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„Russian Foreign Policy in the South Caucasus in the
Context of Security Since the Collapse of the Soviet
Union:

Regional Conflicts and Russia's Involvement in Them“

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Abstract

The paper examines Russian foreign policy in the South Caucasus in the context of security since the demise of the Soviet Union (SU). After the collapse of the SU, the overriding objective of Russia has been to maintain its supremacy and influence in the post-Soviet area. The South Caucasus, referred to as a part of the ‘near abroad’, is of special interest to Russia which has always been portrayed as “an inalienable part of the history and fate of Russia”. Russia plays a dominant role in the region which bolsters its standing as a great power on the international arena.

Following the fall of the SU, the region has become turmoil of violent ethno-political clashes with Russia’s direct and indirect involvement. The Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh (NK), Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-South Ossetian conflicts (which should be viewed in the context of Russian-Georgian conflict) have turned the region into a dangerous source of regional instability with spillover effect. Though these three conflicts are characterized by more differences rather than similarities, the choice has been preconditioned by the theoretical framework used to explain the security dynamics of the region and interconnectedness of security of the Regional Security Complex (RSC), in this case sub-complex component countries.

The focus of the paper is on Russian foreign policy in the region in the context of security and its involvement in the conflicts. The research examines Russian security interests in the region with attempts to understand whether instability in the South Caucasus is in Kremlin’s interest. On the one hand, based on the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), the instability in the region cannot be in the Kremlin’s interests since it might have the domino effect and could spill over the North Caucasus. On the other hand, the study reveals that Russia is much more interested in preserving the status quo, rather than in the settlement of those conflicts. Based on the study of both primary and secondary sources the research comes to the conclusion that the so called ‘controlled instability’ best suits Kremlin’s interests. Frequent clashes between conflicting sides provide Russia with opportunities to influence/control the instability in the region under the guise of a mediator or protector, which in its turn bolsters Russia’s dominance in the region and its stand as a great power on the international arena.

Key Words: South Caucasus, Russian Foreign Policy, Russian Security Interests, Security, Great Power, Regional Conflicts, Nagorno-Karabakh, South-Ossetia, Abkhazia, RSC, RSCT.

Abstract

Die vorliegende Arbeit untersucht russische Außenpolitik im Südkaukasus im Sicherheitskontext seit dem Untergang der Sowjetunion (SU). Nach diesem Ereignis zählte zum übergeordneten Ziel Russlands seine Vormachtstellung und seinen Einfluss im Post-Sowjetraum zu erhalten. Der Südkaukasus, der als Teil von „near abroad“ bezeichnet wurde, ist von speziellem Interesse für Russland und wurde außerdem stets als „ein unabdingbarer Teil von Russlands Geschichte und Schicksal“ dargestellt. Russland spielt eine vorherrschende Rolle in der Region, was seine Stellung als Großmacht in der internationalen Arena bestärkt.

Im Zuge des Zusammenbruchs der SU versank die Region in Turbulenzen mit gewaltvollen ethnopolitischen Konflikten, in welche Russland direkt und indirekt involviert war. Der Konflikt zwischen Armenien und Aserbaidschan in Nagorno-Karabach (NK), die georgisch-abchasischen und georgisch-südossetischen Konflikte (welche im Kontext des russisch-georgischen Konflikts betrachtet werden sollten), haben die Region in eine gefährliche Quelle regionaler Instabilität mit Spillover-Effekten transformiert. Auch wenn diese drei Konflikte eher durch Unterschiede als durch Gemeinsamkeiten geprägt sind, wurde die Auswahl der Fallbeispiele durch die theoretischen Rahmenkonzepte bedingt, um die Sicherheitsdynamiken und die gegenseitige Abhängigkeit der Sicherheit im „Regional Security Complex (RSC)“ zu erläutern, in diesem Fall „sub-complex component“ Länder.

Der Schwerpunkt dieser Arbeit bildet die russische Außenpolitik im Kontext Sicherheit im Südkaukasus und die Involvierung Russlands in die vorherrschenden Konflikte. Die Forschungsarbeit untersucht russische Sicherheitsinteressen in der Region, um nachvollziehen zu können, ob ein Interesse des Kremls an Instabilität im Südkaukasus besteht. Einerseits kann laut der Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) Russland nicht direkt an Instabilität interessiert sein, da dadurch ein Domino-Effekt entstehen und den Nordkaukasus beeinflussen könnte. Andererseits offenbart die Studie, dass Russland mehr Interesse an dem Erhalt des Status Quo zeigt als die Konflikte beizulegen. Nach der Analyse von sowohl Primär- als auch Sekundärquellen kommt die Untersuchung zu dem Schluss, dass eine sogenannte „kontrollierte Instabilität“ dem Kreml am meisten zu Gute kommt. Regelmäßige Auseinandersetzungen zwischen beiden Konfliktparteien bieten Russland die Möglichkeit, die Instabilität in der Region zu beeinflussen oder zu kontrollieren und in der Gestalt des Vermittlers oder des Beschützers aufzutreten, was die Vormachtstellung Russlands in der Region hervorhebt und seine Rolle als Großmacht auf internationalem Areal bestärkt.

Schlüsselwörter: Südkaukasus, russische Außenpolitik, russische Sicherheitsinteressen, Großmacht, regionale Konflikte, Nagorno-Karabach, Südossetien, Abchasien, RSC, RSCT.

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List of Abbreviations

CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CST	Collective Security Treaty
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
EAEU	Eurasian Economic Union
ENP	European Neighborhood Policy
EU	European Union
EurAsEC	Eurasian Economic Community
FPC	Foreign Policy Concept
IR	International Relations
JCC	Joint Control Commission
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NK	Nagorno-Karabakh
NSS	National Security Strategy
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PKF	Peace-Keeping Force
RF	Russian Federation
RSC(s)	Regional Security Complex (-es)
RSCT	Regional Security Complex Theory
SIPR	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SSR	Soviet Socialist Republic
SU	Soviet Union
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

1. Introduction

The collapse of the former Soviet Union as a historical process cannot be considered as fully completed, unless the ethno-political conflicts all over its territory are settled.

Sergey Markedonov¹

Since the collapse of the SU, the Russian Federation (RF) has sought to preserve its influence over the states that used to be part of the SU. Russia has established various regional organizations such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC)², etc. in order to consolidate its hold over the former Soviet republics.

Establishing Russian supremacy throughout the former SU has always been central to Russia's political, security and economic interests. One of many factors determining the importance of the post-Soviet space has been to counterbalance Western influence, particularly to resist the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) enlargement, within its 'sphere of interest'.³ Russian security interests call for maintaining a security belt around its periphery. Thus, politically, securing Russia's stand as the epicenter of power in the post-Soviet space would maintain Russia as the sole great power in the region.⁴

The South Caucasus, referred to as a part of the 'near abroad',⁵ is of special interest to Russia which is portrayed as "an inalienable part of the history and fate of Russia"⁶. The region has been described as "a zone of privileged interest" by Tracey German (2008), "a zone of existential (zhieznenno-vazhnyhk) interest"⁷, "an area of vital strategic interest" by Pavel Baev (1997), etc. Historically, Russian policy towards the South Caucasus has undergone significant changes, yet the goal of maintaining a position of influence never ceased⁸. What makes things complicated is that the

¹ Markedonov 2011: 35.

² See «Евразийское Экономическое Сообщество» (ЕврАзЕс вебсайт) <<http://www.evrazes.com/en/about/>> доступ 20 декабря 2016.

³ German 2012a: 1651.

⁴ Rumer 2007: 25.

⁵ The term 'near abroad' was conceptualized by the Russian Foreign Minister Andrey Kozrev (1900-1996) at the beginning of the 1990s to denote special rights held by Russia in the states pertaining to the former territory of the USSR. For more information, see 'Kulhanek, J. (2006) Russia and Near Abroad: Past and Present' (Russkii vopros website) <<http://www.russkii-vopros.com/?pag=one&id=28&kat=6&csl=11>> accessed 20 Sept 2016.

⁶ Gadzhiev 2010: 318.

⁷ Nation 2015: 3.

⁸ Nation 2015: 1.

region is also of interest to the West (European Union (EU), NATO, and the United States (US)) because of its location and energy resources. Furthermore, as Dmitry Trenin (1996) states any attempts to develop possible external models of security governance to tackle Russia's position as the main regional power and mediator makes Russia always "remember that their own domestic and international weaknesses would open a "window of opportunity"⁹ for its rivals. The region has been described as a subject of geopolitical competition between external actors which has turned the Caucasus into "an apple of discord" to be called a new "Great Game" played for regional hegemony"¹⁰. The growing importance of external players in the South Caucasus has caused Russia to increase its influence and in some cases it has led to the projection of hard power. In addition, the military presence in the region has also greatly contributed to Russia's hegemonic stand in the region.

Russian policy towards the South Caucasus is driven by broader foreign policy goals and security objectives. The South Caucasus remains a region of political instability because of the existence of long-standing conflicts. Military conflicts between Georgia and Russia gave birth to two separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In case of the NK conflict, for the moment it doesn't seem reasonable that Russia might have some direct involvement in the conflict. However, it is worth mentioning that Armenia and Azerbaijan are dependent on Russia's position in the conflict, given the fact that Russia is a co-chair in Minsk Group¹¹.

One of the main characteristics of Russian foreign policy has been and is the use of hard power when soft power¹² doesn't seem to work. The military aspect of the Ukrainian conflict has captured

⁹ Trenin, D. (1996). "Contested Borders in the Caucasus: Russia's Security Interests and Policies in the Caucasus Region", in: Coppieters, B. (ed) (1996). *Contested borders in the Caucasus* (1st ed.). Brussels: VUBPRESS. <<http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/ContBorders/eng/ch0301.htm>> accessed 07 Sept 2016.

¹⁰ For more information, see Rasizade, A. (2005). "The Great Game of Caspian energy: ambitions and realities", *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, 7(1), 1-17.

¹¹ The Minsk Group, the activities of which have become known as the Minsk Process, spearheads the OSCE's efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It is co-chaired by France, the Russian Federation, and the United States. For more information, see 'OSCE Minsk Group' (Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe website) <<http://www.osce.org/mg>> accessed 05 Nov 2016.

