish that for purposes of promoting economic recovery in the conflict zone an international commission be established with the participation of international and national organizations.

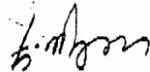
⁴⁸⁷ Special File prepared by Muhittin Önal, Head of the Caucasian Foundation.

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7. To prepare recommendations on the political status of Abkhazia, a group of experts including representatives of the parties, the United Nations, the Russian Federation and the CSCE will begin work in Moscow in early December 1993. The group will submit its report to the next round of negotiations.

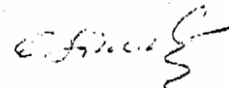
8. The next round of negotiations for a comprehensive settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict under the aegis of the United Nations, with the Russian Federation as facilitator and with the participation of the CSCE representative will begin on 11 January 1994 in Moscow or Geneva.

For the Georgian side



(Jaba Iqseliani)

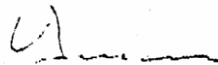
For the Abkhaz side



(Sokrat Jinjolia)

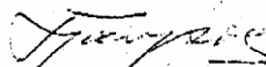
In the presence of:

For the United Nations



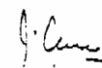
(Edouard Brunner)

Russian Federation



(Boris Pastukhov)

CSCE



(Vincenzo Manno)

APPENDIX D: DECLARATIONS ON MEASURES FOR A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF THE GEORGIAN/ABKHAZ CONFLICT⁴⁸⁸

Declaration on measures for a political settlement of the Georgian/Abkhaz conflict

1. The third round of negotiations on a comprehensive settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict took place from 22 to 25 February 1994 in Geneva, from 7 to 9 March 1994 in New York and from 29 to 31 March in Moscow under the aegis of the United Nations with the facilitation of the Russian Federation and with the participation of representatives of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

2. The negotiations were held in accordance with Security Council resolutions 849 (1993) of 9 July 1993, 854 (1993) of 6 August 1993, 858 (1993) of 24 August 1993, 876 (1993) of 19 October 1993, 881 (1993) of 4 November 1993, 892 (1993) of 22 December 1993, 896 (1994) of 31 January 1994, 901 (1994) of 4 March 1994 and 906 (1994) of 25 March 1994.

3. By signing this declaration, the parties hereby commit themselves to a strict formal cease-fire from this date and also reaffirm their commitment to the non-use of force or threat of the use of force against each other as expressed in their Communique of 13 January 1994.

4. The parties have agreed to and signed a quadripartite agreement, a copy of which is attached to the present Declaration, on the repatriation of refugees/displaced persons. The agreement provides for the return of refugees/displaced persons in accordance with existing international practice, including the practice of UNHCR.

A special commission on refugees/displaced persons, which shall include representatives of the parties, UNHCR, the Russian Federation, and CSCE in an observer capacity, shall begin its work in Sochi in mid April 1994. The implementation of the agreement will begin upon the deployment of a peace-keeping force.

5. The parties reaffirm their request for the early deployment of a peace-keeping operation and for the participation of a Russian military contingent in the United Nations peace-keeping force, as stated in the Memorandum of Understanding of 1 December 1993 and the Communique of 13 January 1994. The plan for carrying out the peace-keeping operation will be agreed upon with the parties to the conflict.

The realization of the peace-keeping operation should also promote the safe return of refugees/displaced persons.

The parties again appeal to the United Nations Security Council to expand the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG).

6. Abkhazia shall have its own Constitution and legislation and appropriate state symbols, such as anthem, emblem and flag.

7. The parties held discussions on distribution of powers on the understanding that any agreement on this issue is part of a comprehensive settlement and will only be reached once a final solution to the conflict has been found.

At this state, the parties have reached mutual understanding regarding powers for joint action in the following fields:

- a) Foreign policy and foreign economic ties;
- b) Border guard arrangements;
- c) Customs;
- d) Energy, transport and communications;
- e) Ecology and elimination of consequences of natural disasters;
- f) Ensuring human and civic rights and freedoms and the rights of national minorities.

8. The Parties agree to continue energetic efforts to achieve a comprehensive settlement.

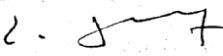
The Parties will set up an appropriate committee, which will work on a standing basis, taking into account the decisions of the Security Council under the chairmanship of the United Nations, with participation of representatives of the CSCE and the Russian Federation and with the involvement of international experts. This body will meet alternatively in Moscow and Geneva. Its first meeting will be held in Geneva on 19 April 1994. A phased action programme will be worked out and proposals on the re-establishment of the state and legal relations will be elaborated.

