

University of Tartu  
Faculty of Arts and Humanities  
Department of Contemporary History

Stina Aava

**Recurrence of the same war – political aspects of Georgian  
wars of 1921 and 2008**

Bachelor's Thesis

Supervisor: Prof. Eero Medijainen

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Stina Aava

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## Introduction

*Soviet Russia offered us military alliance, which we rejected. We have taken different paths, they are heading for the East and we, for the West.*<sup>1</sup>  
– Noe Zhordania, 1921

Historical memory is one of the backbones of current Georgian identity and politics. During the revolution in 2003, history was seen as a tool to use against Russia and to withdraw from Russian hegemony. After the war in 2008, tendencies in this field increased further, as several historians and politicians drew parallels between the Soviet Army invasion in 1921 and Russian attacks in 2008.<sup>2</sup> After 90 years, the leaders of Georgia started using the ideas of the Democratic Republic of Georgia (DRG) to create new collective memory. In the 1990s when Georgia was torn apart by wars in Abkhazia and Samachablo, as well as civil conflict, hard circumstances in everyday life were present, and it was natural that there was no time for nostalgic feelings or historical discussions on the Democratic Republic of Georgia (spoken: I republic). First publications were published in the 1990s, however over-nationalistic and sloppy. New facilities, funding, political practice and fresh perspective on Russia after 2008, have paved a steady road for researching this topic again. As one part of a five-month-long internship at the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, the author of this thesis chose this topic to further elaborate on the similarities or differences of 1921 and 2008, with analytical work, not only with verbal and emotionally loaded comparisons.

This thesis aims to prove or to refute the hypothesis – Russian *casus belli* for conflicts with Georgia and Georgia's problems remain invariable through time, as for Russo-Georgian wars both in 1921 and 2008. Ultimately, this thesis will make it possible to assess whether the conflict in the region can recur. In order to reach the conclusions, the comparative method is used side by side, to place these wars in a particular system and to bring out characterizations requisite for this comparison. Comparing two conflicts remains a sophisticated and capacious task, due to shortages in systematizing components of wars. Especially tricky is building a framework for political analysis, as the logic has to be created by the author. The shortage of frameworks is the main obstacle in

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<sup>1</sup> Kirchick, James 2010: Letter from Tbilisi: Georgia Between Two Powers. *Foreign Affairs*, July 1. Kirchick uses Noe Zhordania's speech made at the Extraordinary Session of the Constituent Assembly.

<sup>2</sup> Look at the references of this paper: Revaz Gachechiladze (a history professor), Malkhaz Toria (an associate professor of history), Mamuka Tsereteli (a researcher, diplomat and lecturer) and Mikheil Saakashvili (the ex-president of Georgia).

researching wars of two centuries, which are not widely published. The help of different political scientists and their researches are vital in this process. Truda Gray and Brian Martin<sup>3</sup> are one of the few scholars who have introduced specific measures for war comparisons, according to which the author of this thesis shapes the analytical part as well. Also, using the Correlates of War Project<sup>4</sup> helped to understand the essence of both wars, despite their not profound focus on Georgia.

Comparing invasions of 1921 and 2008 is not sufficiently researched, even though unofficially several similarities have been discussed. Never have these comparisons been based on a theory, specific criteria, or precise topics which are measured. Since the comparison has not been researched in the past, there is no main source. In order to compare two such different events, the author has used various documents, media reports, but also a database to assess the nature of wars. The most significant emphasis is on the processing of literature and the presentation of evaluations of scientific articles. Previously Stephen Jones has published a book of collective works “The making of modern Georgia, 1918-2012. The First Georgian republic and its successors”<sup>5</sup>, which by the title seems to focus on the first republic, but in reality is mainly about the modern Georgian republic. Articles in this collection by Gachechiladze, Matsaberidze, Toria, Tsereteli and Welt give a little information on the first republic and very brief parallels between wars in 1921 and 2008. In Georgia, historian Mikheil Bakhtadze<sup>6</sup> has worked on framing the main mistakes made by the government in 1918–1921, which led to the Soviet occupation. Sadly, his works are in Georgian only and to include his contribution, the author of this thesis arranged an interview with Bakhtadze.

Other than experts and historians, ex-president of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili repeatedly used to draw parallels between 2008 and 1921, he used this rhetoric in speeches but also in real actions and funding. Currently, SovLab<sup>7</sup> in Tbilisi is working on Soviet occupation and is analyzing related questions, but also the Georgian National Museum<sup>8</sup> works on the topic of occupation, and they have even illustrated some parallels of 1921 and 2008 in their exhibitions. Reaching archives in Georgia is not easy, as one has to pass bureaucracy. Moreover, Georgian historians are lately in a problematic position as Soviet archives face censorship. It is complicated to reach Soviet era

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<sup>3</sup> Gray, Truda; Martin, Brian 2008: Comparing Wars. *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, 10(3).

<sup>4</sup> Correlates of War Project’s homepage 2019: <http://www.correlatesofwar.org/>

<sup>5</sup> Jones, Stephen F. (ed.), *The making of modern Georgia, 1918-2012. The First Georgian republic and its successors*. New York: Routledge.

<sup>6</sup> Look at: Bakhtadze, Mikheil 2016: Sabedistsero shetsdomebi (1921 tsilis ruset-sakartvelos omis tsin da omisas dashvebuli shetsdomebi) (in Georgian).

<sup>7</sup> SovLab’s homepage 2019: <http://sovlab.ge/en>

<sup>8</sup> Georgian National Museum’s homepage 2019: [http://museum.ge/?lang\\_id=ENG](http://museum.ge/?lang_id=ENG)

documentation and to investigate crimes, as the state keeps archives under partial censorship, allegedly for the public interest.<sup>9</sup> What is more, the author of this thesis was declined the access to the archive several times, with no sufficient explanations.

This thesis is divided into three main parts – the theoretical framework, historical context and comparative research. In the first part, relevant standards of war comparisons are introduced and it is described which factors can promote the recurrence of conflict. Never before has theory been used to research the recurrence of Georgian wars. Moreover, wars of 1921 and 2008 have been rarely classified and ranked according to theory. In the second chapter, both the Soviet invasion of 1921 and the Russo-Georgian war of 2008 are introduced and shortly explained, to give a reader a brief overview of both events. This is followed up by an analysis from the author, where different aspects are put into tables. Six subtopics are researched, of which half are based on the recommendations of other scholars, but rest is the author's contribution. As a result, this thesis aims to activate more profound research on the comparison of these two events.

I sincerely want to thank the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, SovLab, Mikheil Bakhtadze and the Georgian National Museum. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Vakhtang Chkhenkeli and Eero Medijainen.

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<sup>9</sup> Forestier-Walker, Robin 2019: Georgia's historians fight against censorship of Soviet archives. *Al Jazeera*, May 1.

# 1. Theoretical framework

This chapter introduces war theories and concepts, which help to categorize wars of 1921 and 2008. Firstly, the foundation of methods for researching wars is covered and secondly, the recurrence of the same conflict is discussed. Standard criteria for war analyzes are still not used and lacks standards, which is why describing particular theory used in this thesis is essential for creating conclusions. Recurrency of conflict in the same region between the same actors is also not agreed upon and has not gained attention, whereas recurrent civil wars are often discussed. Therefore, this term is exemplified and researched through chapters.

## 1.1 Models of measuring wars

Generally, two approaches of war analyzes are conducted – political and military. As for the military approach, mainly weapons, ground, air, paramilitary and other forces are considered; therefore it is outside of the scope of this paper. Political comparisons are rare and less studied, as comprehensive measures for wars are not agreed upon and when warfare and its numbers are not in question, then studying purely the political level becomes even more complicated. Eventually, in the past decade, a standard system for war comparisons was created however, it still has not received full international recognition.

In 2008, Truda Gray and Brian Martin<sup>10</sup> introduced a problem of the absence of specific criteria to grade or to compare wars. Authors acknowledge that researches are creating their single-standing systems or logic when describing similarities or differences between wars, but there is a lack of a simple and universal standard to follow. According to Gray and Martin, main problems of comparisons arise from the same root – two wars are measured in a parallel system, but not three-dimensionally, including new wars of the same type.<sup>11</sup> Bearing this in mind, slight resemblances between wars under discussion and additional examples are matched. For the most part, this thesis aims to find political motives in conflicts between the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic/Russian Federation and the Democratic Republic of Georgia/Georgia, but also explanations or justifications of actions and failures, recurrent problems in the region – all in order to give an insight of political aspects which shall be avoided or solved for the future. In such a case,

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<sup>10</sup> Gray and Martin 2008.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 2–11.

comparing military powers, weapons, duration and casualties are not priorities and the thesis focuses other nuances offered by Gray and Martin.

To lay out standards in this field, Gray and Martin constructed categories of aspects, which could be used to discuss wars. As a result, they came up with 20 characteristics, which are divided into five subgroups: causes/rationales, participants/forces, methods/nature, scale/duration and outcomes.<sup>12</sup> According to other scholars, conflicts have several dimensions: political, strategic, socio-economic, psychological and cultural. In detail, these parameters demonstrate such sides of the conflict as security, power, institutions, perception of enemies, economic competitiveness, identity.<sup>13</sup> Subsequently, types of conflict divide into three parts: revolutionary and ideological conflicts, identity and secession conflicts, factional conflicts (power struggles among other factions). It has been suggested that these conflict types are not inter-state type, but the author of this thesis believes these characteristics shall be considered to be subdivisions of an inter-state war as well, as it is still possible to have revolutionary or identity questions present when two different states are in a war.<sup>14</sup> These are helpful guidance when studying specific components of wars and moreover, they are valuable for creating comparative charts between two wars. In the analysis of this paper, some points from Gray and Martin are compared in a table, with additions from the author to contribute to the further development of the future of war analyses.

Arrangement of the Soviet invasion of 1921 and the Russo-Georgian war of 2008 into a definite type of wars is a troublesome task. Up to this date, these armed conflicts have not been permanently defined, as there is no official decision on rates of Georgian wars. To put hostilities in order and research them later on, it is crucial to understand the backgrounds of both wars. For this purpose, The Correlates of War Project (COW), started by J. David Singer<sup>15</sup>, gives valuable information for defining conflicts and builds a base for this research. Regretfully, the COW has not yet categorized these particular Georgian events in neither the 20<sup>th</sup> century nor the 21<sup>st</sup> century, only information is about the 1990s and the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, a theory is used to start this thesis by labeling both wars to continue with more in-depth comparisons.

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Berg, Eiki; Ehin, Piret; Kasekamp, Andres; Mälksoo, Maria; Piirimäe, Eva; Toomla, Raul; Toomla, Rein 2018: *Sissejuhatatus rahvusvahelistesse suhetesse: õpik kõrgkoolidele*. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 232.

<sup>14</sup> Ramsbotham, Oliver; Woodhouse, Tom; Miall, Hugh 2011: *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 63–93.

<sup>15</sup> Singer, David J.; Small, Melvin 1982: *Resort to Arms: international and civil wars 1816–1980*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.



The Correlates of War Project, created in 1963 and developed to date, has classified different types of wars for research purposes. Basic categorization starts with putting events into two big groups – international wars and civil wars.<sup>16</sup> According to the newest typology, the division is even more extensive, as it goes into four groups: inter-state wars, extra-systemic wars (colonial or imperial), another inter-state type of war (civil, regional, inter-communal), non-state wars.<sup>17</sup>

When it comes to the Soviet invasion in 1921 and the Russo-Georgian war in 2008, borders of classifications start to blur, especially on the latter case. In both occurrences, tensions originally raised inside the state, such as Bolsheviks vs. Mensheviks in 1921 and South Ossetian-Georgian tensions in 2008. Later on, both cases became wars between states, which in the COW system would help us replace them firstly into international wars, not civil wars. Secondly, using the newest divisions, 1921 and 2008 both would be foremostly inter-state wars, between two or more states.<sup>18</sup> Another method to divide wars can be separating them into dyadic or complex wars. Complex war involves three or more actors, whereas dyadic is a two-sided war and considered more common.<sup>19</sup> Both 1921 and 2008 categorize under power politics wars by their nature, which include forming alliances and overall rivalry. In 1921 Russia and Bolsheviks disapproved Georgia's cooperation with Western powers, the same happened in 2008 when Georgia stepped towards NATO. Therefore, both Georgian wars meet the criteria of complex territorial and power politics war, as both wars had regional issues and pre-war alliance plays.

## **1.2 Conflict and recurrence**

Georgia is considered a typical small state by its population, territory, gross domestic product (GDP) and size of its armed forces. Three significant political theories are used to study Georgia as a small state and its role in conflicts. Firstly, realism focuses on politics between superpowers and great powers, but also the geopolitical position of the small state. Usually, realists acknowledge that bipolar world order is fair enough for small states, but multipolar order is far more beneficial. One of the examples of bipolar world's shortcomings is Russian actions against Georgia in 2008. Moreover, realism supports the idea of recurrence and cycles of big states' power. Russia is an

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Sarkees, Meredith Reid; Wayman, Frank Whelon 2010: *Resort to War: A Data Guide To Inter-State, Extra-State, Intra-State, And Non-State Wars, 1816–2007*. Washington DC: CQ Press, 39–75.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Vasquez, John A.; Valeriano, Brandon 2010: Classification of Interstate Wars. *The Journal of Politics*, 72(2), 294, 296.

example of when a state is more powerful, its neighbours feel more in danger. Georgia and its geopolitical position are similar to Baltics – for centuries, Russia has wanted to reach the sea or essential routes, which weakens the political strength of a small state. Buffer states gain notable attention from realists, as these countries greatly rely on big states surrounding it. Georgia could be another example, both in the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when Europe has used this place as a buffer zone between Russia.<sup>20</sup>

As liberalism prioritizes economic issues, then these factors are also fundamental for small states and obstacles in their political survival. First and foremost, small states are dependent on international trade, but also exports are made up of raw materials, economic growth is slow, trade is focused on one partner and product.<sup>21</sup> Lastly, constructivism focuses on the history and its exploitation. It is noted, that past actions of big states are juxtaposed with their current nature, in order to shape attitude towards them. Even though small states mostly use it, it often occurs with Russia, for example Baltics are imaged as failed states.<sup>22</sup> The same could be applied to Russian attitudes towards the modern Georgian republic.