¹² The terms Hard Power and Soft Power represent two important concepts in the field of International Relations. The term soft power was introduced by Joseph Nye which is defined as "the combination of the hard power of coercion and payment with the soft power of persuasion and attraction" (Nye 2011: XV). Joseph Nye explains that a nation's soft power is based on the use of three resources: "its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (where others see them as legitimate and having moral authority)." (ibid: 89). Hard power is defined as "the ability to use the carrots and sticks of economic and military might to make others follow your will" (Nye 2003). In other words it is hard power as coercive power wielded through inducements or threats (Nye 2009: 63) and it is based on military intervention, coercive diplomacy and economic sanctions (Wilson 2008: 114) and relies on tangible power resources such as armed forces or economic means (Gallarotti 2011: 29). For more information, see: 'Wagner, J.P. (2014). The Effectiveness of Soft & Hard Power in

substantial attention both on regional and international levels. Some regions in the post-Soviet space have become concerned about their own security.¹³ In general, the security aspect has become more important in international relations. Though the thesis revolves around Russian foreign policy, the main focus of the paper is on the security aspect since the South Caucasus faces recurrent instability which has a potential of domino effect¹⁴ spreading over the region's borders. This spillover effect might have daring implications, especially for the North Caucasus.

As the report of the US Institute of Peace states: "Neighboring countries, [such as those in the South Caucasus] are recalculating their security and foreign policies through the lens of Ukraine assessing their own security and conflict dynamics based on Russia's newly aggressive policies and practices in Ukraine and response of the West."¹⁵ In this context, one cannot speak about security of a single country in the region but about interdependency of security of the whole region. The paper further aims at understanding what the connection is between the security of the region and Russia's own natural security, i.e. whether instability of the region is in Kremlin's interest and what is Russia's role in the conflicts.

The theoretical foundation of the thesis is based on RSCT developed by Buzan and Waever. According to the RSCT regions with similar security concerns and a high degree of security interdependence comprise RSCs. "Smaller states usually find themselves locked into an RSC with their neighbors, great powers will typically penetrate several adjacent regions [...]"¹⁶. Against this background, Russia is one example of a great power, but it is also seen as the central regional power in the post-Soviet RSC, identified by Buzan and Waever,. In their work *Regions and Powers (2003)* they argue that there are four sub-complexes of the post-Soviet-RSC and the Caucasian sub-complex

Contemporary International Relations' (E-International Relations Students website) <<http://www.e-ir.info/2014/05/14/the-effectiveness-of-soft-hard-power-in-contemporary-international-relations/>> accessed 30 Jan 2017.

¹³ For more information, see Lauren Van M., Viola, G. and Kuehnast, K. (2015). *The Ukraine-Russia Conflict Signals and Scenarios for the Broader Region: Signals and Scenarios for The Broader Region*. (Special Report 366). The United States Institute of Peace, p. 2. <<http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR366-The-Ukraine-Russia-Conflict.pdf>> accessed 15 Oct 2016.

¹⁴ Domino effect is also known as the domino theory developed in the US foreign policy after World War II according to which if one country fell of a noncommunist state to communism, then the neighboring countries would follow in a domino effect. For more information, see 'Domino Theory: International Relations' (Encyclopedia Britannica website) <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/domino-theory>> accessed 10 Dec 2016.

In the context of this research, the term is used in the sense that an outbreak of one conflict in the South Caucasus might have cumulative effect and produce 'domino effect' of conflict from state to state and from the South Caucasus region to the North Caucasus.

¹⁵ Lauren Van M., Viola, G. and Kuehnast, K. (2015). *The Ukraine-Russia Conflict Signals and Scenarios for the Broader Region: Signals and Scenarios for The Broader Region*. (Special Report 366). The United States Institute of Peace, p. 2. <<http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR366-The-Ukraine-Russia-Conflict.pdf>> accessed 15 Oct 2016.

¹⁶ Buzan and Waever 2003: 46.

is one of them. This study focuses only on the South Caucasus as a part of this sub-complex and views it as a mini sub-complex within the Caucasian RSC.

The research aims at tracing Russian foreign policy in the South Caucasus since the collapse of the SU in the context of security, in particularly Russia's position and role in the conflicts centered on South Ossetia, Abkhazia and NK, and understanding what security interests Russia has in the region. The literature research reveals that there is a gap in studies which utilize the RSCT for the security interdependences of the South Caucasus. Thus, overall this paper aims at contributing to the analysis of the South Caucasus within regional RSCT and understanding why the region is of particular interest for Russia in terms of its own security. The following hypotheses have been developed:

Hypothesis I: Based on the theory of RSC, possible escalation of the South Ossetian conflict could “spill over into the North Caucasus, undermining pro-Moscow rulers in Chechnya, Ingushetia and Ossetia and the Islamist insurgents in the North Caucasus could use this opportunity to cause even more trouble”.¹⁷ Against this background, instability in the South Caucasus cannot be in the Kremlin's interest because it can evolve the instability of the North Caucasus with a high level of spillover. Sergei Karaganov argued that after the collapse of the SU Russia's survival depended first upon stability in the south and the eruption of conflicts within the country's southern neighbors were Russia's greatest threats.¹⁸ Given all these arguments, *the hypothesis is that instability in the South Caucasus is not in Kremlin's interests.*

Hypothesis II: *Controlled instability in the region suits the Kremlin's interests.* One of the most dominating arguments is that “the existence of long-standing interethnic conflicts feeds into Russian security interests”¹⁹. These conflicts play to Russia's advantage letting the country preserve its presence in the region “under the guise of a mediator, or a protector.” Moreover, according to Nation (2015) Russia has used its status as a defender of the breakaway enclaves (Abkhazia, South Ossetia and the NK) in order to prolong its regional influence and he finds the Russian domination in the region as an important source of regional instability.

¹⁷ Felgenhauer, P. (2006). “The Kadyrovtsy: Moscow's New Pawns in the South Caucasus?”, *North Caucasus Weekly Volume: News and Analysis of the North Caucasus*, 7(24) (The Jamestown Foundation: Global Research and Analysis website) < <https://jamestown.org/program/the-kadyrovtsy-moscows-new-pawns-in-the-south-caucasus/> > accessed 25 Oct 2016.

¹⁸ Караганов, С. Независимая газета, 18 августа 1992. (In English: Karaganov, S. Independent Newspaper, 18 August 1992).

¹⁹ Naumkin 2002: 31.

Hypothesis III: *Russia aims at preserving the status quo of the conflicts in the South Caucasia.* Russia has been involved in all the above-mentioned conflicts: either as a direct party to the conflict or as a mediator. Each of these conflicts is characterized by distinctive features. However, there are also some common features and it is to the point to mention one of the key common features: the status quo of those conflicts. As Blank argues “Moscow has intervened with troops in the many ethnic wars in the Caucasus, ostensibly in a peacemaking role, but actually to create a new status quo”²⁰. Though these conflicts have been labeled as frozen, however, for instance, in case of NK as the recent events have demonstrated the conflict is not frozen at all and is characterized by a high potential of escalation. The third hypothesis is presumed on the basis of one of the evolutions to an RSC, namely maintenance of the status quo. To put it differently, Russia avoids any changes to the essential structure of an RSC. The research has showed that there are some arguments supporting this hypothesis. Buzan and Waever argue that Russia has exploited the conflicts of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Adzharia “to impose itself as guarantor of an inconclusive status quo”²¹. Rumer (2007) also states that Russian policy has never sought to bring about long-term, systemic change in the region but “Russian policy has been aimed at preserving the status quo and avoiding major changes”²².

Having all these hypotheses in mind, some practical questions have been developed to guide the whole research: *What are Russia’s security interests in the region? Does the escalation of the conflicts in the South Caucasus threaten Russia’s natural security? What is Russia’s position and role in the conflicts centered on South Ossetia, Abkhazia and NK? Does Russia take measures which might lead to a peaceful solution of those conflicts?*

Structurally, the introduction will be followed by an overview of the theoretical framework and the methodology. RSC will be explained in details and points relevant for the thesis will be highlighted. This chapter will also justify the theoretical assumption that South Caucasus can be considered as a mini sub-complex within the Caucasian RSC. This part will be followed by methodology and description of sources used in the thesis.

The next chapter provides a reader with an historical overview of Russian foreign policy in the region in the security context since the collapse of the SU. The second part of this chapter presents an overview and analyses of primary documents on Russian Foreign and Security Policies in order

²⁰ Blank 1995: 66.

²¹ Buzan and Waever 2003: 420.

²² Rumer 2007: 29.

to obtain a better understanding of principals and ideas of Russian foreign policy and security interests, with a focus on the South Caucasus. The forth chapter deals with the conflicts in the South Caucasus. This chapter will be divided into big subchapters, one dealing with the Georgian case, including both South-Ossetia and Abkhazia and the other one with Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict over NK. First of all the chapter provides the reader with an historical background of the origin of these conflicts which is followed by analyses of recent developments of the conflicts and Russia's role in them. The last chapter discusses Russian involvement in the regional conflicts and its role in the conflicts' resolution processes. The final chapter – conclusion contains the main findings.

1.1. Methodology and Sources

The methodological base is mainly qualitative linked to the interpretive approach. The choice of case studies is explained by an interpretivist approach according to which we “select cases on the basis of their inherent interest (...), not because they are typical of a category but for what they tell us about complex social processes”.²³ Each of these conflicts examined here has its own characteristics; however, exploring Russian security interests in the region, particularly in terms of these conflicts will help to obtain an answer to the raised research question. Thus, the collective case study is used here to cover several cases. The focus is not only within but also across cases. The grounded theory developed by Glaster and Strauss is a research strategy which is also be applied here. Its purpose is to generate theory from data. “Grounded means that the theory will be generated on the basis of data; the theory will therefore be grounded in data.”²⁴ Furthermore, the paper analyses speeches and official statements of political leaders, such as the current President of the RF Vladimir Putin; the former Russian President and the current Prime-Minister Dmitriy Medvedev; the former President of Georgia Mikail Saakashvili; the first de facto President of Abkhazia Vladislav Ardzinba; the former Prime Minister of Turkey Ahmet Davutoğlu, etc.