9. The parties decided to take additional measures in connection with the search for missing persons and the reburial of the dead.

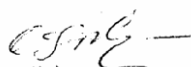
10. The parties, based on the fact that there is no statute of limitations applicable to war crimes, agreed to intensify efforts to investigate war crimes, crimes against humanity and serious criminal offences as defined by international and national law and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Inevitable punishment shall also be inflicted on the persons who try or will try to undermine peace process in Abkhazia resorting to arms.

For the Georgian side:

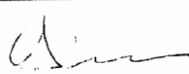

(A.Kavsadze)

For the Abkhaz side:



(S.Jinjolia)

In the presence of:

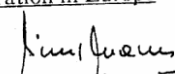
From the United Nations:


(E.Brunner)

From the Russian Federation:


(B.Pastukhov)

From the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe


(V.Mann)

Moscow, 4 April 1994

**APPENDIX E: AGREEMENT ON A CEASEFIRE AND SEPERATION
OF FORCES, SIGNED IN MOSCOW ON 14 MAY ⁴⁸⁹**

In the Declaration on Measures for a Political Settlement of the Georgian–Abkhaz Conflict, signed in Moscow on 4 April 1994 (S/1994/397, annex I), the Parties committed themselves to strict compliance with a formal ceasefire from that date, and once again reaffirmed their commitment to the non-use of force or threat of the use of force against each other, as expressed in their communiqué of 13 January 1994. That commitment remains valid. This Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces formalizes that commitment.

- The parties shall scrupulously observe the ceasefire on land, at sea and in the air and shall refrain from all military actions against each other.
- The armed forces of the parties shall be separated in accordance with the following principles:

(a) The area between lines B and D on the attached map (see appendix) shall constitute a security zone. There shall be no armed forces or heavy military equipment within this zone. The territory between lines A and B and lines D and E shall constitute a restricted-weapons zone. There shall be no heavy military equipment within this zone. The local civil authorities shall function in the security zone and the restricted-weapons zone. The police/militia employed for this purpose may carry personal arms;

Heavy military equipment includes:

- (i) All artillery and mortars of a calibre exceeding 80 mm;
- (ii) All tanks;
- (iii) All armoured transport vehicles;

⁴⁸⁹ Cohen, *op.cit.*, <http://www.c-r.org/accord/geor-ab/accord7/keytext.shtml#Agreement>.

- (b) The peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the military observers, in accordance with the Protocol to this Agreement, shall be deployed in the security zone to monitor compliance with this Agreement;
- (c) The heavy military equipment to be withdrawn from the security zone and the restricted-weapons zone shall be stored in designated areas to be determined by the parties and shall be monitored by United Nations military observers;
- (d) Under the supervision of representatives of the peace-keeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States and United Nations observers, with the participation of representatives of the parties from the Kodori valley, the troops of the Republic of Georgia shall be withdrawn to their places of deployment beyond the frontiers of Abkhazia; A regular patrol of the peace-keeping force and international observers shall be organized concurrently in the Kodori valley;
- (e) All volunteer formations made up of persons from beyond the frontiers of Abkhazia shall be disbanded and withdrawn;
- (f) The movement of units and subunits of the peace-keeping force and of the international observers outside the security zone in the relevant areas shall be subject to agreement with the parties;
- (g) United Nations military observers shall also monitor the coastal waters and airspace between lines A and D;
- (h) In the event of an attack or a direct military threat against the peace-keeping force, it shall take appropriate measures for its safety and self-defence.
- The precise demarcation on a detailed map and a plan for the separation of forces in the initial phase of the deployment of the peace-keeping force shall be worked out by the command of the peace-keeping force with the

participation of the parties in the context of a step-by-step, comprehensive settlement, with a continuation of the return of refugees and displaced persons and in compliance with this Agreement, in a working group, which shall begin its work to this end in Moscow within five days after the signing of this Agreement. It shall complete this task within five days. Disengagement shall commence five days after the working group has completed its task. The process of disengagement shall be completed no later than 10 days after it has commenced.