Conflict Barometer created by Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (HIK)<sup>23</sup> divides the intensity of conflicts into five levels which affect and change the terminology of conflict in question. Levels have been divided into non-violent and violent conflicts. Violent conflicts are: crisis (level 3), severe crisis (level 4) and war (level 5). Subsequently, a crisis takes place when one side uses irregular episodic force, a severe crisis happens when forces are added and lastly, war as a term is used for conflicts that are organized to destroy the enemy.<sup>24</sup> Five main incentives for conflict outbreak are: uneven distribution of resources and power; population's position (North-South); errors in actions and illegitimate or undemocratic governance; ethnic questions considering minorities, borders and representation; imposing hegemony.<sup>25</sup>

Georgia could be researched through the prism of recurrence of civil war as a society often torn towards conflict. Both 1921 and 2008 had at least some roots of in-state rivalry, also in the 1990s

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<sup>20</sup> Berg *et al.* 2018: 406, 411–415, 421.

<sup>21</sup> Väyrynen, Raimo 1971: On the Definition and Measurement of Small Power Status. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 6(1), 91–102.

<sup>22</sup> Berg *et al.* 2018: 411–415.

<sup>23</sup> Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research 2018: *Conflict Barometer 2018*. Heidelberg: University of Heidelberg.

<sup>24</sup> Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research 2018: 6.

<sup>25</sup> Berg *et al.* 2018: 226–232.

Georgia faced a civil war. This notion may give some insight into the society in which these wars have taken place, as civil war is highly likely recurrent and its society is prone to problems. Political scientist Sean Zeigler brings out that states which have faced conflict emerging from in-state problems are more likely to get into conflict again than not. He adds that such civil wars are rather political than economic, even though the economy can stimulate the situation, it is still a strategical or political motive which causes the outbreak of the war. Zeigler even suggests that states which have become successful and wealthier, are still potential fighters, as a society as such has more connection with violence due to their being and history. Lastly, third party involvement in civil conflicts, in theory, might lead to a satisfying dispute, but in reality, adds more complexity to the conflict.<sup>26</sup>

Statistics have shown that around 60% of conflicts recur, which means that the same parties fight in the next wars. Between those two events has to be at least a two-year peace, to divide those conflicts or wars as different occurrences. At times, two years of break are extended to five or ten years, to be more specific of different occasions of conflicts. Since 1946, out of 259 armed conflicts, 159 were repetitions of previous conflicts. In particular, it applies to wars that took place in the 2000s.<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, psychologist Dr. Martin Wangh has found out that societies which have been in a war before, psychologically are prone to a new war. Past experiences stay in people and subconscious wishes for revival and similar situations are keen to pass on (which refers to Sigmund Freud's repetition compulsion). Moreover, Wangh describes it as a sub-section of sadomasochism, because feelings that occur during the war and how people keep on their loved ones, create physical phenomenon that people seek again after the war has ended.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Zeigler, Sean M. 2016: Competitive Alliances and Civil War Recurrence. *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 60, issue 1. 24–37.

<sup>27</sup> Gates, Scott; Nygård, Håvard Mogleiv; Trappeniers, Esther 2016: *Conflict Trends, Conflict Recurrence*. Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2–4.

<sup>28</sup> Wangh, Martin 1968: A psychogenetic factor in the recurrence of war. *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 49(2-3), 319–323.

## 2. Historical context

To introduce similar and different features of Georgian wars of 1921 and 2008, the author carries out a three-dimensional comparative analysis. In this chapter, both wars are introduced separately, as their nature is clarified according to theories presented in the first chapter. For that purpose, additional conflicts and wars are briefly included, to carry out a multifaceted examination of those events. Brief historical nuances are demonstrated and necessary information of wars are introduced, as well as war's nature and outcomes are presented.

### 2.1 Soviet invasion of 1921

#### Historical pretext

After Bolsheviks came to power, Georgian and Soviet Russia's relationships were on the bitter side since the beginning. Aggression towards Georgia was not in question at first place, as there was a devastating civil war in Russia itself, but also because military units such as Germans or British, were very present in South Caucasus and on Georgian territory<sup>29</sup>. Bolsheviks did not recognize Georgia, diplomatic mission in Moscow was denied and even ambassador got detained.<sup>30</sup>

In autumn of 1920, Russians gained a broader overview of Georgian military capabilities, which contained the regular army and the People's Guard. Approximately 50 000 men were ready to fight in three days if mobilization was to be declared. However, the motivation of fighters was low, ideology had undermined the trust and reliability of troops and the People's Guard did not have good relations with the regular army. Soon after the possibilities raised for the Red Army to send its troops to new locations, commander Anatolij Gekker established a so-called Gekker Plan for Caucasia, which included invading Georgia. Even though Georgian intelligence had found out that such a plan is on the table, they were slow to react and soon the Red Army marched on Georgia, from the Armenian and Azerbaijani borders. The Soviet envoy in Tbilisi disproved any presence of Russian fighters in the region and he claimed the clashes to have been organized by Armenian communists. Moreover, Turkish Kemalists, who had established relations with Moscow, demanded

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<sup>29</sup> Look at: Appendix 1.

<sup>30</sup> Khundadze, Giorgi 1999: *Otchet o dejatel'nosti Gruzinskoj diplomaticheskoj missii v Rossii za 1918-1919 gg.* Tbilisi: 103.

Georgians to move out of Artvin and Ardahan regions, which weakened Georgian position even more, as they had to leave the eastern frontier.<sup>31</sup>

In an interview with the author, historian Mikheil Bakhtadze<sup>32</sup>, one of the few and foremost Georgian historians on this topic, presented his fresh ideas on political mistakes that Georgian government did in 1921. Firstly, Georgian intelligence had collected sufficient information that the Soviet Army will attack, but it was expected to happen in April or May, and the Georgian army ended up being unequipped and poorly prepared. Secondly, military leadership had good relations with the government, but opposition members were extensively eliminated from military positions. Thirdly, Georgia trusted the Treaty of Moscow too much and as the Soviet Army invaded Azerbaijan, it should have been an alarm for the government as South-Caucasus is one region and destiny follows all states, no matter what.<sup>33</sup> As a result of these mistakes, the inter-state war between the Red Army and Georgia lasted from 15<sup>th</sup> February to 17<sup>th</sup> March 1921 and eventually, it led to the occupation of the Democratic Republic of Georgia.

### War's nature

Georgian status is comparable to other states in the Russian Empire after the 1917 revolution. Like elsewhere, class struggle and national questions were combined. Mensheviks in Georgia were particularly popular because it had a nationalistic segment against the Russian power, but at the same time was against capitalism due to non-positive attitudes towards the vastly trading Armenians.<sup>34</sup> Before the war outbreak, five main conflict areas were present, though none of them were significant as Russia's goal was to disturb Georgia's peace. These included: relations with Pyotr Wrangel, ownership of Batumi, railway transit to Armenia, Georgian Communist Party and its rights, border and frontier disputes.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Lang, David Marshall 1962: *A Modern History of Soviet Georgia*. New York: Grove Press, 232–234.

<sup>32</sup> Bakhtadze has previously introduced this topic on his paper: Bakhtadze, Mikheil 2016: *Sabedistsero shetsdomebi (1921 tslis ruset-sakartvelos omis tsin da omisas dashvebuli shetsdomebi)* (in Georgian). Paper focuses more on military mistakes, but Bakhtadze was asked to sum up the political side.

<sup>33</sup> Bakhtadze, Mikheil 2019: *Author's interview*. Tbilisi: February 12. Interview took place at the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (Rondeli Foundation), interviewed by Stina Aava and was interpreted from Georgian by Khatia Tandilashvili. Mikheil Bakhtadze is an associate professor at the Institute of Georgian History, at the Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University.

<sup>34</sup> Suny, Ronald Grigor 1984: *Nationalism and social class in the Russian Revolution: the cases of Baku and Tiflis*. Suny, Ronald Grigor (ed.) *Transcaucasia: Nationalism and Social Change*. Ann Arbor: Michigan University of Michigan Press, 250.

<sup>35</sup> Kazemzadeh, Firuz 1951: *The struggle for Transcaucasia, 1917–1921*. New York: Philosophical Library, 302.

The Soviet invasion in 1921 should be considered a war when we use the system of the Heidelberg Institute. Considering the duration, weaponry, casualties, refugees and results of the conflict, it can be said that the invasion of 1921 was with an intensity level of 5, which means it was a war – a high-intensity violent conflict.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, further divisions of conflicts are revolutionary/ideological conflicts, identity/secession conflicts and factional conflicts. Out of these options, after extensive reading on the topic, it can be said that the war of 1921 was an ideological conflict. Foremost it was a war between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, but also a factional conflict that included political power and plenty of economic resources. These aspects of the invasion of 1921 will be further explained in the analytical part of this thesis.<sup>37</sup>

Cory Welt has brought out four aspects of the Abkhazian and South Ossetian conflict in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Firstly, they derive from social and ideological differences – Bolsheviks in Abkhazia and South Ossetia fought for Sovietization and against Georgians/non-Bolshevik members of the society. Secondly, even though these regions have traces of revolutionary ideological conflict, they had ethnic demands and ideas on self-determination before The Democratic Republic of Georgia. Thirdly, territorial claims were not a primary focus, as Abkhazia and South Ossetia did not want to separate from Russia, but still looked to Tbilisi for support and accepted going under independent Georgia. Lastly, conflicts in 1918–1921 surrounding the South Ossetia and Abkhazia were mostly political (ethnoterritorial), not militarist. Those who in these regions were not Bolsheviks worked towards maximizing self-governance. According to Welt, these political reasons were pushed towards conflict by violent revolutions. Moreover, conflict was a result of a power game between Bolsheviks, peasants, authorities of the Russian provisional government in Transcaucasia, the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic (TDFR), independent Georgia.<sup>38</sup>

Stephen Blank<sup>39</sup> has compared politics used towards Georgia with Poland and Bukharan. These examples show methods and procedures according to which Soviet power was established and these include: 1) camouflaging direct Soviet intervention, 2) premature forceful invasion when internal revolution had not yet taken place. This is why later, Georgian attitudes were profoundly

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<sup>36</sup> Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research 2018: 6–7.

<sup>37</sup> Ramsbotham *et al.* 2011: 63–93.

<sup>38</sup> Welt, Cory 2014: A fateful moment. Ethnic autonomy and revolutionary violence in the Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918–1921). Jones, Stephen F. (ed.), *The making of modern Georgia, 1918-2012. The First Georgian republic and its successors*. New York: Routledge, 205–207.

<sup>39</sup> Blank, Stephen 1993: The Soviet conquest of Georgia. *Central Asian Survey*, 12(1), 33–46.

negative and lead to conflict and revolts in the later 1920s. At the moment invasion took place, Bolshevism in Georgia had shallow support.<sup>40</sup>

The essence of the Polish-Soviet War could be adapted to describe the Georgian invasion as well. Firstly, for a notable period in 1919, Soviets claimed that they were not attached with war and instead, it was allegedly happening between Lithuania-Byelorussia.<sup>41</sup> This method is not only similar in 1921, but it was relevant in Ukraine in 2014 as well. Four days before the Soviets officially invaded Georgia in February 1921, there were incidents on Armenian areas occupied by Georgians. Russians accused foreign powers of provocations in those villages and also made it seem like it was a conflict between Georgians and Armenians. In reality, Russians started invading from the direction of Armenia.<sup>42</sup> Secondly, Norman Davies has emphasized that Russian's perception of the beginning of the Polish-Soviet War is not following the real start. Even though for many years Russian scholars dated the start to 1920, hostilities took place already in early 1919.<sup>43</sup> Nowadays, the majority of the world considers dates of the Polish-Soviet War to be the same as Davies proposed, however, in Georgian case, it is still forgotten that hostilities also took place before the actual invasion of 1921. The same applies to 2008 as well, as Russian activities and manipulations had taken place before the exact war broke out. Spreading misleading information about actual dates and real aggressors has given a chance for Russians to picture themselves as victims and other states as the main initiators of conflict throughout the years.

What is more, Norman Davies has underlined why the Polish-Soviet War was not a civil war. According to Davies, it indeed overlapped with the Russian Civil War both in period and somewhat in the territory, but it does not lead to the conclusion that it was a part of the Russian Civil War. He takes these as separate wars and not as one part of the Civil War. Moreover, Poles were threatened both by Whites and Reds.<sup>44</sup> According to this logic, the Georgian invasion shall not be considered as the Russian Civil War either. Georgia had declared its independence and had received numerous recognitions and like in Poland, its freedom was in danger because of Russian aggression. Most interestingly, Józef Piłsudski had ideas about anti-Soviet federation, which would

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Dokumenty Vneshnej Politiki SSSR, Vol. II 1919–1920*: Moscow: 78-9.

<sup>42</sup> Makharadze, Filip 1928: *Sovety i bor'ba za sovetskuiu vlast' v Gruzii. 1917–1921*. Tbilisi: 250; Kazemzadeh 1951: 318.