The examination of Russian foreign and security policy towards the region is developed from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include speeches, statements of political leaders and principal documents such as Foreign Policy Concepts of the RF, National Security Concept(s) of the RF, the National Security Strategy of the RF to 2020 (NSS) and the Military Doctrine of the RF through 2020. The use of primary sources provide ‘unfiltered’ access to information which contributes to gathering overwhelming accurate evidence relevant to the issues covered in the thesis. Secondary sources include books, academic articles, reports and online sources. The diversity of

²³ Della Porta and Keating 2008: 29.

²⁴ Ibid: 155.

materials will provide a comprehensive account on Russia's foreign policy and security interests in the region, in particular with regard to the conflicts. Given the diversity of theoretical perspectives, methodologies and sources of data, multiple triangulation is applied. It refers to the use of multiple data sources and theoretical perspectives to explore the issues important for this research.²⁵

2. Theoretical Framework

Russian foreign policy has been often described by strategic uncertainty or, as Baev (1997) argues the most distinctive feature of Russia's foreign policy towards the post-Soviet republics is bordering on 'incomprehensibility'. One can argue that in order to understand Russian foreign policy behavior in the South Caucasus, s/he should turn to theoretical pluralism which implies the use of several theories instead of one.

RSCT is the basis for the analytical framework. Thus, this chapter provides a detailed overview of the theoretical framework which will establish a foundation for the analysis to be conducted in the thesis. The theory applied in the thesis was developed by Buzan and Waever. This chapter will present the concepts of RSCT with a special focus on the aspects relevant to the thesis. Furthermore, the section is followed by the analyses of the South Caucasus as a sub-complex.

2.1. Regional Security Complex Theory: A Conceptual Approach

The end of the Cold War has triggered the rise of new threats and challenges to international security. At the same time, the advance of globalization has led to the redistribution of power in the international system.²⁶ The character of the post-Cold War international security has become the subject of hot debates within the International Relations (IR) theory. In order to understand the post-Cold War international security structure, in the book *Regions and Powers* (2003) Buzan and Waever offer three principal theoretical perspectives on it, namely neorealism, globalism and regionalism. They personally give preference to the regionalist perspective. This view is also supported by Rondeli's argument which states that "the national interest, foreign policy, and security priorities of small states have regional, rather than global, dimensions".²⁷ Thus, Buzan and Waever adopt the regionalist approach for several reasons. First of all, they agree with Lake and Morgan (1997) that in the post-Cold War world "the regional level stands more clearly on its own

²⁵ For more information, see Della Porta, D. and Keating, M. (2008). *Approaches and methodologies in the social sciences*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.

²⁶ For more information, see Baylis, J. (1997). "International Security in the Post-Cold War Era", in: Baylis, J. & Smith, S. (eds.), *The Globalization of World Politics*. USA: Oxford University Press.

²⁷ Rondeli 2000: 51.

as the locus of conflict and cooperation for states and as the level of analysis for scholars seeking to explore contemporary security affairs’’.²⁸ The core of their argument is that security studies should start with regions because this approach is normally dominated by national and global security analysis. Along similar lines, the authors argue that no national security is “self-contained” and in terms of global security it is “an aspiration, not a reality”. Concerning this claim, the authors’ foregoing discussion suggests that the regional perspective of IR theory supports the existence of regional subsystems which are relatively autonomous from the global system. The regional level of security has become more autonomous and prominent in international politics since decolonization, and according to Katzenstein Peter (2000) the end of the Cold War accelerated that process.²⁹ Furthermore, the withdrawal of the superpowers from different parts of the world and the ending of the bipolarity has made regional structures more prominent.

Buzan and Waeber developed RSC to explain that states interact more among neighboring states when it comes to security, and threats are more likely to occur among the countries of a regional subsystem, since hazards can travel more easily over short distances than over long ones. Against this background, they define the geographical proximity of the component-states of the complex as a distinctive feature of a subsystem. The authors use the concept of security complexes, developed by Buzan in his earlier work, in order to formulate the theory of regional security.

RSC is defined as a “set of units whose major processes of securitisation, desecuritisation or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot be reasonably analysed or resolved apart from one another”³⁰. To explain it differently, RSC is characterized by security interdependence of the states which comprise this RSC, while RSCT is applied to explain and analyze this security interdependence. The security concern of one state in a RSC might affect developments in other states of the same RSC. As they point out “one of the purposes of inventing the concept of RSCs was to advocate the regional level as the appropriate one for a large swath of practical security analysis”³¹. At the core of their arguments lies the statement that RSCT should be applied in order to understand the post-Cold war international security.

²⁸ Lake and Morgan 1997: 6-7.

²⁹ For more information, see Katzenstein, P. (2000). *Re-examining Norms of Interstate Relations in the New Millennium*, Kuala Lumpur: Paper for the 14th Asia-Pacific Roundtable.

³⁰ Buzan and Waeber 2003: 491.

³¹ Ibid: 43.

Buzan and Waever identify a number of regions which fall under the same “complexes”. All RSCs identified by the authors are principal components of international security. The authors argue that this theory cannot be applicable to every group of states. The main criterion to qualify for RSC is the degree of security interdependence possessed by a group of states which should be sufficient enough “to establish them as a linked set and to differentiate them from surrounding security regions”³².

RSCs are defined by two components. These elements are the power distribution and the patterns of amity and enmity which are usually better understood “by starting analysis from the regional level, and extending it towards inclusion of the global actors on the one side and domestic factors on the other”³³. The authors assume that having a look at the distribution of power is not enough in order to predict the patterns of conflict. Actually, patterns of amity and enmity play a big role in shaping RSCs. Cultural and historical factors might have huge influence on these patterns. In their turn, these patterns make RSCs dependent on actions of actors involved in a RSC. Hatred, rivalry and friendships – which can cause conflict or incite cooperation – are examples of historical developments that contribute to the formation of an overall constellation of threats and friendships. All of this defines a RSC.³⁴

Thus, according to Buzan and Waever (2003) the essential elements of a RSC are social construction, which includes the patterns of amity and enmity among the units; polarity, which covers the distribution of power among the units; boundary, which differentiates the RSC from its neighbors; and an anarchic structure, which means the RSC must be composed of two or more autonomous units. It should be taken into consideration that a security complex can undergo some changes because of different factors. For instance, each of the elements of an RSC might undergo transformations because these security complexes “are durable, but not permanent features of the international system”³⁵.

The authors identify three main possible evolutions for a RSC: maintenance of the status quo, internal transformation and external transformation. These options have been highlighted here since they are very relevant for the thesis in terms of understanding the current status of the conflicts and possible evolutions. In terms of internal transformation, changes in patterns of amity and enmity or in the distribution of power or balance of power may occur. As to external transformation, Buzan

³² Buzan and Waever 2003: 30-31.

³³ Ibid: 47.

³⁴ Ibid: 50.

³⁵ Ibid: 12.

and Waever are convinced “that the outer boundary expands or contracts, changing the membership of the RSC, and most probably transforming its essential structure in other ways. The most obvious way for this to happen is if two RSCs merge, [...]”³⁶.

Last but not least, an important concept relevant for this thesis is the ‘mechanism of penetration’. The external global powers try to influence the regional dynamics of RSCs through this mechanism, especially if the region is vulnerable to external factors. According to the authors the “penetration occurs when outside powers make security alignments with states within an RSC”³⁷. As the authors explain, in some cases rivalries between the component-states of RSC provide or even demand for the penetration of the great powers. The penetration of a global power creates preconditions for redefining the power structure within a region through its military or economic assistance to a certain state (states). Thus, it can shape the power distribution. A pattern of rivalry is considered as the standard form for an RSC.

For the analytical framework RSC specifies four interrelated levels of analysis: a) the domestic order in terms of stability and vulnerabilities that define security fears of the component states of the region; b) state-to-state relations; c) the region’s interaction with neighboring regions; and d) the role of global powers in the region.³⁸ This paper will mainly focus on the role of Russia as a global power in the South Caucasus in the context of security with regard to the regional conflicts. However, other levels of analysis will also be touched upon. Still, the thesis finds it relevant and necessary to; first of all, provide a justification and analysis for the choice of the South Caucasus as a sub-complex within the Caucasian RSC.

According to Buzan and Waever (2003) sub-complexes have essentially the same definition as a RSC. The difference is that a sub-complex is embedded within a larger RSC. Their patterns of security interdependence might be characterized as distinctive but they define the RSC as a whole. In short, sub-complexes constitute the whole RSC.

The post-Soviet space is defined by Buzan and Waever as a solid regional security complex around Russia.³⁹ The CIS as a security complex includes three sub-regions due to the level of security interaction: Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Western belt (Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova). Thus, one

³⁶ Buzan and Waever 2003: 53.

³⁷ Ibid: 46.

³⁸ Ibid: 51.

³⁹ For more information, see Part 5. The Europes, 13 The post-Soviet space: a regional security complex, in: Buzan, B. and Wæver, O. (2003). *Regions and powers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

of the structural features of the post-Soviet security complex is that all of the above-mentioned sub-regions are characterized by lesser or greater Russian hegemony. What is important to note in the framework of the thesis is that “the global arena is today much more important than Europe for Russia’s attempts both to secure a larger role outside its region and to legitimize a regional empire”⁴⁰.

Furthermore the authors distinguish between standard and centred RSCs. In case of centred RSCs the engaged power is either a great power (e.g., Russia in the CIS) or a superpower (e.g., the US in the North America), rather than just a regional power. “The expectation in these cases is that the global level power will dominate the region (unipolarity), and that what would otherwise count as regional powers [...] will not have sufficient relative weight to define another regional role”⁴¹. The CIS, for example, is defined as a centred one, whereas, standard RSCs are characterized by unipolarity, that means they have an anarchic structure under the influence of one regional power. “Within a standard RSC the main element of security politics is the relationship among the regional powers inside the region. Their relations set the terms for the minor powers and for the penetration of the RSC by global powers.”⁴² In their previous works, Buzan and Wæver (e.g. Wæver 1993⁴³, 1997⁴⁴) have also talked about ‘centred’ regions, where centralization of power in a region happens when its centre becomes a participant in the global security constellation among the greatest powers, and the regional dynamics cannot be seen any more as a subsystem in which the primary fears and concerns of a group of states are defined by each other.⁴⁵

2.2. Regional Security Sub-Complexes around Russia

As already stated, Buzan and Wæver consider the post-Soviet space as one of the RSCs around Russia.⁴⁶ They examine the evolvement of security dynamics in the region since the demise of the SU. Within the post-Soviet space the following sub-regions are differentiated: the Baltic States, the

⁴⁰ Buzan and Wæver 2003: 398.