- A map indicating the security zone and the restricted-weapons zone is contained in the appendix. Protocol. The Protocol concerning the peace-keeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States is as follows: 'The parties agree that: 'The function of the peace-keeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States shall be to exert its best efforts to maintain the ceasefire and to see that it is scrupulously observed. Further, its presence should promote the safe return of refugees and displaced persons, especially to the Gali region. It shall supervise the implementation of the Agreement and the Protocol thereto with regard to the security zone and the restricted-weapons zone. In carrying out its mission, the force shall comply with local laws and regulations and shall not impede the functioning of the local civil administration. It shall enjoy freedom of movement in the security zone and the restricted-weapons zone and freedom of communications, and other facilities needed to fulfil its mission. 'The peace-keeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States shall operate under the Interim Unified Command and the Commander of the Peace-keeping Force.'
- The process of achieving a comprehensive political settlement shall be pursued.
- The parties appeal to the United Nations Security Council to expand the mandate of the United Nations military observers in order to provide for their participation in the operations indicated above.
- On the basis of the statement by the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States dated 15 April 1994 (S/1994/476, annex), the parties appeal to the Council to take a decision on the use of a

collective peace-keeping force within the zone of the Georgian–Abkhaz conflict.

For the Georgian side: (Signed) J. Ioseliani

For the Abkhaz side: (Signed) S. Jinjolia

**APPENDIX F: UNOMIG MANDATE, ADOPTED BY THE SECURITY
COUNCIL RESOLUTION 937 21 JULY 1994⁴⁹⁰**

The mandate of an expanded UNOMIG, based upon the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report, shall be as follows:

- (a) To monitor and verify the implementation by the parties of the Agreement on a Cease-fire and Separation of Forces signed in Moscow on 14 May 1994;
- (b) To observe the operation of the CIS peace-keeping force within the framework of the implementation of the Agreement;
- (c) To verify, through observation and patrolling, that troops of the parties do not remain in or re-enter the security zone and that heavy military equipment does not remain or is not reintroduced in the security zone or the restricted weapons zone;
- (d) To monitor the storage areas for heavy military equipment withdrawn from the security zone and the restricted weapons zone in cooperation with the CIS peace-keeping force as appropriate;
- (e) To monitor the withdrawal of troops of the Republic of Georgia from the Kodori valley to places beyond the boundaries of Abkhazia, Republic of Georgia;
- (f) To patrol regularly the Kodori valley;
- (g) To investigate, at the request of either party or the CIS peace-keeping force or on its own initiative, reported or alleged violations of the Agreement and to attempt to resolve or contribute to the resolution of such incidents;
- (h) To report regularly to the Secretary-General within its mandate, in particular on the implementation of the Agreement, any violations and their investigation by UNOMIG, as well as other relevant developments;
- (i) To maintain close contacts with both parties to the conflict and to cooperate with the CIS peace-keeping force and, by its presence in the area, to contribute to conditions conducive to the safe and orderly return of refugees and displaced persons.

⁴⁹⁰ Cohen, *op.cit.*, <http://www.c-r.org/accord/geor-ab/accord7/keytext.shtml#unomig>.

**APPENDIX G: ATHENS MEETING OF THE GEORGIAN AND
ABKHAZ SIDES ON CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES 16-18
OCTOBER 1998⁴⁹¹**

The meeting in Athens of the Georgian and Abkhaz Sides on Confidence-Building Measures took place 16 to 18 October 1998 under the Chairmanship of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Georgia, Mr. Liviu Bota. This meeting is an integral part of the Geneva Process begun on the initiative of the United Nations Secretary-General in order to step up the peace process and achieve a comprehensive settlement of the conflict.

The Athens Meeting was the most representative since the end of the armed conflict in 1993. The high-level delegations were headed on the Georgian side by Mr. Vazha Lordkipanidze and on the Abkhaz side by Mr. Sergei Bagapsh. They included representative of government bodies, members of parliament, businessmen, cultural figures, representatives from academic circles, members of non-governmental organizations, and journalists.

Representatives of the Russian Federation as the facilitator, the OSCE and also of the countries of the group of Friends of the Secretary-General participated in the meeting. The Executive Secretary of the joint/bilateral Coordinating Commission was also present at the meeting.

Such a meeting provided an opportunity for discussion of a broad range of questions of mutual interest.