<sup>43</sup> Davies, Norman 1975: The Genesis of the Polish-Soviet War, 1919–1920. *European Studies Review*, 5(1), 47–67.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

not have included only Finland, Poland and the Baltic States, but possibly also Georgia and Romania.<sup>45</sup>

## Outcome

The Democratic Republic of Georgia needed a constitution, as the state was declared independent in 1918. After years of work, it was finally adopted by the Constituent Assembly of Georgia in February 1921. By this time, attacks by the Red Army had already started, which made the acceleration of the process vital. Without war, the constitution would have been announced on 12<sup>th</sup> March and a half year later elections would have taken place.<sup>46</sup> Instead, Georgia became occupied by the Soviet Army in 1921, on 25<sup>th</sup> February.

Abkhazia became a treaty republic of Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1921 when it remained *de facto* independent until its change into an autonomous republic in 1931. Adjara followed as an autonomous Soviet republic in 1922, and South Ossetia became an autonomous oblast in the same year. On 25<sup>th</sup> February, 1921, Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic was created, until on 12<sup>th</sup> March, 1922, the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (TSFSR) was set up which covered not only Georgia but also Armenia and Azerbaijan. The TSFSR ended in 1936 and Georgia became the Soviet Socialist Republic again.<sup>47</sup>

The occupation of Georgia by the Soviet Army in 1921 has been a widely discussed topic as historians and politicians have differing opinions. Swedish politician Per Gahrton in his book “Georgia. Pawn in the New Great Game“ questions the occurrence of Soviet occupation as it did not end the existence of Georgians and their culture. Moreover, he underlines the scope of aid for literature, art, language and institutions, which, in his opinion, favored Georgians. Gahrton builds his arguments further, as he positively highlights economic transformation in Soviet Georgia, furthermore, how populations grew and rurality declined. Lastly, he questions the negativeness of occupation, as he introduces statistics according to which ethnic Georgians increased from 61.4% in 1939 to 74% by the end of the Soviet Union.<sup>48</sup> Author of present thesis disagrees with such argumentation and considers the period of 1921–1991 in Georgia definitely as an occupation, as:

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Matsaberidze, Malkhaz 2014: The Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918–1921) and the search for the Georgian model of Democracy. Jones, Stephen F. (ed.), *The making of modern Georgia, 1918-2012. The First Georgian republic and its successors*. New York: Routledge, 143.

<sup>47</sup> Gahrton, Per 2010: *Georgia. Pawn in the New Great Game*. London&New York: Pluto Press, 40–41.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 41–45.



1) Georgian case goes under the definition of occupation as it is “a situation in which an army or group of people moves into and takes control of a place“<sup>49</sup> 2) Per Gahrton remains a controversial author in Sweden.

Remaining members of the Georgian government managed to escape by ships from Batumi. The government in exile was first created in Istanbul, but later on ended up in Leuville-Sur-Orge, in France. Such politicians as President Noe Jordania, Minister of Foreign Affairs Evgeni Gegechkori, Constituent Assembly president Karlo Chkheidze and Minister of Internal Affairs Noe Ramishvili worked to notify Western world on events that had taken place in Georgia. Active members of the former government travelled in Europe to spread the word and organize different events for Georgia’s sake. Despite sincere attempts, no former ally and recognizer of Georgia made serious moves towards the situation.<sup>50</sup>

## 2.2 Russo-Georgian war of 2008

### Historical pretext

In 2005, according to the National Security Concept, main military risks of Georgia included: violation of state’s integrity, extensions of neighbours conflicts, military intervention and possible military bases of Russia. At the same time, civil security threats were: terrorism, contraband and transnational organized crime, corruption and administrative inefficiency, economic and social problems, energetical challenges, informational issues and environmental challenges.<sup>51</sup>

Russia had put effort in Georgian breakaway regions for years. In 2000, when Vladimir Putin rose to power, the visa regime was established. For Abkhazians, Adjarians and South Ossetians, obtaining visas to Russia was made more straightforward. This move affected the Georgian economy, as back then around 500 000 Georgians had work-relations with Russia.<sup>52</sup> Abkhazians and South Ossetians were simply handed out Russian citizenship, which helped to create both economic and personal ties with these regions. Also, having Russian citizens abroad enabled them to play on the “protection of Russian minorities abroad“.<sup>53</sup> What is more, in 2004, the biggest

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<sup>49</sup> Cambridge Dictionary 2019.

<sup>50</sup> King, Charles 2008a: *The Ghost of Freedom. A History of the Caucasus*. New York: Oxford University Press, 173–174.

<sup>51</sup> The Parliament of Georgia 2005: *National Security Concept of Georgia*. 3–5.

<sup>52</sup> Frantz, Douglas 2000: Russians Send a Message To Georgians: Toe the Line. *The New York Times*, December 21.

<sup>53</sup> Cohen, Ariel; Hamilton, Robert E. 2011: *The Russian military and the Georgian war: lessons and implications*. The Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 17.

escalation of conflict with Georgians broke out and it resulted in casualties. In 2007, Georgian radar spot was bombed by Russians, on the South Ossetian border.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, tensions on the border were present for many years and it only escalated further in the following years.

In 2006, researcher Ariel Cohen successfully predicted a military conflict outbreak. She brought out the possibility of an assassination of Saakashvili expressed by Gleb Pavlovsky, and it was even said that spring is time to start a war with Georgia, South Ossetia as the main conflict area. She also pointed out clear statements a few years before the war, which underlined the possibility of action against Georgia, in case their way towards NATO would continue. On the other side, Georgians emphasized peaceful means, saying that they do not want to be in a war. Furthermore, Georgians followed the advice of Jüri Luik, Estonian Defence Minister and Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, to ignore threats of Russia like Baltics did in the 1990s.<sup>55</sup>

In spring 2008, Russian actions against Georgia intensified, despite low attention and recognition from western states but also from Georgia. In March, Russia gave up its sanctions in Abkhazia, which freed way to weapon transportation to the hands of separatists. In a few weeks, Putin *de facto* recognized separatist governments of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In April, Russians shot down Georgian drone in Abkhazia and ultimately, sent forces to Abkhazia to enlarge peacekeepers contingent. Besides, the railway from Russia to Abkhazia was restored, which was later used in the war against Georgia. In July, problems arose in South Ossetia as Georgian administration there faced assassination attempt, on 2<sup>nd</sup> August *de facto* president of South Ossetia announced civilian evacuation from Tskhinvali, on 4<sup>th</sup> August a general mobilization by the *de facto* government was announced and eventually, Russian aircraft entered Georgian airspace. Finally, on 1<sup>st</sup> August, two bombs blew up in the South Ossetian area belonging to Georgian control, where five men got injured.<sup>56</sup>

Since these first moments of August, actions escalated quickly, as Russians started moving forward to the Roki tunnel. It is proved, that before the war started, troops and “volunteer“ forces of Russia had already gone through the tunnel and stayed in South Ossetia, in Java.<sup>57</sup> On 6<sup>th</sup> August 2008,

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<sup>54</sup> Asmus, Ronald D. 2010: *A Little War That Shook The World. Georgia, Russia and the Future of the West*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 25.

<sup>55</sup> Cohen, Ariel 2006: *Springtime is for War?* The Heritage Foundation, March 31.

<sup>56</sup> Hamilton, Robert 2010: The bear came through the tunnel: an analysis of Georgian planning and operations in the Russo-Georgian War and implications for U.S policy. Rich, Paul B. (ed.), *Crisis in the Caucasus: Russia, Georgia and the West*. New York: Routledge, 208–211.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 209.

500-strong Georgian peacekeeping contingent in South Ossetia got shelled by South Ossetian militia forces and two soldiers ended up being killed. This was the moment when events opened up and Georgian Army decided to attack. On 7<sup>th</sup> August, Major Giorgi Kalandadze had to pull out a brigade from an Iraqi train-up and move it to Gori.<sup>58</sup> The war between Georgia, Russia and separatist governments of South Ossetia and Abkhazia lasted from 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> August and resulted in the occupation of Georgian territory by 20%.

Russia and Georgia have told to had similar conduct and course of the fighting. Russia, on one hand, was well-funded, but lacked tactical skills, Georgia, on the other side, had knowledgeable fighters and sources for small-unit levels for tactical movements but had serious shortages in operational planning. Russia's win was combined with fast forces, greater statistics and a successful political-military strategy. One of the leading causes of Russia's win has often been mentioned to be the knowledge of Soviet times. Georgians had eliminated all Soviet-era military leadership, whereas Russia still had experienced men for planning. People at the Georgian Ministry of Defence and in armed forces were roughly less than 40 years old, which meant no relevant experience from the Soviet-era.<sup>59</sup> Georgians, trained by the USA, had experience in counter-insurgency operations but lacked knowledge in the combined-arms attack. This put them in a regrettable position in August 2008. Also, Georgia was half-way done with its transformations, so in the middle of this process, they were vulnerable – it led to a mess of incompetent officials and incomplete methods.<sup>60</sup> Secondly, Georgians lacked excellent communication as the president's security team was not in one place in Tbilisi, but in Gori. Saakashvili could not reach people by phone and could not meet them. Officers did not even know that Saakashvili had declared a ceasefire on television in the evening of 7<sup>th</sup> August.<sup>61</sup>

### War's nature

According to Conflict Barometer created by Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (HIK), the start of the Russo-Georgian conflict of 2008 took place already in 1992. Even though the conflict of 2008 has been a widely discussed dispute, whether it was just an armed conflict or war, HIK gives it the highest score of violence (5), which means it is firmly defined as a war. Moreover, the Russo-Georgian war is claimed to be an inter-state war, despite being a short

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 204.

<sup>59</sup> Cohen and Hamilton 2011: 6–7.

<sup>60</sup> Hamilton 2010: 206.

<sup>61</sup> Hamilton 2010: 212.

conflict escalation, it was highly violent and met all the criteria of being a war. Interestingly, HIIK considers long-term conflicts between Abkhazia, South-Ossetia, Georgia and Russia as severe secessionist crises, which is separated from the Russo-Georgian war of 2008. Unlike the secessionist conflicts throughout the years, the war of 2008 mainly took place because of the matter of international power play. It happened as Georgia's try to recover South Ossetia was unsuccessful and therefore, Russia intervened with an intense attack.<sup>62</sup>

Independent Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (IIFFMCG)<sup>63</sup> in its 2009 report considered the recent Georgian war as a complex mix of inter-state and intra-state armed conflict. Russians fought against Georgians, whereas also South Ossetians and Abkhazians opposed Georgians. As the report declares, this combination of war is highly likely to violate human rights and also faces the participation of irregular armed factions.<sup>64</sup> However, IIFFMCG has received criticism, as a history professor and writer Revaz Gachechiladze<sup>65</sup> finds this report problematic because it is showing Georgia as an equal trouble-maker along with Russia. According to Gachechiladze, Western institutions have tried to distribute the fault of conflict. This criticism is found among other notable Georgian historians as well, for example, Mikheil Bakhtadze in an interview with the author addressed both wars clearly as inter-state wars, which were Russian interventions and ended up with occupation. Both in 1921 and 2008, fractional groups were heavily backed by Russians. Also, in 1921 whole state of Georgia was occupied and in 2008 Abkhazia and South Ossetia, with an on-going so-called "creeping occupation" which explains the intentions of one participant.<sup>66</sup>

U.S. House of Representatives has issued a document in which it states that even though Saakashvili decided to use military measures, and it remains regrettable, then Russia's provocations cannot be overlooked. Firstly, different notices revealed ethnic cleansing of Georgians in South Ossetia and secondly, Russia's actions in the region had dangerously intensified and enraged

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<sup>62</sup> Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research 2008: *Conflict Barometer 2008*. Heidelberg: University of Heidelberg, 1–2, 12, 21.

<sup>63</sup> Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia 2009: *Report*. Volume I, September, 10.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Gachechiladze, Revaz 2014: Geopolitics and foreign powers in the modern history of Georgia. Comparing 1918–21 and 1991–2010. Jones, Stephen F. (ed.), *The making of modern Georgia, 1918-2012. The First Georgian republic and its successors*. New York: Routledge, 30.

<sup>66</sup> Bakhtadze 2019.

Georgians. Also, it is emphasized that Russia failed two cease-fires and used disproportional forces intending to remove Saakashvili from power.<sup>67</sup>

Foreign journalists have compared the Russo-Georgian war to Prague Spring in 1968 and invasion of the Sudetenland in 1938. Well-known writer and professor Charles King has challenged these comparisons, as instead, he gives an example of Russia's behaviour in the Crimean war in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In his opinion, this event marked the distancing from Western powers and Russia justified itself as a protector of Christian people, which it still does in similar forms today.<sup>68</sup> However, comparisons to more recent events continues as notably, Lithuanian president Valdas Adamkus, when visiting Tbilisi during the war, drew parallels with Munich agreement of 1938 as well. He expressed his concerns, as Georgia could have been the new Munich, which ignited the II World War.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, Swedish foreign minister Carl Bildt stated that Slobodan Milošević's intervention in Yugoslav states was not accepted simply because of protecting Serbian citizens. Russia, on the other hand, used similar doctrine and took it as a fair justification for intervention.<sup>70</sup>

Recently, Georgian events of 2008 were compared to Crimea in 2014, as Russia has continued its expansion abroad by using similar motives and methods like in Georgia. According to Emmanuel Karagiannis, writer and academic, with both Ukrainian and Georgian cases Russia used Kosovo precedent as a justification for its actions and an additional tool was the protection of Russian-speakers or minorities. Though, Karagiannis proposes that the real rationale for Georgia and Ukraine have been NATO's enlargement and Russia's wish to keep its geopolitical position.<sup>71</sup> In the analysis, the author of this thesis tries to find additional reasonings and explanations of the war of 2008.