⁴¹ Ibid: 55.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ For more information, see Wæver, O. (1993). “Europe: Stability and Responsibility”, in: *Internationales Umfeld, Sicherheitsinteressen und nationale Planung der Bundesrepublik. Teil C: Unterstützende Einzelanalysen. Band 5. II.A Europäische Sicherheitskultur. II.B Optionen für kollektive Verteidigung im Kontext sicherheitspolitischer Entwicklungen Dritter*, Ebenhausen: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, SWP – S 383/5, 31–72.

⁴⁴ For more information, see Wæver, O. (1997). “Imperial Metaphors: Emerging European Analogies to Pre-Nation State Imperial Systems”, in: Tunander et al. (1997). *Geopolitics in Post-Wall Europe: Security, Territory, and Identity*, London: Sage, 59–93.

⁴⁵ Buzan and Wæver 2003:54.

⁴⁶ For more information, see Part 5 The Europes, 13 The post-Soviet space: a regional security complex, in: Buzan, B. and Wæver, O. (2003). *Regions and powers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

western group of states, the Caucasus and Central Asia. One of the arguments in favor of these regions as security sub-complexes is that for most states, security concerns relate not only to other states in the sub-complex but also to Russia.⁴⁷ As argued by Rondeli (2000), certain regions attract the attention of world powers due to different factors and thus, they become the focus of great power interests. Regarding the post-Soviet space, the RSCT defines Russia as a great power. According to the authors, “the very term, the ‘near abroad’, revealingly created an in-between category between domestic and truly ‘foreign’ affairs, thus suggesting a polity formed in concentric circles, a centered RSC.”⁴⁸ To put it differently, the post-Soviet security complex is defined as centred on Russia, hence the concept of “Russia-centred complexes” has come forth.⁴⁹

Buzan and Waever see the Caucasus as a sub-complex within the post-Soviet RSC which consists of two parts: the North Caucasus officially a part of the RF which includes Chechnya, Dagestan, and five other units and many ethnic groups; and the South Caucasus consisting of Georgia with secessionist conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Armenia and Azerbaijan with the NK conflict. According to them, the geographic proximity of the South Caucasian states to the North Caucasus has established the grounds for an interdependent security dynamics. The Caucasian RSC is characterized by four events which form the whole Caucasian complex. These four defining dynamics are “secessionists in Georgia, the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Karabakh, spillover between the North and South Caucasus through the micro-coalition patterns of small ethnic groups and the energy and pipelines”⁵⁰. Roy Allison (1999) also shares an important premise concerning the theoretical background that the Caucasus can be viewed as a security complex based on the argument, that conflict in one part of the region, whether in the northern or southern Caucasian republics “can easily spill over or provoke conflict in another part of the region because of ethnic or cultural linkages”.⁵¹ All the aforementioned dynamics are characterized by a strong Russian component, factor which will be further developed in the upcoming section.

2.3. Defining the South Caucasus as a Regional Security Sub-Complex

Franz Eder (2008) and Khatchik Derghouskassian (2006) view the South Caucasus as a separate regional security sub-complex. As already discussed, rivalry between states within a RSC often opens space or demands for the great powers’ involvement. The escalation of conflicts in the South

⁴⁷ Buzan and Waever 2003: 397.

⁴⁸ Ibid: 405.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid: 423.

⁵¹ Allison 1999: 28.

Caucasus after the collapse of the SU has preconditioned Russia's penetration in the region, resulting in its heavy military and political presence in the South Caucasus. Thus, Russia is considered a global power in the South Caucasus and it is viewed as a part of the RSC.

As security alignments shifted after the end of the Cold War and after 9/11, each South Caucasian state perceived its security differently. As Svante Cornell argues "international interest in the region tended to increase polarization of regional politics".⁵² The security framework where relations between the three South Caucasus states – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia – take place is a complex one. A closer look at the security dynamics evolving in the South Caucasus will provide better understanding of the essence of the knot of unresolved conflicts in the region. Also, the analysis of these dynamics through the analytical levels of the RSC framework - such as the global level, foreign penetration, state-to-state relations, the regional balance of power, and the domestic order - will contribute with a deeper scrutiny of the penetration of Russia and its interaction with the South Caucasus in the context of security.

As to the first level of analysis, according to Derghoukassian (2006) the South Caucasus RSC is defined by "the pattern of Russian-US competition/cooperation relationship: while both have strong interests in avoiding the proliferation of strategic weapons and cooperating in the War on Terror, they also cannot avoid competing for influence in the post-Soviet space"⁵³. This has also caused power demonstration in certain regions. The reason was to avoid proliferation of weapons or to cooperate in the frame of the War on Terror, though it could also be characterized as an attempt of each of these countries, under the guise of 'competitors/cooperators', to aim at global hegemony. As Suny argues "while Russia aims for a regional hegemony in the so-called "Near Abroad," the US, most forcefully under the George W. Bush administration, has promoted its own ambitions for global hegemony and the active prevention of any rival hegemon from rising and establishing its influence over some region."⁵⁴ As already mentioned, Russia tried to consolidate its power in the region through the establishment of various regional organizations. As the integration of former Soviet states within the CIS framework for fostering their future co-operation failed⁵⁵, Russia created the CSTO to continue the military cooperation with those CIS states which favored that

⁵² Cornell, E. (2004). "NATO's Role in South Caucasus Regional Security", *Turkish Foreign Policy Quarterly*, 3(2), p. 126.

⁵³ Derghoukassian 2006: 8.

⁵⁴ Suny 2010: 14.

⁵⁵ 'Konończuk, W. (2007).The failure of integration. The CIS and other international organizations in the post-Soviet area, 1991-2006' (The Centre for Eastern Studies website) <<https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-studies/2007-05-15/failure-integration-cis-and-other-international-organisations-post>> accessed 03 Jan 2017.

cooperation. Over the years, this organization has become more institutionalized. One of the main aims of the CSTO is to counterbalance NATO extension. According to Derghoukassian, the nature of the cooperative/competitive relationships between US and Russia sets up barriers to achieving durable stability in the South Caucasus. He argues that:

[the] US-Russian pattern of cooperative/competitive relationship creates a very precarious stability in the South Caucasus, because neither the strategic alliances are durable, nor do they create dividing lines along which a balance of power situation could be consolidated. While all three countries, and to some extent the autonomous units, do have some space for strategic maneuverings, it is the global US-Russian interplay that strongly condition the decision-making process for each actor in the complex.⁵⁶

Regarding the European presence and its influence in the South Caucasus, it has been shaped through the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). Within the framework of ENP, the EU has pursued to stabilize the South Caucasus through a series of activities aimed at economic integration and institutional cooperation. It has also tried to play a growing role as a security actor in the region. However, as Sabine Fisher (2012) points out:

The EU's relations with the countries in the region do not evolve in a linear continuum. On the contrary, they are marked by significant ups and downs. The eastern enlargement in 2004, the development of EN and the color revolutions all contributed to a rapid rapprochement with the countries of the Eastern Neighbourhood. This rapprochement, however, was accompanied by a rapid deterioration in the relations with Russia.⁵⁷

Though after the successful "Rose Revolution" in Georgia the European Council extended the initiative further to South Caucasian States, the EU has remained an outsider to the region's frozen conflicts, on the grounds that other actors are conducting the negotiation processes. Therefore, the EU's involvement has been limited to the status of observer and eventual future guarantor of a final settlement agreement, whereas Turkey and Russia have acted as both supporters and financiers.⁵⁸ In this sense, "Europe's strategy of security and stabilization excludes any direct involvement in the process of conflict resolution and circumscribes Brussels's role in the active support to the OSCE initiatives."⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Derghoukassian 2006: 9.

⁵⁷ Fisher 2012: 32.

⁵⁸ For more information, see Simro, L. and Freire, R. (2008). "The EU's Neighborhood Policy and The South Caucasus: Unfolding New Patterns of Cooperation", *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, 2(4), 47-66. <https://estudogeral.sib.uc.pt/bitstream/10316/9611/1/UNISCI9Freire_2005.pdf> accessed 01 Jan 2017.

⁵⁹ Derghoukassian 2006: 10

Despite initial efforts taken by Turkey and Iran to become leading power players in the region, none of them has been able to stabilize its long-term presence and influence.⁶⁰ Turkey being an Western ally and also a member of the NATO – has also been demonstrating signs of growing awareness regarding its security needs, especially after the 2003 war in Iraq.⁶¹ As to Iran, despite it took unilateral attempts to play a mediating role in the NK conflict⁶², it was excluded from the OSCE Minsk Group since it was not a member of it. Furthermore, although Iran possesses considerable energy reserves, its tense international position and the development of its nuclear program have made it a non-reliable partner for the South Caucasus states. “Despite the religious differences, friendly relations between Yerevan and Teheran have provided both countries with alternatives to isolation, and Moscow’s blessing of Iranian engagement in the South Caucasus and Central Asia, in the early 1990s, was meant to act as a balance to increasing Turkish influence.”⁶³

The next level of the security dynamics can be traced in the pattern of state-to-state relationship in the South Caucasian RSC. Addressing the power distribution and patterns of amity and enmity of the region’s component-states allows an analysis from the regional level. Furthermore, the analysis will gradually extend towards the inclusion of Russia’s role as a global power and its policy towards those states, particularly security interests in the region. As mentioned, the South Caucasus is characterized by four variables which form the essential structure of an RSC: boundary, the international frontiers of the South Caucasian states differentiate it from its neighbors; anarchic structure, which means that the RSC must be composed at least of two (and more) component autonomous states⁶⁴; polarity, which is about the distribution of power among units; and social construction, which covers the patterns of amity and enmity among the units.