The Athens meeting was convened in accordance with the closing statement adopted at the first Geneva meeting, 17 to 19 November 1997 which notes inter alia: “The parties have agreed that progress towards strengthening trust, mutual understanding and cooperation between them could be achieved through direct bilateral contacts and other means.”

⁴⁹¹ Cohen, *op.cit.*, *Key Texts and Agreements*, <http://www.c-r.org/accord/geor-ab/accord7/keytext.shtml#athens>

In this context such measures include a broad range of concrete steps in the following major areas: political statement, ensuring security, return of refugees, economic cooperation, cultural and humanitarian interaction.

During the course of the meeting both sides put forward concrete proposals, some of which require more detailed work.

The representatives of the Russian Federation, acting as facilitator, the countries members of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General, and the OSCE also made proposals and rendered assistance to the sides in drawing up ideas for concrete confidence-building measures.

Agreement was achieved to continue holding such meetings to develop contacts between the sides and for the adoption of confidence-building measures and measures for mutual understanding.

During the meeting the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, representatives of the Russian Federation, as facilitator, and the countries members of the Friends of the

Secretary-General, gave the sides for their consideration the draft protocol on priority measures for a settlement to the conflict. It was proposed to the parties to state their view on this draft protocol at the next meeting of the Coordinating Council.

The parties agree on the following:

- Having once again reaffirmed their commitment undertaken earlier regarding the right of refugees and displaced persons to voluntary return to the places of their former permanent residence, they agreed to speed up conclusion of work on the relevant documents.
- To provide for full implementation of the provisions of the protocol of 24 September 1998 signed in Sukhumi.
- To create a joint mechanism with the participation of representatives of UNOMIG and the CIS-PKF, to investigate acts of violation of the Ceasefire and Separation Forces Agreement of 14 May 1994 and for the prevention of a repetition of such acts,

and also for the immediate consideration of complaints of one of the sides regarding actions of the other side which might represent a threat to security in the conflict zone.

- To conclude drawing up the order for interaction of the prosecutors of the sides in investigating criminal cases regarding subversive acts perpetrated in the security zone.
- To ensure an operative link between the leaders of the military structures of the sides, inter alia, at the local level, for rapid response to situations and actions which may lead to an aggravation of the situation in the conflict zone.
- To promote in all possible ways the implementation of programmes of demining.
- Having noted the importance of the dialogue begun on the development of trade and economic relations between them, to promote the conclusion of direct working contracts in the areas of energy, trade, agriculture, construction, etc.
- To conduct active investigation of cases involving persons missing during the hostilities and the handing over of the remains of the dead. To request from donor countries expert and material support in carrying out psychological social rehabilitation of post-trauma syndrome.

Other proposals put forward by the parties to the meeting will be further studied.

The implementation of confidence-building measures will be carried out within the framework of the activity of the Coordinating Council and bilateral meetings. The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General shall inform the Coordinating Council regarding the implementation of concrete confidence-building measures.

The sides and all participants in the meeting expressed to the government of Greece their profound gratitude for the invitation and warm hospitality, and for the creation of an atmosphere which promoted fruitful work.

(Signed) V. Lordkipanidze

(Signed) S. Bagapsh

(Signed) L. Bota

**APPENDIX H: ISTANBUL STATEMENT OF THE GEORGIAN AND
ABKHAZ SIDES ON CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES 7-9 JUNE
1999⁴⁹²**

The Istanbul Meeting of the Georgian and Abkhaz Sides on Confidence-Building Measures took place from 7 to 9 June 1999, under the chairmanship of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mr. Liviu Bota. The Meeting is part of the Geneva Process, begun at the initiative of the Secretary-General and aimed at achieving a comprehensive settlement of the conflict.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, His Excellency Mr. Ismail Cem, addressed the participants of the Meeting at the Opening and Closing Ceremonies.

The delegation of the Georgian side was led by Mr. Vazha Lordkipanidze, and the delegation of the Abkhaz side was led by Mr. Sergei Bagapsh. The delegations comprised prominent individuals from the sides, including representatives of the intelligentsia, directors of major industrial and agricultural enterprises, elders, military who have participated in the armed conflict, and others.

Representatives of the Russian Federation in its capacity as facilitator, the Organization for Security, and Cooperation in Europe, and the members of the group of Friends of the Secretary-General participated in and addressed the Meeting. The UNOMIG Chief Military Observer and the Executive Secretary of the Joint/Bilateral Coordination Commission for Practical Questions also addressed the Meeting.