Differences of Crimea in 2014 and South Ossetia in 2008 occur as well, as in Georgian case Moscow directly and immediately told that their men are part of the intervention and ready to protect South Ossetians. In Crimea, admitting the presence of troops was not so straight-forward and it was announced that the Black Sea fleet only stepped out for safeguarding people from

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<sup>67</sup> Authenticated U.S. Government Information 2008: *U.S.-Russia relations in the aftermath of the Georgia crisis. Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives, 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, II session. Serial no. 110-221.* September 9. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 5.

<sup>68</sup> King, Charles 2008b: The Five-Day War. Managing Moscow After the Georgia Crisis. *Foreign Affairs*, November/December, 3–4.

<sup>69</sup> Adamkus, Valdas 2008: Georgia Should Have Ceasefire Before Negotiations. *Baltic News Service*, August 12.

<sup>70</sup> Asmus 2010: 42.

<sup>71</sup> Karagiannis, Emmanuel 2014: The Russian Interventions in South Ossetia and Crimea Compared: Military Performance, Legitimacy and Goals. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 35(3), 416.

Ukrainian extremists.<sup>72</sup> This tendency has only developed further, as of the war in East Ukraine, Russia has been very hesitant to admit any presence in the region.

### Outcome

As a result, the Russian invasion terminated Georgia's integrity<sup>73</sup> and Abkhazia and South Ossetian independence got recognized by Russia and few of its allies. Moreover, Russia managed to demonstrate the weakness of the European Union and NATO, as well as undermined the reliability and trust of Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan. Russia started seeking broad collaborations in the Caucasus area and relationships with Ukraine started to deteriorate.<sup>74</sup>

Tsygankov and Tarver-Wahlquist have used political theories to place the Russo-Georgian conflict into frames. Russia's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia is put in four theories and only constructivism with its facts and figures proves itself. According to constructivism, Russia's recognition of break-away regions was put through for the sake of increasing internal honor.<sup>75</sup> In the hope to get recognition for these areas, Russia has supported Latin American states or small microstates and failed states, as only Syria, Nauru, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Tuvalu and Vanuatu have recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent. Cooperating on Latin American soil is also beneficial for Russia in the sense that it is a clear threat to the USA, as Cuba was during the last century. Moreover, these states are economically and politically problematic, which makes them an easy target to widen Russia's hegemony all over the world.<sup>76</sup>

Zurab Abashidze, former Georgian ambassador in Moscow and current Georgian Prime Minister's special representative for relations with Russia, has summarized primary outcomes of the 2008 war, according to his perspective. Firstly, Georgia suffered significantly – in deaths and an increase of internally displaced people. Also, Georgian acceptance to NATO was put on hold for an unknown amount of time, which serves the interests of Russia. Positively, Eastern Partnership was established, the EU Monitoring Mission increased the European Union's presence and Georgia got a positive impact from financial aid as well as from the USA-Georgian Charter of Strategic

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 413–414.

<sup>73</sup> Look at: Appendix 2.

<sup>74</sup> Blank, Stephen 2009: America and the Russo-Georgian War. *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 20(2), 425–451.

<sup>75</sup> Tsygankov, Andrei P.; Tarver-Wahlquist, Matthew 2009: Duelling Honors: Power, Identity and the Russia-Georgia Divide. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 5, 307–326.

<sup>76</sup> Aava, Stina 2019: *Checkbook Diplomacy: Russia seeking recognition for Abkhazia and South Ossetia*. Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, Intern's Contribution, 3.

Partnership. Secondly, Russia won even more from the war, as they enhanced their military presence in the region and put a hold on NATO's enlargement. More importantly, domestically authority and belief in Putin and Medvedev went up and threatening messages for nearby countries were comprehensible. According to Abashidze, the USA's image got harmed, as they were not effective in protecting their partner, whereas the EU acted fast and Nicolas Sarkozy did much what was in his power, even if it partly turned out to be sloppy.<sup>77</sup>

Moreover, as the business with Russia by the Western powers was quickly rebuilt, then the message sent to the world was weak. What is more, states did not reach a consensus on policy towards Russia and fights at the Council of Europe gave Russia a sign of an unstable EU. For Turkey, the military strength of Russia in South Caucasus was not a pleasant outcome and it pushed Turkey towards cooperation with Russia and to active communication. Azerbaijan and Armenia both realized that finishing energy passage through Georgia is risky for them and it made Azerbaijan more loyal to Russia and Armenia had to force itself to overcome hardships with Turkey, which led into the creation of necessary relations, in case transit of Georgia would diminish.<sup>78</sup>

According to a notable researcher Mamuka Tsereteli, one of the primary outcomes of war for the Georgian side in 2008 was the ethnic cleansing of Georgians in Tskhinvali, Akhalkori and Kodori Gorge. Secondly, after the war, Russia has set up military and troops in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Thirdly, the USA showed its support by showcasing its navy at Georgian ports, as well as assisting together with the EU and international institutions worth of US\$4.5 billion. For Russians, a vital outcome was seeing that it has more significant interests in Eurasia than West and it was also a wake-up call for the neighbouring states. As an energy partner, Russia became unreliable and the EU started looking towards alternative sources, such as liquefied natural gas (LNG), solar and wind energy. Lastly, Caspian companies are still trying to not rely on Russian transit, as before, and new pipelines are being built.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Abashidze, Zurab 2010: *Gruzino-rossijskaja vojna: 20 mesjacev spustja*. Hucishvili, Georgi i Gogeliani, Tina (red.), *Rossija i Gruzija. Puti vyhoda iz krizisa*. Tbilisi: Mezhdunarodnyj centr po konfliktam i peregovoram, 57–63.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Tsereteli, Mamuka 2014: *Georgia as a geographical pivot. Past, present, and future*. Jones, Stephen F. (ed.), *The making of modern Georgia, 1918-2012. The First Georgian republic and its successors*. New York: Routledge, 87–88.

### 3. Comparative research

#### Contemporaneity

As in many Eastern European states, Georgia celebrated its centenary in 2018. In Estonia, people have better connections with the first republic, as it lasted longer and even most of the current grandparents grew up during independence. On the contrary, in Georgia independence lasted only for three years, many of patriotic and loyal political leaders, as well as intelligentsia, emigrated to France, Germany, etc. Current French rooted Georgian president Salome Zurbishvili is also a successor of Georgians who emigrated to France in 1921. As citizens of Georgia rarely have personal contact with the first republic, it has been harder to keep up the continuity and propaganda has worked better than, for example, in the Baltic States.

When creating a new identity or memory of a nation, it is essential to create myths on a smaller or more significant scale, to strengthen the wholeness of society.<sup>80</sup> Myths or fake stories of first independence were very present, especially in the 1990s. René Girard explains how myth is twisted understanding of some historical event – a reality which is distorted and therefore changes into myth, which always has some true origins. According to his notions, myth can come from a real event that actually had sufferers.<sup>81</sup> In that case, Soviet invasion and occupation give a solid base for continuing research of 1921, as it had victims and Georgian resistance to Russia has continued up to date. George Schöpflin, a well-known writer on nationhood and identity, has categorized myths into main groups. From his division, two are deeply connected with the Soviet invasion in 1921 and occupation, as these myths are nowadays used on every level. Firstly, myths of rebirth and renewal are present in current Georgian society, as sometimes the government and people of 1921 are blamed for weakness and bad work, which resulted in occupation. Nowadays, it can be used as a motive to instruct people not to fall on the same path again. Secondly, the myth of unjust treatment is relevant in Georgia, like in most other Post-Soviet states. According to this, the nation has faced its destiny by being badly treated and ultimately, Europe and the rest of the world somehow have to compensate or acknowledge the suffering of these countries, which has not been a fault of the victim.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Miller, David 1995: *On Nationality*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

<sup>81</sup> Golsan, Richard J. 2002: *An Introduction: René Girard and Myth*. New York: Routledge, 61–62.

<sup>82</sup> Schöpflin, George 1997: The Functions of Myth and Taxonomy of Myths. Hosking, Geoffrey; Schöpflin, George (ed.), *Myths and Nationhood*. New York: Routledge, 19–36.



During the “Rose Revolution“ in 2003, shaping the nation’s memory by illustrating Russia as an eternal enemy became a subject for strengthening Georgian identity. Such measures allow politicians to get approval for their decisions. After the war in 2008, paralleling 1921 and 2008 became popular, as it was a lively example of war and occupation, which could lead the political myth of a rebirth of Georgians and help to ditch Soviet past.<sup>83</sup> When the Museum of Occupation was opened in 2006, the exhibition seemed to equal the Soviet regime with the Russian Republic and the new Georgian government from 2003 was illustrated as a successor of the 1918–1921 republic. It is even suggested that Saakashvili’s talks about Georgia as a moving train referred to Shorapan’s tragedy’s wagon, which was shot completely by Soviets in 1924 and is now exhibited at the Museum of Occupation.<sup>84</sup>

In 2010, a commission was established for historical truth in the Georgian-Russian relationship, headed by Vasili Rukhadze, a political analyst and professor. According to Rukhadze, people do not acknowledge Russian occupation and he proposed several methods that could be adapted to change people’s understanding. These included: new history books, street names and public spaces, memorials/statues/cemeteries for Georgian victims as well as setting up a memorial day and mourning days.<sup>85</sup> In high schools, a textbook on occupation was put forward, public lectures on actions against Georgia were taught and in Kutaisi, even a youth conference on Soviet invasion of 1921 was organized.<sup>86</sup> Events, contests and lectures on such topics continue up to date.

In May 2010, following a long speech on struggles of Georgian independence, Mikheil Saakashvili opened a monument on the Heroes Square, which is dedicated to around 3500 people who died as a direct result of Soviet invasion and occupation of 1921.<sup>87</sup> One way of shaping collective memory has become commemorating matters of Soviet invasion, which are after 2008 more popular and frequent. For example, in February 2019, an event of Immortal Cadets of 1921 was held. It underlined that even though Tbilisi may have fallen, heroes never die. As part of the event, lecture

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<sup>83</sup> Toria, Malkhaz 2014: The Soviet occupation of Georgia in 1921 and the Russian-Georgian war of August 2008. Historical analogy as a memory project. Jones, Stephen F. (ed.), *The making of modern Georgia, 1918-2012. The First Georgian republic and its successors*. New York: Routledge, 316.

<sup>84</sup> Shatirishvili, Zaza 2009: National narratives and new politics of memory in Georgia. *Small Wars&Insurgencies*, 20(2), 396.

<sup>85</sup> Rukhadze, Vasili 2010: Kolektiuri mekhsiareba. *Iberiana*.

<sup>86</sup> Toria 2014: 323. Toria uses Kldiashvili’s articles on <https://okupacia1921.blogspot.com/2009/03/37.html>, which has been removed since.

<sup>87</sup> Saakashvili Addresses Nation on Independence Day 2010: *Civil Georgia*, May 26.

on occupation was held, there was an exhibition of 1918–1921, screening of documentary movie *Telegraph Occupation*, a visit to the Occupation Museum and Kojori Junkers Memorial.<sup>88</sup>

## **Analysis**

In this chapter, the author compares six main areas to illustrate the similarities and differences of both wars. Rather political than military criteria help to compare these events in comparative tables, which finally makes it possible to come to a conclusion. Components that will be briefly compared are: the pre-war economic position of Georgia, pre-war internal politics of Georgia, pre-war international presence in Georgia, causes of war, international reaction and protection at war, legal problems of war.

Chosen components are part of Gray and Martin's classifications<sup>89</sup>, with the exception of leaving out military or statistical information. Particularly driving forces, triggering events and legality are taken from their system, but to be able to illustrate Russian motivations and Georgian problems over these past centuries, the author of this thesis has decided to add its points. These include pre-war positions and reactions, which give an understanding of not only the war but how conflict has escalated to full-scale war. It is essential to understand the role of international relations before the war and during it, as Georgia relies on its allies. A similar view on triggers of the Georgian war in 2008 is shared by Shearman and Sussex, as they introduced factors of foreign policy, the balance of power, national interest, geo-economy, politics (different systems, democracy promotion, ethnicity and war), culture and perception.<sup>90</sup> Moreover, Notable Western diplomat Ronald Asmus has emphasized how conflicts and wars in Georgian history mostly are not important to look at because they are violent, but instead what roles do foreign players act in these wars. In particular, he finds Russian manipulations in the region over the centuries the most important factor, which shapes Georgia's and broader region's destiny.<sup>91</sup> Therefore, such aspects are added to Gray and Martin's system to give a short but efficient overview.

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<sup>88</sup> Event was held by a non-governmental organization Young Generation on 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2019 at Saakashvili Presidential Library. Shared widely on Facebook.

<sup>89</sup> Gray and Martin 2008: 4–5.

<sup>90</sup> Shearman, Peter; Sussex, Matthew 2010: The roots of Russian conduct. Rich, Paul B. (ed.), *Crisis in the Caucasus: Russia, Georgia and the West*. New York: Routledge, 1–25.

<sup>91</sup> Asmus 2010: 53.

Table 1. The pre-war economic position of Georgia

	War of 1921	War of 2008
Economy	Major transit country for Russia to get resources from Baku oilfields. Exactly before the war, the Western world had lost interest due to unreliability and conflicts in the region.	Before the war, Russia was left out from the energy transit route. Georgia's cooperation with neighbours was high. European interests for energy routes and Georgia as a transit state.