The South Caucasus has been a site for both inter- and intra-state conflicts characterized by a large number of non-state and state actors.⁶⁵ The interplay between these actors has created issues that extend far beyond national borders. The security problems of Armenia and Azerbaijan cannot be analyzed separately since the security of one country directly affects security of the other in the context of the NK conflict. Besides, any acquisition of weapons by one party, joining in alliances or international organizations causes concerns for each of the sides. Moreover, all of these factors may

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Torbakov, I. (2006). “Turkey's strategic outlook making significant shift”, in: *Eurasia Daily Monitor* <<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav030706.shtml>> accessed 03 Jan 2016.

⁶² Ter-Gabrielian and Nedolian 1997: 109-10.

⁶³ Rashid 1994: 212-213.

⁶⁴ The South Caucasus consists of three independent states – Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan.

⁶⁵ For more information, see Bertsch, K. et al. (2000). *Crossroads and Conflict*. 1st ed. New York: Routledge.

have implications on the balance of power between the parties which is of importance for Russia. For instance, Armenia's alliance with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)⁶⁶ turned the power-balance in the region to Russia's advantage and caused concerns for Azerbaijan.

Due to rich oil resources Azerbaijan has secured a vast number of armaments. As stated in the report produced by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), an arms trade research group, Azerbaijan has been reported as the second-largest arms importer in Europe over the past five years⁶⁷. Azerbaijan increased its armory imports by 249 per cent between 2005–2009 and 2010–2014.⁶⁸ The most controversial fact is that although Russia is one of the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group, it is the main weaponry provider to both sides⁶⁹, openly acknowledging this fact. During one of his speeches while defending Moscow's policy of selling arms to both Armenia and Azerbaijan, the Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said in Russian state television: "They would buy weapons in other countries, and the degree of their deadliness wouldn't change"⁷⁰. All of this has implications for the polarity of the region: the distribution of balance of power among units tends to change.

Regarding the Georgian case, as Thornike Gordadze argues "once the shock of disintegration⁷¹ was over, both Georgia and Russia returned to their classical national projects: state-building for the first and restoration of its empire or sphere of influence for the second"⁷². This is where their interests clashed. Of all the three South Caucasian countries, Georgia became "the most striking example of Russia's new policy involvement in the post-Soviet space"⁷³ and has paid a high price for it. Russia backed two break-away governments of South Ossetia and Abkhazia undermining

⁶⁶ 'Armenia Joins Russia-Led Economic Union (Jan 2, 2015)' (The Moscow Times Website) <<https://themoscowtimes.com/articles/armenia-joins-russia-led-eurasian-economic-union-42666>> accessed 10 Nov 2016.

⁶⁷ 'Wezeman, P. and Wezeman, S. (2014). Trends in International Arms Transfers, SIPRI Fact Sheet. March 2015' (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute website) <<http://books.sipri.org/files/FS/SIPRIFS1503.pdf>> accessed 14 Sept 2016.

⁶⁸ See 'Arms Imports (SIPRI Trend Indicator Values)' (The World Bank website) <<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.MPRT.KD>> accessed 07 Oct 2016.

⁶⁹ «Рогозин подтвердил продолжение продаж российского оружия Азербайджану и Армении, 8 апреля 2016» (Lenta.Ru веб-сайт) (In English 'Rogozhin has confirmed that Russia continues selling Russian weapons to both Azerbaijan and Armenia' (Lenta.Ru website)), <<https://lenta.ru/news/2016/04/08/mustflow/>> accessed 23 Oct 2016. Lenta.Ru is a Moscow-based online newspaper in Russian language.

⁷⁰ 'Russia's prime minister has defended Moscow's policy of selling arms to both Armenia and Azerbaijan, whose military forces have faced off in a sharp escalation of fighting around Nagorno-Karabakh April 9, 2016, at 12:48 p.m.' (U.S. News & World Report website) <<http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2016-04-09/russia-defends-selling-arms-to-both-azerbaijan-and-armenia>> accessed 10 Nov 2016.

⁷¹ The collapse of the SU is meant.

⁷² Gordadze 2011:1.

⁷³ *ibid*: 13.

Georgia's sovereignty within its internationally recognized borders⁷⁴, and the self-proclaimed republics gradually became heavily dependent on Russia.⁷⁵ Given, the economic, social and military dependence of both Abkhazia and South Ossetia on Russia, Georgia's security interaction is primarily with Russia.⁷⁶ The real threat to Russian security concerns in the North Caucasus is the possible Georgian intervention into South Ossetia or Abkhazia which could have a spill-over effect to North Ossetia because of the ethnic relations and destabilize the North Caucasus. In this regard, Naumkin (2002) is also the proponent of the argument that the South Caucasus is of substantial interest for Russia in terms of security, given tensions in the Chechen case. He refers to the South Caucasus as "both stable and friendly to it"⁷⁷, a reason which overrides the temptation to deploy risk factors menacing the South Caucasus states in the interest of Russia⁷⁸.

Thus, the obtained evidence supports Derghoukassian's interpretation of the amity-enmity relationship pattern between the South Caucasian states. Armenian-Azerbaijani relations are characterized by the enmity pattern of relationship because of the existing conflict over the NK region. Regarding the Armenian-Georgian relations, on the one hand Derghoukassian states that they are dominated by rivalry, on the hand he notes that it is not an obvious conclusion.⁷⁹ According to H. Peimani (2009), Armenia is interested in the stability of Georgia given the fact of having closed borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan, and the importance of Georgia as a transit route which has been lost because of the hostility between Georgia and Russia.⁸⁰ As Peimani argues further, transit routes through Georgia connecting Armenia and Russia would be impossible, as long as Georgian-Russian relations remain hostile. Indeed, Armenia's interest in the stability of Georgia is also expressed in the NSS: "Armenia has traditionally enjoyed friendly relations with Georgia which have contributed to the maintenance of overall stability in the region"⁸¹. In this context, infrastructure projects are highlighted and the government of Armenia hopes that the inner Georgian conflicts might be solved soon, so that Armenia could benefit from the Georgian highway- and

⁷⁴ United States Mission to the OSCE Response to the Three Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions on the Conflict in Georgia. *Delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer to the Permanent Council, Vienna, November 3, 2016.* <<http://www.osce.org/pc/280491?download=true>> accessed 20 Nov 2016.

⁷⁵ For more information, see Jafalian, A. (2011). *Reassessing Security in the South Caucasus*. (1st ed.). Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

⁷⁶ For more information, see Gerrits, A. and Bader, M. (2016). "Russian patronage over Abkhazia and South Ossetia: implications for conflict resolution", *East European Politics*, 32(3), 297-313 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2016.1166104>> accessed 17 Nov 2016.

⁷⁷ Russia.

⁷⁸ Naumkin 2002: 31.

⁷⁹ Derghoukassian 2006: 12.

⁸⁰ Peimani 2009: 271.

⁸¹ National Security Strategy of the Republic of Armenia 2007: 16.

railway-system.⁸² The Georgian-Azerbaijani relations are also “closer to the rivalry pattern than the amity” because of the desire for larger autonomy of Azerbaijani ethnic minority in Georgia.⁸³

Another relevant concept to be noted here is the hegemonic status of Russia which is believed to be closely linked to the South Caucasus. According to Robert Keohane, a hegemon state is one which is strong enough to ensure the necessary rules governing interstate relations and which intends to do more.⁸⁴ The historical perspective illustrates clearly how Russia has always tried to resist the presence of any other powers in the region ensuring its status of hegemonic power.⁸⁵ However, the argument that hegemony often promotes stability, because “cooperation may be fostered by hegemony, and hegemons require cooperation to make and enforce rules”⁸⁶ doesn’t prove to be true in the case of the South Caucasus.

3. Post-Soviet Security Interests of Russia in the South Caucasus

Being a part of the SU during the Soviet period the South Caucasus was fully integrated into its security system. Already in the late Soviet period the tensions were mounting in the region and as “at that time, security matters were the responsibility of the Soviet ministries of defense and the interior, and of the command structures of the various military and security forces”⁸⁷ Moscow had the primary responsibility for dealing with the various conflicts that were evolving in the South Caucasus. After the fall of the SU, Stephen Iwan Griffiths (1993) advanced the argument that different minorities in the CIS would become sources of instability, however then it was not clear at all what implications Russian intervention policies in the newly independent states would have.⁸⁸ According to Herzig, in the post-Soviet period Russia’s role has become complex and opaque. After the collapse of the SU, those conflicts became internationalized.⁸⁹

According to Buszynski (1996) the nationalists and geopoliticians, who insist on Russia’s predominant role in the ‘near abroad’ have different views in relation to the means of Russian foreign policy. The geopoliticians’ claim that Russia’s entire security is closely linked to the

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Derghoukassian 2006: 12.

⁸⁴ Keohane 1984: 44.

⁸⁵ For more information, see Nation, R. (2015). “Russia and the Caucasus”, *Connections: The Quarterly Journal*, 14(2), 1-11.

⁸⁶ Keohane 1984: 46.

⁸⁷ Herzig 1999: 48.

⁸⁸ Griffiths 1993: 86

⁸⁹ Jafarova 2015: 35.

stability in the “near abroad”. As the latter still remains unstable, it might involve other external powers. For these reasons, Russia cannot detach itself from the “near abroad” and re-orientate itself to the West⁹⁰. Buzan and Waever also partly support this argument noting that:

‘Near abroad’ is an important part of the Russian security agenda partly for specific reasons, partly for strategic ones. [...] the bottom-line strategic threat is, that if Russia is to remain a great power both able to defend itself and able to assert some influence globally, it needs to retain its sphere of influence among the current CIS countries’.⁹¹

As stated by Franz Eder (2008) the dominance over the region is seen by Russia as a prerequisite to control any potential spillover effects of the so called ‘frozen conflicts’ not only in terms of the South Caucasus, but in the whole post-Soviet space.⁹² Whereas, for many Russians the idea of a Russia without a dominant role in the “near abroad” conflicts with their sense of history and nationalism. One of the chief proponents of Russian hegemony in the “near abroad”, Andranik Margaryan argued that Russia should declare to the outside world that the former SU was a “sphere of its own vital interests”⁹³.