The Meeting was convened on the basis of the Concluding Statement of the First Geneva Meeting of the Georgian and Abkhaz Sides, held from 17 to 19 November 1997, in which the sides agreed that progress toward strengthening trust, mutual understanding and cooperation between them could be achieved through direct bilateral contacts and other means.

⁴⁹² Cohen, *op.cit.*, *Key Texts and Agreements*, <http://www.c-r.org/accord/geor-ab/accord7/keytext.shtml#istanbul>

The Meeting focused primarily on the question of the return of refugees and displaced persons, and also on economic problems.

The sides agreed as follows:

- Within one week to hold a special meeting of plenipotentiary representatives to address the issue of the exchange of hostages and prisoners.
- To support and cooperate with the Chief Military Observer of UNOMIG in conducting joint investigation of incidents which may represent a threat stability in the conflict zone.
- To revive the activities of the working groups within the framework of the Coordinating Council.
 - a) To convene within one week Working Group I. It will consider measures to implement the agreements achieved by the sides regarding ensuring security along the entire line of the separation of forces.
 - b) To convene within one week Working Group II for the consideration and agreement of urgent measures regarding the issue of the return of refugees and displaced persons, and the establishment of conditions for their safety. The Working Group will also hear information from the parties regarding the situation in the Gali region.
 - c) To convene within one week Working Group III. It will address the question of interaction with the Standing Working Group of the Joint Bilateral Coordination Commission for Practical Questions. This Standing Working Group will promote the establishment of economic ties between economic entities and draw up specific proposals and submit them for discussion by the Coordination Commission. It will also address projects which serve the interests of the Georgian and Abkhaz sides, including those designed to ensure uninterrupted functioning of the Inguri dam and power plant, and also the restoration of films with assistance of UNDP and other international and national organizations.
- Financing of this Working Group will be implemented with support from UNDP.
- To insure implementation of the commitment of the sides, provided for by the Protocol of 24 September 1998, on questions of stabilization of the situation along the line of separation of forces.

- To develop cooperation at the local level Istanbul Meeting participants will continue contacts to study possibilities for specific types of cooperation in various areas, in particular in the economic area.
- To organize meetings of political and public figures of the sides.
- To develop and establish mechanisms for the regular exchange of information, including, inter alia:
 - a) To exchange information between representatives of the mass media of the sides, including the exchange of television groups to create reports, including interviews with high-level individuals. These materials will be broadcast by the respective local television stations.
 - b) The Abkhaz side will be able to receive three hundreds copies of each issue of Svobodnaia Gruzia and the Georgian side will receive an equal number of copies of Respublica Abkhazia, on the basis of funding and logistical support from the United Nations.
 - c) Transmission from each side to the other of their respective press service reports will be facilitated by the United Nations.
 - d) To hold a meeting of Georgian and Abkhaz journalists in Tbilisi in July 1999, and in Pitsunda in August 1999, to exchange information.
 - e) To request the BBC to sponsor training courses for Georgian and Abkhaz journalists in London.
- The law-enforcement organs of the two sides will exchange available information on any preparations for illegal acts and will consult on measures to be taken jointly to prevent them. Direct communication links should be utilized for this purpose.
- Representatives of the respective Commissions for Missing-in-Action cases of the two sides will meet within one month, to review the situation. They will meet regularly within the framework of the Coordinating Council. Implementation of the above agreed measures will be carried out within the framework of the Coordinating Council and through bilateral contacts. The United Nations will provide logistical support as necessary, in the implementation of these measures.
- The Special Representative of the Secretary-General will report to the Secretary-General of the UN, who will then inform the Security Council on the outcome of this Meeting.

- The sides and all participants of this Meeting expressed to the government of Turkey their deepest gratitude for the invitation to convene a meeting in Istanbul, for the warm hospitality shown, and for its active role in the creation of an atmosphere that facilitated substantive and constructive results.
- The participants of the Meeting took note of the information concerning the invitation from the government of Ukraine to hold the next Meeting of the Georgian and Abkhaz sides on confidence measures in Yalta.

(Signed) V. Lordkipanidze

(Signed) S. Bagapsh

(Signed) L. Bot