Georgia became especially important for Russia when in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, cars were invented and oil became an vital source. As Azerbaijan produced half of the world's oil on its oil fields and also was a crucial supplier for the Soviet Union, then Georgia as a transit-state gained attention by the Russian political ladder. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, new oil and gas fields in Central-Asia and the Caspian Sea, have raised Georgian importance even higher.<sup>92</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century oil transportation to Batumi took place on railways, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century already in pipes. Especially during the I World War, ports and railways of Georgia raised the state's importance and involved it into power games.<sup>93</sup>

The Democratic Republic of Georgia tried to establish strong foreign relations, based on the export of manganese, which before the war covered about 70% of the world's production. Furthermore, silk, honey, tobacco and tea were export articles. In Georgia, several currencies were used, as own Georgian currency inflated. That led to the fluctuation of state, which became convenient to Soviet Russia, who used this situation as a provocation tool to deepen discontentment among Georgians.<sup>94</sup> During the first republic of Georgia, 80% of the population lived in rural areas which enabled them to keep the famine away, as people could supply themselves efficiently. The state was in a difficult position, even though independent, it had too many issues to control. Regretfully, Georgia could not manage its economics, as the state budget was unbalanced – imports were larger than exports, the deficit was around 250 million rubles, money was printed and it all followed by inflation.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Laaneots, Ants 2014: *Vene-Gruusia 2008. aasta sõda – põhjused ja tagajärjed*. Estonian National Defence College: ENDC Occasional Papers Series, 1, 7–8.

<sup>93</sup> Kazemzadeh 1951: 12.

<sup>94</sup> Tsereteli 2014: 80.

<sup>95</sup> Makharadze 1928: 157–158.

Mamuka Tsereteli has emphasized that great powers lost its interest in Georgia when its transit functions ceased to serve European interests, due to conflicts and instability taking place in the area. Lack of international interests caused the Democratic Republic of Georgia to collapse easily under Russian provocations. Invasion of Bolsheviks was also inevitable, as Georgia had no allies even in its region, as Turkey and Georgia, Armenia vs. Azerbaijan/Turkey/Georgia destabilized the region irredeemably. In comparison, the situation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century was cardinally different, as working closely with Turkey and Azerbaijan caught interests from the European side. Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline was an outcome of such relations and since 2005, Georgia had more importance for the Western world, than it did in 1921.<sup>96</sup>

Jossif Stalin, in his speech at the Twelfth Congress of the R.C.P. in 1923, repeatedly addressed Georgian importance for the Soviet Union. Firstly, he mentioned that the creation of the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic was necessary to create peace and without Georgia, it would not have succeeded. Also, Stalin frowned upon what he named *chauvinism* in Georgia, as he described how 30% of people were non-Georgians and they were considered underdeveloped. Moreover, Stalin let listeners at the Congress decide over Georgian privileges, as he talked about Batumi as an economical door to the West and an important import centre for Azerbaijan, as well as also Tbilisi as an essential railway point for Armenia. That, according to Stalin, illustrated how Georgia was substantial for TSFSR. According to Stalin's understanding, Georgia wanted to use its full potential which would have put Armenians and Azeris in unfavourable positions and therefore, Georgia had to be involved into Southern-Caucasus so it would not enjoy its privileges alone.<sup>97</sup>

When it comes to modern conflicts in South Caucasus, again, aspects of energy security cannot be overlooked. Nowadays, not only oil and gas move through Georgia but also grains, goods and raw materials from Central Asia and China are transported widely. Still, in 2012, more than 1.2 billion barrels of oil products and gas were transferred through Georgia daily. Moreover, the current Southern Gas Corridor project has deepened Georgian relations with Europe, as gas is transported from Azerbaijan.<sup>98</sup> New projects which bypass Russia can be seen from their perspective as being

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<sup>96</sup> Tsereteli 2014: 75–76.

<sup>97</sup> Stalin, Jossif 1923: The Twelfth Congress of the R.C.P. (B.). Moscow, April 17–25.

<sup>98</sup> Tsereteli 2014: 75.

left out, as well as potentially being threatened by the enlargement of the Western world towards their borders.

One of the Russia's policies would purposefully offer more dependency on its energy sources, in order to get control over the region and its foreign politics. As Shearman and Sussex suggest, cooperation on energy between West and Russia could bring more common interests on the table, but instead, it ended up as another excuse for political battles.<sup>99</sup> Three years before the war, Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) crude oil pipeline, favored by the USA, was opened. A year later in 2006, the South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP) of natural gas from Baku to Erzurum was added. These solutions did not include Russia and instead connected Europe with the Caspian Sea, South Caucasus and Central-Asia. For Moscow, this meant losing transit tariffs, but also being cut off from control on pipes that go to Europe. Such projects have increased the autonomy of South Caucasus states and deepened their relationships with Europe and the USA.<sup>100</sup>

When it comes to the economic status of Georgia before the war, then several notable events occurred during previous years. In May 2007, Krakow summit took place where Azerbaijan, Georgia, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Poland signed a declaration for further cooperation and transport of oil and gas to Europe. As of 2007, IMF considered Georgian economic performance remarkable and growth was expected in the future as well.<sup>101</sup> Throughout all quarters of 2007, the main imports of goods came from Turkey, Ukraine, Russia, Azerbaijan, Germany and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Also in both years, the main export destinations were Armenia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Ukraine, Russia and Germany, but in the 4<sup>th</sup> economic quarter of 2007, it included the USA and Canada as well.<sup>102</sup>

Georgian geopolitical situation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was worse, as its transportation system was troubled and great powers did not get attracted to its transit possibilities. This differs vastly from 2008 when western countries were genuinely interested in energy passing through Georgia.<sup>103</sup> In modern Georgia, previous examples have shown that foreign economic interests went beyond gas

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<sup>99</sup> Shearman and Sussex 2010: 9.

<sup>100</sup> German, Tracey C. 2010: Pipeline politics: Georgia and energy security. Rich, Paul B. (ed.), *Crisis in the Caucasus: Russia, Georgia and the West*. New York: Routledge, 94–113.

<sup>101</sup> Georgian-European Policy and Legal Advice Centre 2007: *Georgian Economic Trends*. Quarterly review, July, 9–11.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, 41; Georgian-European Policy and Legal Advice Centre 2008: *Georgian Economic Trends*. Quarterly review, May, 44–45.

<sup>103</sup> Suny, Ronald Grigor 1994: *The Making of the Georgian Nation*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 204.

and oil, also there were plentiful destinations and collaborations. In 2007, countries such as the United Arab Emirates, the USA and Kazakhstan all planned to invest or started their investments in Georgia. UAE planned to invest US\$1.5 billion to the Georgian Black Sea port of Poti, also Hyatt hotel construction took off in Tbilisi and respectively, Kazakhstan planned to invest US\$10 million to grain terminal in Poti. Moreover, Georgia and the USA signed the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement to deepen and create better trade relations between these two states. Also, continued aid from the EU, as Georgia and European Investment Bank signed another agreement for investments.<sup>104</sup>

In February 2008, on the year of war before the conflict escalated, Batumi Oil Terminal and Sea Port were sold to KazMunaiGas (Kazakhstan). Moreover, British investment joined in stakes of Georgia's most prominent internet provider. Later that month, the government introduced the economic package to parliament, which included three draft laws and 22 draft amendments, all to make Georgia an important global economic point. By early 2008, foreign direct investments were remarkable and upturn was expected. Additionally, two foreign banks were selected to be part of Georgia's first Eurobonds issue, with a value of US\$500 million, which ended up being a great success. Moreover, foreign investments came from several states. The UAE led project of Uptown Tbilisi took off, which included projects worth of US\$170 million. Also, Georgians signed a partnership with Turkish investors for seven hydropower stations. What is more, Georgia signed a deal with the UAE for creation of the Black Sea free zone, which by the latter was envisaged as Georgia's chance to become next Dubai.<sup>105</sup> Additionally, it should be mentioned that often Georgian businessmen with foreign citizenship invest in Georgia, therefore, these are considered foreign investments.

Table 2. Pre-war internal politics of Georgia

	War of 1921	War of 2008
Governance	Parliamentary	Semi-presidential
Ethnic tensions within the state	Low	Moderate

<sup>104</sup> Georgian-European Policy and Legal Advice Centre 2007: 9–11.

<sup>105</sup> Georgian-European Policy and Legal Advice Centre 2008: 11–16.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Greeks, Armenians, Russians and Germans settled to Georgia. As at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Georgian Muslims were forced to move to the Ottoman Empire, then they were replaced by Armenians. At the end of the Russian Empire, many Georgians were settled to areas of ethnic minorities, which were more loyal to Russian power. Also, in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Russian soldiers and religious individuals settled in Georgia, with a total sum near 100 000. Lastly, Assyrians and Kurds set up their homes during the I World War.<sup>106</sup> In 1917, Georgians made up 67,7% of the population, Armenians 11,5%, Russians/Ukrainians 4,9%, Turks/Persians 5,3%, Ossetians 4%, Abkhazians 1,9% and others 4,9%. Considering these statistics, it is visible that Ossetians and Abkhazians were micro ethnicities within the Georgian territory and therefore, conflict was more rooted in ideology than ethnicity.<sup>107</sup>

During the I republic of Georgia, even though the state faced problems of territorial integrity and had to fight for its right to be independent, the route was taken towards Europeanness. Bolsheviks and Russia were considered to be Asiatic and a great danger to Georgia's aspirations.<sup>108</sup> Compared to the new republic, political parties in 1921 were divided by ideologies and did not depend on a single person.<sup>109</sup> Main parties in Georgian Constituent Assembly were: leftist Socialist-Revolutionaries, who endeavored socialism with democratic institutions; leftist-centrist Socialist Federalists, rather a democracy with proportional socialism; leftist-centrist Social Democrats, who dreamt of creating the most democratic state up to date; right-wing National Democrats, with no socialist roots, working towards Western democracy.<sup>110</sup>

Moreover, the Georgian constitution released in 1921 was very progressive at the time, as it included social and economic rights, and tried to establish a participatory democracy. Importantly, different from 2008, Georgia was not a presidential state, as it was believed that it is unsuitable for decentralized democracy. From 1918–1921, Georgia was a parliamentary republic, where the head of government had several functions when needed. Inversely, from 2004–2013, Georgia was a semi-presidential republic, with both prime minister and president, whereas the president kept the

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<sup>106</sup> Komakhia, Mamuka 2008: Georgia's ethnic history and the present migration processes. *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, no. 1(49),155–156.

<sup>107</sup> *Sabchotha sakartvelos ati tseli. Statistikuri krebuli*. 1931. Tbilisi: 20–21.

<sup>108</sup> Matsaberidze 2014: 141.

<sup>109</sup> Gachechiladze 2014: 20.

<sup>110</sup> Matsaberidze 2014: 142.

right to dissolve the parliament. Also, during the first republic, national minorities were protected by the right of self-governance, as autonomy was issued to Abkhazia, Batumi and Zakatala.<sup>111</sup>

In 2004, Mikheil Saakashvili started a state building program. Firstly, he wanted to turn Georgia towards democratization and to integrate ethnic minorities into it. He planned decentralization and enhancement of local governance, alongside with ethnic minority employment. Secondly, Saakashvili was devoted to losing corruption, which would bring transparency to governance and education. Ideally, Saakashvili hoped that this kind of transparency would bring economic growth. Lastly, the president planned to reconstruct the whole state, as he envisaged priorities to be changed, good infrastructure to be guaranteed and importantly, excellent police service to be created. In Saakashvili's expectations, Abkhazia and South Ossetia would have managed to get autonomy both politically and culturally, in the Georgian state. This may have resulted in a better quality of life, as they could join investments and infrastructure. Both Abkhazia and South Ossetia were concerned, that Georgian government wants to intervene more into their daily lives. President's wish to quickly change the situation and lack of giving real autonomy to regions left Abkhazia and South Ossetia more suspicious and isolated.<sup>112</sup> Saakashvili's wish to integrate separated districts was profound and idealistic, which at the beginning of his term was a benefit for him, but later turned out to be a shortcoming, as things did not go according to the plan.

Conflicts in the South Ossetian region were at its highest peak in the 1990s, and brief clashes took place in 2004 and 2006. Back then, hatred was very present and resulted in bloody conflicts. Before 2008, Georgians and Ossetians had managed to peacefully live next to each other for some years – at schools, hospitals, and other areas of daily life. Peaceful future seemed imaginable and therefore, no Georgian authorities and international organizations focused on the region and had no consistent operations on the place.<sup>113</sup> Such a frozen conflict gave a possibility to Russia to engage in the life of South Ossetia step by step and eventually use the weakness of this region against Georgia itself.

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<sup>111</sup> *Ibid*, 144, 145, 157.

<sup>112</sup> George, Julie A. 2010: The dangers of reform: state building and national minorities in Georgia. Jones, Stephen F. (ed.), *War and Revolution in the Caucasus: Georgia ablaze*. New York: Routledge, 48–49, 56–58.

<sup>113</sup> Khidasheli, Tinatin (ed.) 2009: *Report of the Georgian Non-Governmental Organizations on Violation of Fundamental Human Rights & International Humanitarian Law. August War 2008*. Tbilisi: Open Society Georgia Foundation, 5.



Table 3. Pre-war international presence in Georgia

	War of 1921	War of 2008
Major political players	Germany, the UK, France	The USA
Membership of international organizations	Georgia not accepted to the League of Nations.	Georgia not accepted to NATO.