After the collapse of the communism, Russia as a successor of the SU “has found it impossible to let the independent Caucasian countries go their own way”⁹⁴ and in general, all previous Soviet states. Since then it has been following the policy of preserving and fostering its presence in the former soviet republics. That policy has been accompanied by both failures and success. Establishing Russian supremacy throughout the former SU has always been central to Russia’s political, security and economic interests. One of many factors determining the importance of the post-Soviet space has been to counterbalance Western influence, particularly resist NATO’s enlargement within its ‘sphere of interest’⁹⁵ and maintain a security belt around its periphery. The establishment of the CIS in 1991 initiated by Russia has been “an ambitious project of economic and political reintegration of post-Soviet space”.⁹⁶ The CIS was created as an attempt by Russia to reintegrate the post-Soviet space and to maintain a common security and economic space. The desire to elaborate closer relations with the member-states of the CIS has been high on the Kremlin’s agenda. According to Dimitrakopoulou and Liaropoulos, it is not only a matter of prestige

⁹⁰ Buszynski 1996: 98.

⁹¹ Buzan and Waever 2003: 409.

⁹² Eder 2008: 86.

⁹³ Buszynski 1996: 98.

⁹⁴ Henze 1996: 392.

⁹⁵ German 2012a: 1651.

⁹⁶ ‘Kulhanek, J. (2006). Russia and Near Abroad: Past and Present’ (Russkii vopros website) <<http://www.russkii.vopros.com/?pag=one&id=28&kat=6&csl=11>> accessed 20 Sept 2016.

for Moscow to sustain a leading role among the post-Soviet countries, but also a way to secure stability in its “near abroad” where Russia has enormous national interests.⁹⁷ Likewise the establishment of the CIS in 1992, Moscow introduced a collective security treaty in order to enhance security cooperation with some of the CIS states, which was institutionalized in 1999 as the CSTO.⁹⁸

One of the most predominant arguments occupying the core of hot debates on Russian foreign policy towards the “near abroad” is that military and security interests prevail prominently in Russia’s approach. “This is especially the case with the southern flank of the CIS, as it is seen as the last-line of defense against militant Islam extremism from the South.”⁹⁹ One of the proponents of this view is Trenin, according to whom security, whether external or internal, is the prevailing Russian interest, especially in the case of the Caucasus. He describes the reasons for it as manifold. The most important one appears to be the essential unity of the Caucasian region, to which the newly independent South Caucasus - like the Russian Northern Caucasus - belongs. The spillover effect of the South Caucasian conflicts raging in the area sets the unity of the Russian Federation at stake. As Trenin states, a process of building stability in the South Caucasus to prevent conflicts has been of overriding importance for Russia.¹⁰⁰ Findings support the claim, that since the demise of the SU, Russian foreign policy has been guided by the objectives of securing its southern flank from instability and excluding any foreign penetration into its sphere of interest. The CIS had been created to serve as a tool for pursuing those objectives, however according to many scholars it failed to evolve into an effective security system.¹⁰¹

As Rondeli claims, the Caucasus is of special importance because of “its significance to world energy markets and its potential role as a transit route between Europe and Asia”¹⁰². These factors have turned the region into a subject of geopolitical competition of external actors¹⁰³ and the South Caucasus has long served as a key arena for competing regional powers such as Russia, Turkey and Iran who continue to exercise their influence in the region.¹⁰⁴ “As the successor state of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), and a South Caucasus’ border country, Russia claimed to

⁹⁷ Dimitrakopoulou and Liaropoulos 2010: 36.

⁹⁸ Jafalian 2011:1.

⁹⁹ Brown 2001: 445-6.

¹⁰⁰ Trenin, D. (1996). Chapter III Contested Borders in the Caucasus: Russia's Security Interests and Policies in the Caucasus Region, in: Coppieters, B. (ed) (1996). *Contested borders in the Caucasus* (1st ed.). Brussels: VUBPress. <<http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/ContBorders/eng/ch0301.htm>> accessed 07 Sept 2016.

¹⁰¹ Herzig 1999: 48-51.

¹⁰² Rondeli 2000: 51.

¹⁰³ Buszynski 1996: 95.

¹⁰⁴ Giragosian 2007: 100.

have specific interests in the region.”¹⁰⁵ As argued by Buszynski since 1992, internal pressure within Russia for a dominant position in the region has grown greatly, inflamed by frustrations with the West, the demand for a great power role, and the security and economic exigencies of the area.¹⁰⁶ “The inherent instability of the area [...] may entice the nationalists and the proponents of empire into assuming a more prominent role in policy formulation”.¹⁰⁷ According to Menon, any significant changes in the South Caucasus represent the danger of prolonged instability on Russia’s southern flank.¹⁰⁸

The research sources provide abundant information on the South Caucasus as an area of special interest for Russia. Though the views on those special interests differ, the overwhelming evidence suggests Russia’s security as the primary factor accounting for its interest in the region. As stated by Rondeli, being one of the regional powers, the RF

[...] considers its presence in the region as a vital factor for its national security and cannot accept that the region could be anything other than a totally subordinate zone of influence. Russia fears that a power vacuum in the Caucasus would be filled by powers hostile to Russia and perceives as the solution to the Caucasus states remaining as impotent satellites of Russia – a kind of ‘frontier province’.¹⁰⁹

In the early 1990s, the South Caucasus has been viewed by the West as a “landlocked area”¹¹⁰ within post-Soviet space, and it was mainly “presented as Russia’s south and integrated *de facto* by the Kremlin in to its Near Abroad policy”.¹¹¹ An associate professor at Russian State University for Humanities Sergey Markedonov, also accepts that the South Caucasus is of crucial importance for Russia’s core strategic interest.¹¹² As stated by him, Russia’s geopolitical strategy in the South Caucasus is not intended “to produce an “imperial resurgence” or “re-sovietization” of the region. Rather, Russia is focused on ensuring stability in the former Soviet republics of Transcaucasia as a prerequisite for Russia’s peaceful domestic development and the preservation of its territorial integrity”¹¹³. Furthermore, as a practical matter, the ethno-political tensions emerged in Russia’s

¹⁰⁵ Jafalian 2011: 1.

¹⁰⁶ Buszynski 1996: 95.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Menon 1999: 19.

¹⁰⁹ Rondeli 2000: 52.

¹¹⁰ Jafalian 2011: 1.

¹¹¹ Ibid: 1.

¹¹² Markedonov, S. (2014). Russia and Conflicts in the Greater Caucasus: In Search for a Perfect Solution’ (Russian International Affairs Council website) <http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id_4=3638#top-content> accessed 17 Nov 2016.

¹¹³ Markedonov 2013: 29.

regions have been closely connected with the ongoing conflicts in the South Caucasus.¹¹⁴ Thus, ethnic tensions arising even in the North Caucasus may fuel tensions in the South and vice versa. For this reason, it should be in Russian interest not to let those tensions spread and tranquilize them as soon as possible.

Naumkin (2002) distinguishes five factors which account for the region's significance for Russia in terms of ensuring Russia's security and economy. These determining factors are: the South Caucasus borders on the North Caucasus, which generates grave internal threats to Russia's security; it separates Russia from its major southern partners, Turkey and Iran; it has a high level of instability, with some serious unsettled internal conflicts. Furthermore, due to the mineral resources of the Caspian Basin the region also receives increasing attention from other global and regional powers, and other states as well.¹¹⁵

Already before its independence, instability in the South Caucasian was gathering force and has become of concern for Russia. Since then, Russia has been trying to maintain its military presence in the region."¹¹⁶ Herzig argues that "the original rationale for the maintenance of a strong Russian security presence in the South Caucasus was developed in the context of a strategy that hoped to make the CIS function as a security structure, maintaining the old external borders and strategic defences of the Soviet Union."¹¹⁷ This strategic intention is expressed by the 1992 Collective Security Treaty (CST), known also as Tashkent agreement on collective security. Later in 2003, it was reorganized into the CSTO "as a counter to the NATO and the eastward expansion of European influence"¹¹⁸. Armenia, being one of the original signatories is the only country in the South Caucasus "whose foreign policy serves the goals of CSTO, and Armenian authorities see it as the only international framework ensuring the country's national security".¹¹⁹ The other two Caucasian states Azerbaijan and Georgia, acceded to the CST already in 1993.¹²⁰

¹¹⁴ Markedonov 2013: 29.

¹¹⁵ Naumkin 2002: 31.

¹¹⁶ 'Kulhanek, J. (2006). Russia and Near Abroad: Past and Present' (Russkii vopros website) <<http://www.russkii.vopros.com/?pag=one&id=28&kat=6&csl=11>> accessed 20 Sept 2016.

¹¹⁷ Herzig 1999: 48.

¹¹⁸ Shahnazaryan 2006: 355.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Herzig 1999: 48.

3.1. Primary Documents on Russian Foreign and Security Policies

As the current debate revolves around the questions of which security interests Russia has in the South Caucasus, there are two main concepts that lie at the heart of the discussions: the Russian national security and foreign policy. It is a well-known fact that there is no universal consensus regarding the definition of security. In an attempt to obtain a better understanding of Russia's foreign policy and security interests in the region, the paper examines some primary documents which illustrate the principles and ideas of Russian foreign and security strategy. The following principal papers forming Russian foreign and security policy have been studied: Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (2008¹²¹, 2000¹²², 2013¹²³ and 2016¹²⁴) (hereafter FPC) , the 1997 Russian National Security Blueprint and National Security Concept of the RF of 2000; the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation to 2020 (NSS) and the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation through 2020. The gained data reveals key aspects of Russia's foreign and security policy, particularly towards the South Caucasus and contributes to better understanding of Russian security interests in the region.

3.1.1. Foreign Policy Concept(s) of the Russian Federation

Each of the Concepts sets out the content and basic directions of Russia's Foreign Policy, and each of them can be considered as further developed and broadened successor of the previous Concept. One of the main objectives of *the Foreign Policy Concept of the RF: 2000*, approved by the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on 28 June 2000 is “to form a good-neighbor belt along the perimeter of Russia's borders, to promote elimination of the existing and prevent the emergence of potential hotbeds of tension and conflicts in regions adjacent to the Russian Federation”¹²⁵. This Concept also emphasizes the need of “ensuring conformity of multilateral and

¹²¹ The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, 2008. *Approved by Dmitry A. Medvedev, President of the Russian Federation, on 12 July 2008*. Source: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation <<http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/4116>> accessed 15 Oct 2016.

¹²² The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, 2000. *Approved by Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation on June 28, 2000* <<https://fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/econcept.htm>> accessed 15 Oct 2016.

¹²³ The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, 2013. *Approved by President of the Russian Federation V. Putin, on 12 February 2013*. Source: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation <http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICk6B6BZ29/content/id/122186> accessed 17 Oct 2016.

¹²⁴ The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, 2016. *Approved by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, 30 November 2016*. Source: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation <http://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICk6B6BZ29/content/id/2542248> accessed 17 Oct 2016.

¹²⁵ The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. *Approved by Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation on June 28, 2000*. Source: Federation of American Scientists (FAS)

bilateral cooperation with the member states of the CIS to national security tasks of the country’’,¹²⁶. Among regional priorities Russia attaches “a priority importance to joint efforts toward settling conflicts in CIS member states, and to the development of cooperation in the military-political area and in the sphere of security, particularly in combating international terrorism and extremism’’,¹²⁷.

The 2013 Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation was signed by Vladimir Putin on the 12th of February. The Concept fits into the wider framework of Russia’s strategic thinking. It explicitly acknowledges the National Security Strategy to 2020¹²⁸ and the Military Doctrine.¹²⁹ The Concept is of special interest for this research since a closer look at the data, in particular at the paragraph about regional priorities of Russia reveals not only its political objectives related to each region and to individual states, but also to non-recognized states. The development of bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the CIS member states is included in Russia’s foreign policy interest. Furthermore, it aims at strengthening of the CIS as a basis for enhancing regional interaction among its participants who not only share common historical background but also have great capacity for integration in various spheres. Russia acknowledges that it will maintain its active role in the political and diplomatic conflict settlement in the CIS space. It is stated in the document that:

[Russia] will participate, in particular, in the settlement of the Transdnistria problem on the basis of respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and neutral status of the Republic of Moldova while providing a special status for Transdnistria, contribute to the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in collaboration with other OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, building on the principles contained in the joint statements made by the Presidents of Russia, the USA, and France in 2009-2011.¹³⁰

Furthermore, the document reflects Russia’s commitment to further support the Republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and contribute to the formation processes of the Republics as modern democratic states. Strengthening their international positions, as well as ensuring sustainable security and, their social and economic recovery remain among Russia's priorities.

<<https://fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/econcept.htm>> accessed 15 Oct 2016.

¹²⁶Ibid.

¹²⁷Ibid.

¹²⁸ The Russian Federation's National Security Strategy, 2015. *Approved by Russian Federation Presidential Edict 683, on 31 December 2015* <<http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/2016/Russian-National-Security-Strategy-31Dec2015.pdf>> accessed 20 Dec 2016.

¹²⁹ The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2020. *Approved by Russian Federation presidential edict on December 25, 2014 No. Pr.-2976.* <<http://rusemb.org.uk/press/2029>> accessed 15 Dec 2016.

¹³⁰ The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, 2013. *Approved by President of the Russian Federation V. Putin, on 12 February 2013.* Source: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation <http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICk6B6Z29/content/id/122186> accessed 17 Oct 2016.

It is noteworthy that in all the Concepts, the CIS is defined as the priority area of action for Russia. However, in the concept of 2013 the role of CIS is particularly emphasized, considering it as the framework to preserve the cultural heritage and the common civilization, and to guarantee the rights of the Russian diasporas. Furthermore, it is a framework to face new risks and threats, especially those coming from the South Caucasus and Asia Central. In cases of instability, Russia emphasizes the role of CSTO as one of the key elements of the modern security system in the post-Soviet space.

The comparative analysis of the points related to the CIS in all the three Concepts reveals how the regional priorities change from more general to more specific, such as in the Concept of 2000, the regional priorities are CIS: Customs Union, the Treaty on collective security; and in the Concept of 2008 – CIS: EurAsEC, CSTO, whereas, in the Concept of 2013, the document makes references not only to CSTO, EurAsEC, but also to individual states such as Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and self-proclaimed republics of NK, Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

One of the most important and key goals of all the Concepts is the protection of rights and interests of Russians and compatriots abroad. In the most recent Concepts of (2016) this goal has been broadened and reformulated in the following way: “to ensure comprehensive, effective protection of the rights and legitimate interests of Russian citizens and compatriots residing abroad, including within various international frameworks”¹³¹. This goal occupies a very important position in the Security Concept documents as well. It is very important to mention about this aim because in many cases of Russian aggression, it justifies its actions claiming that it acts as a protector of Russians abroad, as it was the case, for example, with Ukraine and also in case of the Abkhazian and South Ossetian conflicts.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this slightly comparative study of the Concepts is that the documents are characterized by the identical structure. But there is much progress in terms of identifying specific objectives formulating Russian foreign policy. After the collapse of the SU, it was referred to as obscure and uncertain, but now, as these Concepts illustrate step by step, Russia has developed a consolidated model, a clear definition of its national interests, and how they should be defended. One of the issues to be highlighted is the formulation of a broader concept of security. The Concepts also repeatedly express Russia’s concerns regarding unresolved conflicts in its

¹³¹The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, 2016. *Approved by President of the Russian Federation V. Putin, 30 November 2016*. Source: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation <http://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/foreign_policy/official_documents//asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/254248> accessed 17 Oct 2016.

southern neighborhood, and in the very recent Concept of 2016, it expresses its readiness to contribute to their peaceful settlements calling on international actors such as OSCE for their contribution and cooperation, particularly in the case of NK.

Ruiz González, F. (2013) carried out comparative studies of the three Concepts in order to illuminate the main lines of Russian foreign action and how the Kremlin perceives changes in world geopolitics.¹³² As stated by him, after Russia has regained its lost status of great power, this recovery has led Russia to a position of more strength, both in its near abroad and in front of the EU. Furthermore, Ruiz González claims that Russia's re-attainment of the status of a great power has coincided with Putin's adoption of internal measures of authoritarian character after he returned to the Kremlin. "To begin to reverse that situation, it would be good to cooperate in the resolution of some of the 'frozen conflicts' in the common neighbourhood, in particular that of Transdniestria in Moldova."¹³³ The list of frozen conflicts which need a peaceful resolution is much longer than only the case of Transdniestria. Besides, many of these conflicts cannot be characterized as frozen but rather as escalating or having a high potential of escalation. The Four Day War in the disputed territory of NK provides ample support for this assertion. He also quotes the speech by the former German Chancellor Schroeder in the Munich Security Conference in 2005, in which the former German Chancellor said: "one of the fundamental truths of the European policy is that the security of our continent cannot be achieved without Russia, or certainly against it".¹³⁴ This argument is particularly relevant for achieving security and stability in the South Caucasus, and in the Caucasus in general.

3.1.2. National Security Concept(s) of the Russian Federation

As already mentioned above, Russia hoped to make the CIS function as a security structure to maintain its strong security presence in the South Caucasus. However it failed to do so. Russia, already being aware of its failure introduced the importance of the CIS from a slightly different angle in the 1997 Russian National Security Blueprint¹³⁵. In the document, as Herzig notes: "it still

¹³² For more information, see Ruiz González, F. (2013). The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation: A Comparative Study. Framework Document by Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies (IEEE). < 2013_Rusia_ConceptoPoliticaExterior_FRuizGlez_ENGLISH.pdf > accessed 03 Jan 2017.

¹³³ Ibid: 21.

¹³⁴ Speech by Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schröder at the opening of the 41st Munich Conference on Security Policy (02/12/2005) <<http://gerhard-schroeder.de/en/2005/02/12/munich-conference/>> accessed 29 Dec 2016.

¹³⁵ Russian National Security Blueprint, 1997. *Approved by Russian Federation presidential Edict No. 1300 dated 17 December 1997* \FBIS-SOV-97-364, 30 Dec 1997. Source: Rossiiskaya Gazeta, 26 Dec 1997 pp.4-5 <<https://fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/blueprint.html>> accessed 18 Oct 2016. As amended by Decree of the President of the Russian Federation on January 10, 2000 № 24. In accordance

maintains the emphasis on the importance of the CIS states, but asserts that their development into 'friendly, independent, stable and democratic states' is of primary importance, rather than insisting on the need to corral them into a CIS security structure''.¹³⁶ The development of relations with CIS member states is seen as the most important factor to promote the resolution of ethno-political and inter-ethnic conflicts, as well as to ensure socio-political stability along Russia's borders, which would eventually lead to preventing centrifugal phenomena within Russia itself.¹³⁷

In 2000, acting President Vladimir Putin signed Russia's revised National Security Concept. The concept is notable for its criticism of the US and other Western states.¹³⁸ This National Security Concept is a wider and more comprehensive document that adopts broader view of security.

In *Chapter III: Threats to the Russian Federation's National Security*, the factors which may bring the fundamental menaces in the international sphere are the weakening of the process of integration within the CISs and the conflicts breaking out and escalating near to the borders of the Russian Federation and the external borders of CIS member states.¹³⁹ As stated in Chapter IV, one of the vital strategic directions in ensuring the Russian Federation's military security is effective collaboration and cooperation with the CIS member states. Furthermore, the interest of guaranteeing Russia's national security predetermines the need, under appropriate circumstances, for Russia to have a military presence in certain strategically important regions of the world. Deploying limited military troop contingents there on a treaty or international legal basis, as well as on the principles of partnership must ensure Russia's readiness to accomplish its obligations and support the forming of a stable military-strategic balance of forces in the regions. Gradually, all these measures will enable the RF to react to a crisis situation in its initial stage and achieve its foreign-policy aims.¹⁴⁰

with Presidential Decree of May 12, 2009 № 537 repealed. Source: The Security Council of the Russian Federation. <<http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/99.html>> accessed 09 Dec 2016.

¹³⁶ Herzig 1999: 49.

¹³⁷ Russian National Security Blueprint, 1997. *Approved by Russian Federation presidential Edict No. 1300 dated 17 December 1997* \FBIS-SOV-97-364, 30 Dec 1997. Source: Rossiiskaya Gazeta. <<https://fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/blueprint.html>> accessed 18 Oct 2016.

¹³⁸ 'Russia's National Security Concept' (Arms Control Association website) <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2000_01-02/docjf00> accessed 10 Dec 2016.