Revaz Gachechiladze has pointed out the lack of geopolitical competitiveness between great powers, which lead to Russian and Turkish influences in the region. Entente states were interested only in energy politics, but the UK moved towards Persia and Iraq, which made the situation even worse for the Southern Caucasus states. This resulted in a situation where control was in the hands of Bolsheviks and Kemalists. In April 1920, when the Red Army took Baku, Georgia had no significant allies and state was weak. This led to an unavoidable signing of the Moscow Treaty, which recognized Georgia as an independent state, but allowed the Communist Party of Georgia. Most importantly, Russia recognized Georgian borders, considering Abkhazia and South Ossetia as Georgian.<sup>114</sup>

Georgia and Azerbaijan had started their cooperation in June of 1919, by signing a military agreement. It was agreed that during attacks, two states would jointly protect their territories and independence.<sup>115</sup> When Georgian and Azerbaijanis' representatives attended the Paris Peace Conference, Noe Zhordania, politician and later leader of the government in exile, was pushed to seek partnership from Great Britain and France in case recognition would not be provided. By then, Great Britain had already decided to pull its forces out of Georgia and proposed Italy as a possible ally. Italians then even prepared for such a move, but changes in government aborted the mission.<sup>116</sup>

In 1920, when Soviets took over Azerbaijan, Georgia did not intervene as the treaty with Azerbaijan stated, mostly because of the lack of resistance from Baku and Azerbaijan's politicians' loyalty to Bolsheviks. Soon Soviets tried to attack Georgia from that direction, despite the peace treaty. In 1920, Armenia got invaded by the Turkish army and as they had not cooperated with

<sup>114</sup> Gachechiladze 2014: 22–23.

<sup>115</sup> National Archives of Georgia, Central Historical Archive, fond 1833, description 1, case 96, 2.

<sup>116</sup> Janelidze, Otari 2018: *The Democratic Republic of Georgia 1918–1921*. Tbilisi: Georgian National Museum, 77.

neighbours, then only assistance came from the Bolsheviks, turning it quickly towards Russia.<sup>117</sup> Once again, Azerbaijan's case, Armenian alliance with Bolsheviks and the first attack on Georgia should have been enough red alarms for Georgia, to not go through risky military reforms and prepare for an attack as soon as possible, already in 1920.<sup>118</sup>

Germany and Georgia had signed an agreement in 1918, on 28<sup>th</sup> May, which stated cooperation between these two states. This included Georgia's recognition of the Brest-Litovsk treaty in relations with Germany, Germany gained the rights to use Georgian railways, but also diplomatic delegates were regulated. This treaty was provisional and intended for replenishment.<sup>119</sup> Other agreements on that day mostly stipulated economic matters, which established a co-working mining company and usage of Georgian minerals. Also, Georgia was about to get a loan for letting Germans use railways and port. Firstly, Germany was interested in manganese production in Georgia, which never took off on a big scale for Germans, because the subpoint of an agreement which demanded recognition of Georgia was never satisfied fairly.<sup>120</sup> Secondly, Germany was motivated to send its troops to Georgia, mostly due to Turkey's unreliability and demand of oil from Baku.<sup>121</sup> In the summer of 1918, some Georgian diplomats and politicians started doubting in German win in the First World War. This motivated Zurab Avalov, jurist and diplomat, to visit French and British ambassadors in Norway and Sweden.<sup>122</sup> Moreover, he met chargé d'affaires of the United States of America, H. F. Arthur Shoenfeld. Like the document shared to British and French, it asked for the recognition of Georgia.<sup>123</sup>

The British were next to get control over the Southern Caucasus, which in some cases alongside with German period is equalized to the occupation. Their goal was to liberate Georgia from Bolsheviks and Germans, without interfering in politics. Also, freeing transportation routes was one of the objectives, and getting to Persian ports was the desired aim as well. Even though the British wanted to fight Bolsheviks and restore Russian authority, they had no intentions to develop

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<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, 56, 58.

<sup>118</sup> Bakhtadze 2019.

<sup>119</sup> Kazemzadeh 1951: 123. Kazemzadeh uses Kliuchnikov, Iuri; Sabanin, Andrei 1926–1928: *Mezhdunarodnaia politika noveishego vremeni v dogovorakh, notakh i deklaratsiakh*. Moscow: 436.

<sup>120</sup> Avalov, Zurab 1924: *Nezavisimost' Gruzii v mezhdunarodnoj politike 1918–1921 gg.*: *Vospominaniia. Ocherki*. Paris: 66–67, 105–107.

<sup>121</sup> Kazemzadeh 1951: 147.

<sup>122</sup> Avalov 1924: 115–119.

<sup>123</sup> United States Department of State 1932: *Papers relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. 1918, Russia. Volume II*. Washington: United States Printing Office, 639–642.

Georgian statehood.<sup>124</sup> Additionally, the French had kept sceptical attitude towards Southern Caucasus for the whole of its independence. French had not given *de jure* and even *de facto* recognition to any republics in the region. Georgian conflicts with Russia and Armenia deteriorated its reputation even more. The main interest of France stayed purely economic, as they were ready for commercial relations, but nothing more.<sup>125</sup> French and England's recognition came too late, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January, 1921. By the time diplomats changed credentials, Soviets had started marching on Tbilisi.<sup>126</sup>

When Georgia applied for the membership of the League of Nations, it underlined geographical, religious and ethnic differences with Russia. Georgian application was considered to be the most advantageous as its government was considered to be stable. Controversially, Georgian borders were considered to be clear and precise, even though it was not applied for neighbouring countries and conflicts were present. Moreover, Georgian and Russian border was officially recognized by both sides and it had a geographic separation line. Finally, the Georgian application was decided alongside with the Baltic States. In that case, Georgia was also favoured, because of its longtime existence before the Russian Empire and the natural border with Russia, which the Baltic States did not have. Moreover, Georgia was considered an outstanding place to stop Bolshevism, as Armenia was turning into it. Nevertheless, Georgia was not admitted to the League of Nations but was offered participation in technical organizations' work.<sup>127</sup>

The USA recognized Armenia, but not Georgia due to its extensive lobby work by the Armenian diaspora. Firstly, several American missionaries had witnessed the Armenian Genocide which raised sympathy for suffers from this small nation and as a result, charity programs were established. Armenian diaspora established the American Committee for the Independence of Armenia (ACIA) which became the main tool for Armenians to get recognition for its independence. Led by Vahan Cardashian, an organization was formed in 1919. From this on, letters and statements were sent to officials and many notable people joined the movement. The White

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<sup>124</sup> Kazemzadeh 1951: 169–170. Kazemzadeh uses Devderiani, Gaioz 1931: *Dni gospodstva menshevikov v Gruzii*. Tbilisi, 39–40.

<sup>125</sup> Avalov 1924: 235.

<sup>126</sup> Lang 1962: 223.

<sup>127</sup> Gzoyan, Edita G. 2018: The admission of the Caucasus states to the League of Nations: the Role of Soviet Russia. *Caucasus Survey*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1–17. Gzoyan uses archive materials from the League of Nations Archive: LNA 1920e. Admission of the Georgian Republic to the League of Nations, Memorandum by the Secretary-General. Sec. 28, doss. 9516, doc. 2541; LNA 1920i. The Records of the First Assembly Plenary Meetings. Geneva. Gzoyan also uses a book: Sabanin, Aleksey. 1924. *Rossija i Liga Nacii 1920-21-22*. Moscow: NKID.

House and Congress both put effort into Armenian question and even Wilson's Fourteen Points contained solutions for the Ottoman Empire and consequently, for Armenian independence. In April of 1920, after long diplomatic work, Armenia got its *de facto* recognition from the United States.<sup>128</sup>

In the current Georgian republic, allies as the European Union and the USA were good on paper cooperation but lacked throughout plan for Georgia. After Kosovo gained Western recognition, no satisfactory solution was offered for Georgia, in case it should find itself in a similar position. It has been proposed that Western allies should have already then stated that if Russia manipulates with Georgia on such topics, then it will have severe consequences in the relations of the USA, EU and NATO. Instead, the UN and OSCE missions in separatist regions remained small and weak, which made Russian intervention possible. No serious efforts were made to offer solutions for problematic Georgian regions and Russia was not addressed about sabotages.<sup>129</sup>

Out of all allies, Georgian most significant friend before the war was predominantly the USA. Already in 2002, the USA contributed to a fight with terrorism in Pankisi Gorge (ethnically Chechen) and also Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP) started. GTEP lasted until 2004 when Georgians had gained control over Pankisi Gorge. Although it is assumed that US-led initiatives in the region might have angered Russia, it is questionable, as it was carefully controlled that nothing would feed Russians' aggressive intentions. In 2004, new president Mikheil Saakashvili offered Georgian US-taught troops to go in Iraq. As of 2008 summer, three brigades had been to the mission and fourth was under training, and participants' number raised to a remarkable 2000.<sup>130</sup> Two big mistakes in US policy towards Georgia have been proposed – overall democracy should have received attention instead of supporting Saakashvili and the US supported Georgia's integrity instead of helping to solve the conflict. Ultimately, such tendencies are blamed on personal relationships and ties with the Georgian government.<sup>131</sup>

Furthermore, the Bush administration used freedom and democracy agenda around the world, for which Saakashvili was a perfect fit. He managed to create a team of people who had studied abroad,

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<sup>128</sup> Malkasian, Mark 1984: The Disintegration of the Armenian Cause in the United States. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 16, no. 3, August, 349–365.

<sup>129</sup> Asmus 2010: 89.

<sup>130</sup> Hamilton 2010: 205–206.

<sup>131</sup> Cooley, Alexander; Mitchell, Lincoln A. 2009: No way to treat our friends: recasting recent U.S.-Georgian relations. *The Washington Quarterly*, 32(1), 27–29.

he had education from Columbia University and started reforms that matched the USA's promotional work on the other side of the world. This resulted in the USA's investments and aid, but also many experts were located to Tbilisi, to help Saakashvili with his reforms. This shaped Georgia's economic success vastly and deepened the relations of two states, resulting in Georgia being seriously pro-American. On the other hand, powerful European states never managed to get such a close understanding of Georgia's aspirations and needs. As Georgia had been a part of the Soviet Union, then its existence was not so present in people's minds. After NATO summit in Bucharest, even Carl Bildt was resentful on how Europe did not back Georgia enough in its hopes for NATO's enlargement. French President Nicolas Sarkozy did not want to take the blame on himself but also saw the source of the problem to be Germany. Germany, in particular, was sceptical in questions related to Georgia, Merkel was mostly concerned about Georgian democracy's problems, whereas Steinmeier was hesitant because of its relations with Russia.<sup>132</sup>

Table 4. Causes of war

	War of 1921	War of 2008
Triggering events	Russian Revolution; land reform revolts	Kosovo's declaration of independence; NATO Bucharest Summit
Ideology	High (Bolshevism vs. Menshevism)	None

The Democratic Republic of Georgia carried out the only land reform in Transcaucasia. This idea was proposed already in 1917, which was finalized when Georgia got independent. By 1920, approximately 4000 estates were nationalized. To suppress dissatisfaction, the state sold some of its newly got lands to peasants.<sup>133</sup> However, land reforms still led to some unrest among peasants. In 1918, one of the conflicts took place in South Ossetia, where villages were destroyed and it was put down by troops sent from Tbilisi. South Ossetians grew hatred for Georgians and became the target for Bolshevik propaganda. Even two years later, an uprising in South Ossetia repeated, fueled by Bolshevik ideology. North Ossetians in Vladikavkaz had been armed by Bolsheviks and entered

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<sup>132</sup> Asmus 2010: 58, 59, 141.

<sup>133</sup> Lang 1962: 212–213.

South Ossetia, to occupy it.<sup>134</sup> In 1918, similar peasant uprisings took place in Samegrelo, Abkhazia and Dushet, but also on a smaller scale over the country.<sup>135</sup> On the other hand, when Marxist Karl Kautsky visited Georgia in 1920, he found the state of being opposite of Bolshevism which had democracy, capitalistic economy and freedoms of a single citizen.<sup>136</sup>

According to the former Commander of the Estonian Defense Forces, Ants Laaneots, in the 1990s when South-Caucasian states gained their independence, Russia on purpose destabilized the region. Russian Federation was not flattered by the idea of this region turning its future towards the Western powers and losing grip of its hegemony. Moscow successfully acted out, to keep its military and political position, when it participated in creating turmoils between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and among ethnic groups in Georgia. By 2000s, Russia had established a military base in Armenia, but as no gas or oil lines passed through Armenia, then Georgia became strategically more valuable, as these tools could be used for manipulation against the Western states.<sup>137</sup>

Russian confidence in its foreign affairs significantly declined since the Georgian Rose Revolution, Ukrainian Orange Revolution and Beslan school siege. As a result of these events, differences between Western and Russian perceptions of foreign and domestic affairs were underlined. Russian attitude towards certain foreign matters started differing and took a new negative turn. In particular, NATO's enlargement became a subject of resentment.<sup>138</sup> In April 2008, at the Bucharest Summit, Vladimir Putin emphasized the threat of NATO to Russia's security. Also, he presented his dissatisfaction of the prospective enlargement of NATO on its borders and agitated organization to reckon Russia's concerns and interests.<sup>139</sup> In 2007 and 2008, both Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Russian Chief of the General Staff Yuri Baluyevsky had expressed concerns on NATO's enlargement to Ukraine and Georgia. It was not only stated that they would do anything to prevent states from joining NATO, but it was firmly assured that intervention could be done by military means.<sup>140</sup> If Georgia were to move towards NATO, then the West might have got new

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<sup>134</sup> Makharadze 1928: 166–167, 225–228.

<sup>135</sup> Kazemzadeh 1951: 190–191.

<sup>136</sup> Kautsky, Karl 1921: *Georgia: A Social-Democratic Peasant Republic*. London: International Bookshops, 8.

<sup>137</sup> Laaneots 2014: 8.

<sup>138</sup> Monaghan, Andrew, 2008: "An enemy at the gates" or "from victory to victory?" Russian foreign policy. *International Affairs*, 84(4), 719.

<sup>139</sup> Blomfield, Adrian; Kirkup, James. 2008: Stay away, Vladimir Putin tells Nato. *The Telegraph*, April 5.

<sup>140</sup> Russia army vows steps if Georgia and Ukraine join NATO 2008: *Reuters*, April 11.

motivation to solve conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russia was left with an option to feed a crisis, so Georgia would immediately become a risky partner for NATO and the EU.<sup>141</sup>

Moreover, the Russian attitude in 2008 changed because Kosovo got declared independent of Serbia and received wide recognition. Russia, as Serbian ally had previously made comments on Georgian breakaway regions, declaring that if the precedent of Kosovo takes place, the same will happen in Georgia.<sup>142</sup> When Kosovo's independence was declared, Moscow reacted fast with its measures. Moscow revoked its participation in the Commonwealth of Independent States' (CIS) decision of 1996, according to which there were sanctions on weapon delivery and military aid to separatists. Only weeks later, Russia worked on recognition of independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and Putin promised tangible aid for separatist governments.<sup>143</sup>

Table 5. International reaction and protection at war

	War of 1921	War of 2008
Main supporters	France	Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the USA and E
Overshadowing event	None	Beijing Olympics; summer holidays
Attitude towards Georgia in war	Georgia considered unreliable in Europe due to its social democratic foundation of the state.	Georgia considered unreliable due to its too deep presidential system and hasty leader.

In the 1920s, with Azerbaijan, Georgia lost its only neighbour willing for some cooperation, as with Armenia Georgia had been in a recent war and there were unsolved border issues. Soon Georgia was left alone not only in the South Caucasus but in the whole world. Turks did not help Georgians either, as instead the Turkish military entered Batumi and few other spots on the southern border. Helping Georgia against bolsheviks was out of the table and Muslim part of

<sup>141</sup> Hamilton 2010: 208.

<sup>142</sup> *ibid*, 207.

<sup>143</sup> Asmus 2010: 146. Asmus uses online statements of Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Russian Duma, which are unavailable after the end of a particular term in question.

Georgia was made part of Turkey.<sup>144</sup> Georgian Government fled the state, but thankfully after armed conflict, Batumi managed to stay in Georgian borders, whereas Artvin and Artaani districts stayed Turkish up to the present day.<sup>145</sup>

The Western world had supported Georgia during its independence but failed to do so during the Soviet invasion. Germany was the first country the Democratic Republic of Georgia created foreign ties with and helped to stay away from the Turkish invasion. Also, Germany was notably interested in the economic and strategic benefits of Georgia. Nevertheless, military presence had to be pulled out due to lost in World War I and problems back at home but also a lack of resources. Similarly to Germans, British troops left South Caucasus in 1919, after realizing that Bolsheviks were about to win in Russia. Instead, Great Britain deepened diplomatic relations, but Georgia was not anymore a spot for pursuing their interests and policies.<sup>146</sup> This meant that by the time of Soviet invasion, Germany was not a helping hand for Georgia, suffering itself from losses and Great Britain decided not to intervene.

In January of 1920, Georgian representatives alongside with Azerbaijanis met the British Imperial General Staff, to talk about protection of Transcaucasia. At this very moment, the British did not consider a war breakout very potential.<sup>147</sup> By the time Soviet Army entered South Caucasus, outside help to Georgia was close to non-existent. Arthur Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, opened up the hinterlands of British decision: “We will protect Batumi, Baku, the railroad between them and the pipeline.”<sup>148</sup> Such a statement without mentioning the protection of independence or integrity of Georgia straightforwardly shows an attitude on possible British alliance. Also, considering Batumi belonged to the British until July 1920, this statement clearly shows that the only thing they were still fighting for was their own energetic and economic interests.

Moreover, Georgia, alongside with its neighbours were social democratic systems and belonged to the Second International. Even though Georgia and Armenia had many clashes on the borders over the territory, they claimed to work only towards peace. Sadly, for the wider public, it left a two-face impression and the region was considered unreliable.<sup>149</sup> During the war, only tangible

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<sup>144</sup> National Archives of Georgia, Historical Central Archive, fond 1872, description 1, case 10, 6.

<sup>145</sup> Janelidze 2018: 52.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid*, 63–64.

<sup>147</sup> Kazemzadeh 1951: 272–273.

<sup>148</sup> Suny 1994: 204.

<sup>149</sup> Lang 1962: 217.



attempt to help Georgians was made by the French. The French navy was on the Black Sea and they bombed Bolshevik positions however, they never made an effort to fight on land and abandoned the initiative after recognizing Russian planes.<sup>150</sup>

Revaz Gachechiladze considers the new republic's position more favorable than it was in 1918–21. Back then, Georgia did not manage to move further from *de jure* recognition and failed to gain attention. Since the 1990s Georgia joined international organizations, worked on partnerships and gained allies, and also established relationships abroad and gained recognition. Peaceful conflict resolution has become more popular, aid for states like Georgia are bigger and overall changes in international relations have been better for the new republic. In addition, during the first republic, Georgia did not get international aid and was considered unreliable due to its socialist background. In 2008, Georgia had friends in the world, as Eduard Shevardnadze had got attention in the 1990s from leaders all over the world, thanks to his well-based contacts.<sup>151</sup>

On 8<sup>th</sup> August 2008, the world had put its eyes on Olympic Opening Ceremony in Beijing. As Olympic Truce had been announced, Russia was already set to fight with Georgia.<sup>152</sup> OSCE mission in Georgia had monitored the ground situation, which they considered to be very dangerous. Several reports were sent with an SOS, but these did not get any attention as the Olympics started and summer holidays were on their highest peaks.<sup>153</sup>

When comparing situations in 1921 and 2008, it is important to acknowledge the most significant difference affecting those two events – media and globalism. Naturally, in 1921, it was not possible to make quick phone calls, use social media or use online/paper publications as a tool of manipulation. Therefore, it has to be underlined, that in 2008 the ability to quickly spread the word was especially beneficial for Georgia and may have been one of the reasons why the occupation of Russia did not fully succeed. During the war of 2008, Georgia was ahead of Russia in using media as a tool of conflict. After a few hours since the war broke out, foreign media started receiving e-mails from the Georgian government. Mikheil Saakashvili, with his background of international

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<sup>150</sup> *ibid*, 235.

<sup>151</sup> Gachechiladze 2014: 26–27, 31–32.

<sup>152</sup> King 2008b: 2.

<sup>153</sup> Asmus 2010: 27.

education and contacts, managed to go live via CNN.<sup>154</sup> Saakashvili knew that loud voice was his best opportunity to catch the attention and fortunately, it brought some results.

Loudest statements during the conflict came from the Baltic States and Poland, whereas most Western opinions tried to balance the blame equally on both conflict sides. Immediately, Polish and Baltic leaders declared Russia as the main aggressor and a few days later, they visited Tbilisi to show their support. Lithuanians were the first to send their foreign minister to Georgia at the beginning of the conflict, therefore, the idea for a declaration against Russian action came from the Lithuanian president. Baltic states joined in with no hesitation, but for Finland and Ukraine, the vocabulary and message were too strong as the text accused Russia of unilateral aggression.<sup>155</sup> Signatories urged the EU and NATO to act and step against imperialism and revisionism but also denounced empty support and statements of other states.<sup>156</sup> Apart from Baltic and Polish leaders, also Finnish and French foreign ministers, alongside with the EU's envoy in South Caucasus arrived in Tbilisi.

At the time, the Presidency of the Council of the European Union was held by France. Therefore, President Nicolas Sarkozy mediated peace talks and a preliminary peace treaty was signed on 12<sup>th</sup> August. Considering that hostilities took place several days later as well, the author of this thesis does not consider France as the saviour of Georgia. In fact, it is often overlooked that also secretary of state of the USA, Condoleezza Rice introduced a ceasefire package. It proposed the withdrawal of all forces, the establishment of a new peacekeeping unit in South Ossetia and new elections in the region. Saakashvili agreed with specific demands on elections, but Moscow quickly declined the offer.<sup>157</sup> USA's goal before the war was to prevent Georgia taking hasty decisions and during the war, they tried to minimize the length and depth of it, even though with reservations as Georgians had not acted according to their suggestions.

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<sup>154</sup> King 2008b: 8.

<sup>155</sup> Lasas, Ainius 2012: When History Matters: Baltic and Polish Reactions to the Russo-Georgian War. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 64(6), 1061–1075.

<sup>156</sup> Joint Declaration of Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish Presidents on Situation in Georgia 2008: *US Fed News*, August 9.

<sup>157</sup> Asmus 2010: 40.

Table 6. Legal problems of war

	War of 1921	War of 2008
Legal problems	Russia unilaterally broke the Treaty of Moscow of 1920.	Subject to international law.
Main justifications	Russia's excuse for protecting minorities. Ideological excuses.	Russia's excuse for protecting minorities/Russian citizens. Usage of Kosovo's precedent.

Gachechiladze brings out that Russia purposefully escalated both in the first and second republic of Georgia, conflictual situations within Georgia. In 1921, Russian action was called to stand for proletarianism, whereas in 2008 it was even more clearly expressed as Russian right to protect its citizens, even outside its borders.<sup>158</sup>

In 1920 on 7<sup>th</sup> May, the Treaty of Moscow was signed between the Democratic Republic of Georgia and Soviet Russia. Article 1 recognized Georgia as an independent and sovereign state and according to article 2, it was promised to not interfere in Georgian internal affairs. Most importantly, article 3 stated the frontier of two states and also declared some areas neutral and subject to demilitarization. Moreover, article 4 recognized Georgian territory and announced Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi, Zaqatala and Sokhumi to belong to Georgia unconditionally.<sup>159</sup> These selected articles presented above were the main ones under threat when the war in 1921 broke out. Not did Russia only interfere with its concerns of minorities and ideology, but it also did not follow the demilitarization aspect. Eventually, territory, integrity and sovereignty of Georgia were interrupted and violated by Russia. Unfortunately, the Treaty of Moscow was controversial since the beginning, as it included a special secret supplement. According to article 1, Georgia had to allow free existence of communist organizations on its full territory.<sup>160</sup> It can be considered as a fatal part of the treaty, as this enabled to weaken the internal politics of Georgia.

In 2008, Russia worked on assuring that the activities taken place in Georgia were legal. NATO's bombing in Serbia in 1999 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003, gave a possibility for Russia to portray

<sup>158</sup> Gachechiladze 2014: 29.

<sup>159</sup> Batsell, Walter Russell 1929: *Soviet Rule in Russia*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 247-254. Author of this book has published the Treaty of Moscow in its full form.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

itself as the protector of international law. From the Russian perspective, NATO's actions during Kosovo's war were illegal, because Russia as a permanent member of the UN Security Council did not authorize the intervention. This argument only got stronger when Western states recognized Kosovo in 2008. Moreover, according to Emmanuel Karagiannis, trying to justify actions legally, minimizes the future possibility of Russia having to deal with Georgia or Ukraine at the European Court of Human Rights.<sup>161</sup>

International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (IFFMCG) found that Saakashvili's rapid decision on stepping into the war was unjustifiable in terms of international law. When it comes to other side's legal problems, then South Ossetians used 100 mm and 120 mm artillery since July 2008, which were banned in this zone. These destroyed Georgian positions since the mid-summer of 2008 and were the most powerful weapons used throughout the years of tensions. It has been noted that only Russia could have been the supplier of such weapons to South Ossetia.<sup>162</sup> Once again, Georgian actions could be justified by constant attacks from the other side, even though mostly Saakashvili is blamed for pulling the trigger.

Russian Federation had handed out Russian passports in Georgian breakaway regions for several years. This opened a possibility for Russia to justify its actions with an excuse of protecting its citizens, which was often illustrated with the Russian Constitution's 61<sup>st</sup> article, which underlined the obligation of protecting its citizens. Such justification was used for example by Valery Zorkin, Chairman of the Constitutional Court of Russia, who wrote in mid-August a newspaper article explaining why Russia carried out its duties to protect its citizens. According to his perspective, all Russian military actions taking place in sovereign and independent Georgia were legal, merely because of the right to protect Russian citizens.<sup>163</sup>

Contrary to 1921, the war between Russia and Georgia can also be classified as a subject to international law. Both the Russian Federation and the Republic of Georgia are members of the United Nations, Russia even as a member of the Security Council. According to the UN, aggression means that sovereignty, independence and integrity of another state, is attacked by the armed forces.<sup>164</sup> According to such aspects of international law, not Georgia, but Russia was the aggressor, as it attacked another independent state. South Ossetia and Abkhazia were not internationally and

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<sup>161</sup> Karagiannis 2014: 414.

<sup>162</sup> Asmus 2010: 19, 26.

<sup>163</sup> Zorkin, Valerij 2008: Projti po lezviju britvy. Prinuzhdenie k miru i prava cheloveka. *Rossijskaja gazeta*, August 13.

<sup>164</sup> United Nations 1974: *Definition of Aggression*. Resolution 3314, 29<sup>th</sup> Sess. December 14.

widely recognized as independent states, therefore, this justification cannot be comprehensive either. Also, it needs to be considered that the UN Security Body is responsible for recognizing the aggression after evaluating the situation and moreover, the Russian Federation is a permanent member of the Security Council.

## Conclusion

This thesis aimed to clarify Georgian problems in conflicts with Russia and open up *casus belli* of Russian actions through two centuries. The gap between those two events seemed to make comparisons complicated, if not impossible, but the analytical part proved the opposite. As a result of this thesis, it can be stated that these wars can be paralleled and a number of similarities and differences give an insight of both Russian behavioral pattern and Georgian weaknesses. Therefore, until Russian rhetoric does not change and Georgian problems stay same, recurrence of the conflict is possible.

Profound research, according to the theory, suggests that both wars of 1921 and 2008 can be considered as wars, as they meet the criteria of the highest level of conflict. Moreover, both were principally inter-state wars, which resulted in occupation, either full or partial. In both cases, several events and smaller conflicts took place before the actual outbreak of the war. At the beginning of these wars, Russia avoided claiming its involvement and performed as an observer or third party for a significant time.

As a result of the analysis, first, it is notable that Georgian economic situation has been surprisingly crucial for its destiny. As a transit country, interest in Georgia has depended on its possibilities and resources passing through its territory. Both in 1921 and 2008, pipelines in Georgia were beneficial to Russia, which meant that no control over these possibilities heightened the risk of conflict. However, in 1921 the Western world could not be a mediator for Georgia as they had lost interests due to conflicts in the area and problems in their states. On the other hand, in 2008, both the European Union and the USA, alongside with several other states were deeply dependant on Georgian transit potential and therefore, it was easier to keep the conflict from escalating. Lastly, in 1921 the Georgian economic sphere was more unstable, whereas in 2008, Georgia was considered a prosperous state with vast potential.

Analysis suggests that internal politics before the war was in both cases not ideal, but also not fatal. In 1921 Georgia was a parliamentary republic but in 2008 a semi-presidential state. Therefore, in the modern time, the president's decisions had more weight. Discussions on Georgian conflicts usually emphasize the importance of ethnic tensions, but alternatively, the author of this thesis does not see it in both cases as the sole cause of the war. On the contrary, in both centuries the role of

ethnicity was a moderate problem, which, however, was agitated by Russians. Eventually, such tensions weakened the state and helped Russians use the relative weakness of multicultural society.

When it comes to pre-war international presence and support, one main similarity has affected Georgian faith – as in 1921, Georgia was not accepted to the League of Nations, it was neither accepted to NATO in 2008. This has reduced the diplomatic capacities of Georgia, which have left Georgia in isolation. In the 1920s, Germany, the UK and France were present in Georgia, mostly for commercial purposes. Therefore, political help was not profound and by the time invasion came, Georgia had no support. In the 2000s, Georgians were trained by the Americans and had established deep relations between the two states.

Both wars happened after the escalation of bad relations between Russia and Georgia. In 1921, Georgian conflicts were fed by the Russian Revolution and Georgian land reforms. In 2008, NATO's Summit in Bucharest and Kosovo's declaration of independence triggered aggressive Russian attitude towards Georgia. Events in the 1920s established a solid fundament for the usage of ideology. Menshevism and Bolshevism could be named as the main characteristics of war in 1921, which affected both Georgian internal and foreign politics. Ideology gave an advantage to Russians who could use it to undermine Georgian internal life and to draw together masses for fighting. In 2008, such grand ideology was not used and it was harder to shape politics inside the Georgian state.

According to the analysis, a comprehensive international reaction to war might have been a key reason why the war of 2008 ended up with different outcomes than the war of 1921. In the last century, by the time Georgia was invaded, foreign allies had left the state and had no means to help Georgia, nor did they want to intervene in Russian wars. In 2008, mostly because of economics and prospective expansion of European borders, Western states and allies expressed more concerns about the actions taking place in August 2008. Still, Germany was hesitant to support Georgia in the degree it demanded and the USA, Georgia's main ally before the war, acted out slowly and not explicitly. Instead, the Baltic States and Poland expressed their frustrations the loudest and supported Georgia despite the threats Russia could have imposed. Moreover, a beneficial factor for Georgia in the 21<sup>st</sup> century was that media helped to spread the word fast, even though that attacks took place during the summer holidays and Beijing Olympics. However, reactions and measures taken by the Western states were still mild and not strict enough, as Ukraine followed a few years later. Also, in 1921, attitudes towards Georgia were cold since it was a social democratic state;

similarly, in 2008, Georgia was seen as an unreliable partner because of its president and his impulsive character.

Legal problems illustrate that Russia uses its legal justifications and creatively comes up with a variety of explanations. Both in 1921 and 2008, Russia showed itself as a protector of minorities or Russians. In 1921 Russia breached the Treaty of Moscow, and in 2008, skillfully used Kosovo's example to rationalize and extenuate its actions. However, the war of 2008 was different as it had a larger variety of international law on the table and it has given Georgians possibilities to refute Russian statements. Still, knowledge about the war and Georgian role in it, remains a problematic topic, as the Western states have no broad knowledge about the region and are not aware of some facts and figures about the war and the pre-war influence.

Based on the analysis, new measures could be used to avoid the recurrence of the conflict. Foremost, the author of this thesis, suggests Georgia to diversify its economy and partners. Secondly, a stable democracy and strength in internal affairs could be immensely valuable. This dissertation could be further developed, for example, by including the war of the 1990s and possibly using archive materials could deepen the analysis. Also, the thesis could be complemented by adding military history and overview, to give a complete comparison of these wars. Alternatively, effect of the glorification of the first republic on current collective memory and its policies could be researched. Fortunately, there are very few language limitations, as Georgian authors have made excellent English translations of their works. Only limitations face the researcher when it comes to archives, both in Russia and Georgia.



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## Resüme

### **Sama sõja kordumine – Gruusia sõdade poliitilised aspektid 1921. ja 2008. aastal**

Käesoleva töö eesmärgiks on uurida hüpoteesi, kas Venemaa ja Gruusia vahelistes konfliktides on venepoolsed õigustused jäänud läbi kahe sajandi samaks ning kas Gruusia peamised probleemid on muutumatud. Töö teoreetilises osas selgitatakse, mis kriteeriumite alusel annab antud uurimisülesannet lahendada ning lühidalt analüüsitakse konflikte iseseisvalt vastavalt teooriale, mille alusel saab väita, et tegemist on sõdadega ning need vastavad peamiselt riikidevaheliste sõdade kriteeriumitele. Selgitatud on puudujääke sõdade hindamise viisides, mistõttu on töös kasutatud uusimaid kriteeriume, mille on loonud Truda Gray and Brian Martin. Lisaks on rakendatud peamise abivahendina konfliktide kategoriseerimisel Correlates of War Project'i tulemusi. Selleks, et anda täpseid hinnanguid Vene-Gruusia sõdadele, on kirjeldatud erinevaid konfliktide tasemeid ning kasutatakse Heidelbergi Instituudi parameetreid. Töös tuuakse välja konflikti taasesinemise riskid, mis võivad Gruusia ajaloos mängida olulist rolli. Peamiselt on nendeks ühiskonna psühholoogia, ajalugu ning Gruusia geopoliitiline positsioon.

Teooriale järgnevas ajaloolises kontekstikirjelduses on üldjoontes tutvustatud mõlemaid sõdu. Välja on toodud ajalooline taust, sõja olemus vastavalt teooriale ning põhilised tulemused. Töös keskendutakse poliitilistele, mitte militaarsetele külgedele. Kolmandaks peatükiks on autoripoolne võrdlev analüüs, milles kasutatakse näidetena 1921. aasta Nõukogude Venemaa sissetungi ja 2008. aasta Vene-Gruusia sõda, kuna nende kahe sündmuse kõrvutamine on Gruusias päevakorras ning see võimaldab näidata probleemistikku, mis on ajas jääv. Antud sündmuste võrdlused on siiani olnud peamiselt suusõnalised, kuid käesolev uurimus panustab avalikku arutellu üldise ülevaatega ning konkreetsete võrdlustega. Analüüs on läbi viidud vastavalt teoreetilisele raamistikule, mis aitab paralleele ja erinevusi tuua kuues peamises kategoorias: sõjaeelne Gruusia majanduslik positsioon, sõjaeelne Gruusia sisepoliitika, sõjaeelne rahvusvaheline kohalolek, põhjused ja ajendid, rahvusvaheline reaktsioon ning õiguslik diskursus. Analüüsis kasutatakse peamiselt kirjandust ning üksikuid primaarseid allikaid, et kõrvutada kahe sõja peamised erinevused või sarnasused.

Uurimus kinnitab osaliselt püstitatud hüpoteesi ning tõestab, et antud sündmusi on teatud määral võimalik võrrelda. Mõlemal juhul on Gruusia majanduslik positsioon olnud oluline suhetes lääneriikidega ning Venemaa käitub vastavalt enda kasudele. Samas erinevad 1921. aasta ja 2008.



aasta sõjad sellepolest, et kaasajas oli Gruusia majanduslikult stabiilsem ja paljutöotava tulevikuga riik, aga 1921. aastal oli majanduses probleeme, mis destabiliseerisid riigi üldist korda. Samuti oli erinev riigi sisepoliitika, kuigi mõlemal juhul oli olukord üldiselt neutraalne, siis 2008. aastal mõjutas otsustuskiirust ja samas ka impulsiivsust pool-presidentaalne riigivorm, kui 1921. aastal oli Gruusia parlamentaarne ning arenenud demokraatia. Mõlemal sajandil üritati tegeleda etniliste vähemustega, kuid tulutult. Samas ei saa pidada etnilisi probleeme peamiseks põhjusteks, miks konfliktid eskaleerusid, nagu seda tihtipeale läänemaailmas arvatakse. Mõlemal juhul on Gruusia mitmekesisust ja etniliste vähemuste probleeme ära kasutanud Venemaa, kelle jaoks on see olnud suurepärane viis nõrgestada Gruusia riiki.

Sõja-eelset rahvusvahelist kohalolu uurides on tähtsaimaks jooneks Gruusia välja jäämine rahvusvahelistest organisatsioonidest. 20. sajandil ei võetud Gruusiat vastu Rahvasteliitu ning tänapäeval pole õnnestunud astuda NATO liikmeks, mistõttu on Gruusia osaliselt isoleeritud. 1920. aastatel olid Gruusias kohal nii Saksamaa, Suurbritannia kui ka Prantsusmaa, peamiselt küll majanduslike eesmärkide tõttu. Sellest tulenevalt ei saanud Gruusia piisavat poliitilist toetust ning sõja puhkedes ei saadud piisavat abi. 2000. aastatel oli Gruusia teinud laiaulatuslikku koostööd Ameerika Ühendriikidega, mis aitas koolitada nii personali kui ka süvendada suhteid kahe riigi vahel. Mõlema sündmuse puhul esines konflikte ja hoiatavaid märke enne sõda. 1921. aastal saatis Gruusiat Vene Revolutsiooni järelkaja ning oluliselt mõjutas olukorda ka maareform, mis Gruusias läbi viidi. 2008. aastal süvendas Venemaa kehva hoiakut NATO tippkohtumine Bukarestis ning Kosovo iseseisvuse kuulutamine ja tunnustamine. 20. sajandil oli aktuaalne ideoloogiline taust ning see võimaldas Venemaal nõrgestada Gruusia sise- ja välispoliitikat. Sellist meetodit ei saanud kasutada aga 2008. aastal ning seetõttu ei suutnud Venemaa Gruusia riiki seepidist piisavalt õhnestada.

2008. aastal lõppes konflikt osalise okupatsiooniga ning 1921. aastal täieliku okupatsiooniga. Kaasajal oli Gruusiale kasulik globaliseerumine ja kommunikatsioon, mis aitas riigipeadel omavahel efektiivselt kontakteeruda, isegi kui käimas oli Pekingi olümpia ja suvepuhkused. Kuna Euroopa ning lääneriigid on tänapäeval energeetiliselt rohkem sõltuvad idariikidest, siis oli ka reaktsioon Gruusiale kui peamisele transiitpartnerile oluliselt suurem 1921. aastast. Reaktsioon oli siiski aeglane ning kõige selgesõnalisemalt toetasid Poola ja Baltimaad. 1921. aastal ei saanud ühtegi heidutavat abi, ainsana tegid püüde prantslased. Mõlema sõja puhul ei ole Gruusiat partnerite seas peetud piisavalt usaldusväärseks – 1921. aastal oli tegemist sotsiaaldemokraatiaga,

2008. aastal tekitas küsimusi impulsiivne riigipea. Olgugi, et 2008. aastal olid läänemaailma huvid piirkonnas suuremad, siis võib tegutsemist hinnata kehvaks, kuna paari aasta pärast kordus Ukrainas sarnane stsenaarium. Õiguslikult on Venemaa läbi kahe sajandi üritanud oma tegevustele leida juriidilisi põhjendusi. Nii 1921. kui ka 2008. aastal kasutati ettekäändeks rahvusvähemuste kaitsmist ja Venemaa kodanike abistamist. 1921. aastal rikkus Venemaa sõlmitud Moskva lepingut ning 2008. aastal kaasnes rahvusvaheline õigus, mis toetab Gruusiat.

Selleks, et uurimust täiendada, saab kaasata ka 1990. aastate sõjad ning neid sündmusi detailsemalt võrrelda. Tulemused oleksid kindlamad, kui võrdluspunktide arv oleks suurem ning need kätkeks rohkem arhiiviallikaid ja dokumente, sealhulgas suuremat kajastust Venemaa poolelt. Töö tulemusi võiks teadvustada Gruusia ühiskonnas ning leida meetmeid, kuidas minimaliseerida Gruusia majanduslikku sõltuvust, tugevdada demokraatiat, leida toetust rahvusvahelistes organisatsioonides ning motiveerida liitlasi investeerima Gruusia julgeolekusse. Rahvusvaheliselt tasub tuleviku tarbeks kriitiliselt hinnata töö tulemust sõdade kajastamise ja reaktsioonide kohta. Samuti on vaja teada Venemaa õigustusi ning motivatsioone, et osata neid märgata enne uute konfliktide eskaleerumist ning seda juba mitmetes riikides, väljaspool Gruusiat.

## Appendix 1. Map of the Democratic Republic of Georgia



Source: Andrew Andersen, 2004.



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