¹³⁹ The National Security Concept of the Russian Federation. *Approved by Presidential Decree No.24 of 10 January 2000*. Source: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation <http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICk6BZ29/content/id/589768> accessed 11 Dec 2016.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

3.1.3. The National Security Strategy to 2020

In assessing Russia's security policy, the analysis of *the National Security Strategy to 2020*¹⁴¹ is of significant importance. In general, the NSS describes the international environment and defines Russia's national interests and strategic priorities. At the end of December 2016, the Russian President Vladimir Putin signed the executive order on Russia's NSS effective until 2020, which overrides the former NSS approved in May 2009 by then President-Medvedev.¹⁴² The document defines the domestic and foreign threats, strategic national priorities, objectives, tasks, and suggests measures that will guarantee the security and development of the RF in the long-term. In the new NSS the definition of security has been broadened. Among the primary threats to Russia the new NSS makes reference to the missile defense in Eastern Europe and the local conflicts in its near abroad or as Klimentyev M. (2016) puts it the main threats to Russia's national security are "color revolutions and biological weapons".¹⁴³ For this reason, the strategic deterrence and the prevention of armed conflicts is seen as one of the main goals aimed at ensuring national security of the RF.

The Russian military presence in certain regions is viewed as a key component of the country's national security as emphasized in the document. In regards to the previous NSS¹⁴⁴ as outlined in the Strategy, Russia believes that the maintenance of both strategic stability and equality in the strategic partnership can be supported by the presence of Russian armed forces in regions of conflict. This statement seems very obscure since it does not define which regions of conflict are meant here. As Manutscharjan puts it, "only insiders probably know what the authors meant by this nebulous statement: is it about supporting the USA in Afghanistan or about intervening in other unspecified regions of conflict? Does it allude to Ukraine or the Krim? Or to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh?"¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ The Russian Federation's National Security Strategy: 2015. *Approved by Russian Federation Presidential Edict 683, on 31 December 2015* <<http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/2016/Russian-National-Security-Strategy-31Dec2015.pdf>> accessed 20 Dec 2016.

¹⁴² 'Kureev, A. (2016). Russia's new national security strategy has implications for the West' (Russia Direct website) <<http://www.russia-direct.org/opinion/russias-new-national-security-strategy-has-implications-west>> accessed 05 Dec 2016.

¹⁴³ 'Russia's national security strategy for 2016 in 9 key points' (RT-News website) <<https://www.rt.com/news/327608-russia-national-security-strategy/>> accessed 10 Dec 2016.

¹⁴⁴ Strategic stability and equitable strategic partnership, point 93, in: *Russia's National Security Strategy to 2020. Approved by Decree of the President of the Russian Federation, 12 May 2009 No. 537* <<http://rustrans.wikidot.com/russia-s-national-security-strategy-to-2020>> accessed 21 Nov 2016.

¹⁴⁵ Manutscharjan 2009: 160.

In comparison with the last strategy, adopted in 2009, Mark Galeotti describes this new one as “pretty extreme” and provides a comparative overview of primary concepts of the NSS.¹⁴⁶ However, due to the time and space constraints only relevant aspects of the Strategic Stability and Equal Strategic Partnership are considered here. As stated in the document, one of the key areas of Russia’s foreign policy is the development of both bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the CIS members, and with the Republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The document emphasizes the importance of the development of regional and sub-regional integration and coordination on the territory of the participants in the CIS within the Commonwealth itself, and also the CSTO, the EAEU and the Union State.¹⁴⁷ All this is believed to contribute to the stabilization of the overall situation in the regions bordering the participants of the CIS, the Republic of Abkhazia, and the Republic of South Ossetia.¹⁴⁸ The quality development of the CSTO is of primary significance for Russia, since it would contribute to its conversion into a powerful universal international organization. The latter is expected to be capable of repelling any regional challenges and military-political and military-strategic threats (including international terrorism and extremism, the illicit traffic in narcotics and psychotropic substances, and illegal immigration) and also threats in the information sphere¹⁴⁹.

3.1.4. Russian Military Doctrine until 2020

Another primary document which deserves closer attention is Russian Military Doctrine (hereafter the Doctrine). The new *Russian Military Doctrine until 2020* signed by President Vladimir Putin in December 2015¹⁵⁰ replaces the previous doctrine, which had been in effect since April 2000. It is divided into three chapters: general provisions; military risks and military threats encountered by the RF and military policy of the RF. The Doctrine forms a part of the national security policy and therefore, a thorough analysis of certain aspects of the Doctrine is essential in order to gain a good

¹⁴⁶ ‘Galeotti, M. (2016) Russia’s New National Security Strategy: Familiar Themes, Gaudy Rhetoric’ (War on the Rocks website) <<http://warontherocks.com/2016/01/russias-new-national-security-strategy-familiar-themes-gaudy-rhetoric/>> accessed 15 Dec 2016.

¹⁴⁷ It is a supranational union, consisting of Russia and the Republic of Belarus.

¹⁴⁸ Strategic Stability and Equal Strategic Partnership, Point 89, in: the Russian Federation's National Security Strategy. *Approved by Russian Federation Presidential Edict 683, on 31 December 2015* <<http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/2016/Russian-National-Security-Strategy-31Dec2015.pdf>> accessed 20 Dec 2016.

¹⁴⁹ Strategic Stability and Equal Strategic Partnership, Point 90, in: the Russian Federation's National Security Strategy. *Approved by Russian Federation Presidential Edict 683, on 31 December 2015* <<http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/2016/Russian-National-Security-Strategy-31Dec2015.pdf>> accessed 20 Dec 2016.

¹⁵⁰ The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2020. *Approved by Russian Federation presidential edict on December 25, 2014 No. Pr.-2976.* <<http://rusemb.org.uk/press/2029>> accessed 15 Dec 2016.

insight into Russian security strategy. However, this review is limited to elements of external security, such as unresolved regional conflicts. First of all, the paper proceeds with the explanation of what the Doctrine is. The Doctrine is primarily a bureaucratic document which provides “a system of officially adopted by the State views on preparations for armed defense and on the armed defense of the Russian Federation.”¹⁵¹ The overview of the Doctrine highlights certain aspects which in combination with such framework documents provide an insight into how Russia conceptualizes its security. One of the major external threats to Russia’s national security is the expansion of the NATO alliance.

The closer overview aims at highlighting those points that stand out as being of particular analytical importance for this thesis. One of the Military Dangers and Military Threats to the Russian Federation (Part II, 10) is the unresolved status of many regional conflicts. The doctrine does not specify exactly which conflicts are meant under the regional ones, however there is further clarification stating that there is a continuing tendency towards a strong-arm resolution of these conflicts, including in regions bordering on the RF. The existing international security system, including its international-legal mechanisms, does not ensure equal security for all states which leaves a place to suggest that it does refer to the Caucasian conflicts. Among the Main Military External Dangers (12) are listed: b) the attempts to destabilize the situation in individual states and regions and to undermine strategic stability; i) the presence (emergence) of seats of armed conflict and the escalation of such conflicts on the territories of states contiguous with the RF and its allies.

The doctrine also provides an outline of those military relationships¹⁵² which are of primary importance for the RF. One of the tasks of military-political cooperation is the development of the “relations with international organizations for the prevention of conflict situations and the maintenance and strengthening peace in various regions, including the participation of Russian troop contingents in peacekeeping operations”¹⁵³. Among the basic priorities of military-political cooperation, the text attaches a special importance to military-political cooperation with a) Belarus; b) the Republic of Abkhazia and the Republic of South Ossetia – ensuring common defense and security; c) the CSTO member states – consolidating efforts to improve the capabilities of the CSTO

¹⁵¹ The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2020. *Approved by Russian Federation presidential edict on December 25, 2014 No. Pr.-2976.* <<http://rusemb.org.uk/press/2029>> accessed 15 Dec 2016.

¹⁵² See Military-political and military-technical cooperation of the Russian Federation with foreign states, Point 56, in: The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2020. *Approved by Russian Federation presidential edict on December 25, 2014 No. Pr.-2976.* <<http://rusemb.org.uk/press/2029>> accessed 15 Dec 2016.

¹⁵³ Ibid: Point 50 (d).

collective security system for ensuring collective security and common defense; d) the CIS member states – ensuring regional and international security and carrying out peacekeeping operations; e) the SCO states – coordinating efforts to confront new military risks and military threats within common space, as well as establishing a necessary legal and regulatory framework. Regarding the last aspects, one of the amendments in the text of the new Doctrine deserves a special remark: it is the inclusion of primary importance of military-political cooperation with the Republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It is noteworthy that this point lacked in the text of the previous Doctrine (2010).¹⁵⁴ Another addition to the text of the new Doctrine refers to the part of the activities of the RF to contain and to prevent armed conflicts. This part is extended with the task to strengthen the interaction with the Republic of Abkhazia and the Republic of South Ossetia in order to ensure joint defense and security.¹⁵⁵

A number of threats are said to require cooperation with western countries, including terrorism, the situation in Afghanistan, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and frozen conflicts in the Russian neighborhood. To sum it up, the overview of the aspects relevant for this research leads to the conclusion that the escalation or emergence of new conflicts in the Caucasus, and in particular, in the South Caucasus threatens Russian natural security. Therefore, Russia emphasizes the role of politico-military cooperation with the CSTO and CIS members, strengthening the collective security system in the frame of the CSTO and increasing its capacity.

To sum this section up, the overview and analysis of the principal documents forming Russian Foreign and Security Policy provide confirmatory evidence to the argument that the South Caucasus is of substantial importance for Russia in terms of its security interests. The security concerns encompass the unresolved regional conflicts, which might spread over the region and endanger Russian southern flank. Against this background, further research in this area will cover Russian policy towards each of the South Caucasian states with regard to the unresolved conflicts of South Ossetia, Abkhazia and NK.

¹⁵⁴ The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation. *Approved by Russian Federation presidential edict on 5 February 2010* <http://carnegieendowment.org/files/2010russia_military_doctrine.pdf> accessed 15 Dec 2016.

¹⁵⁵ See Chapter III. Military Policy of the Russian Federation: 21. Main tasks of the Russian Federation to contain and the prevention of armed conflicts: h), in: *The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2020. Approved by Russian Federation presidential edict on December 25, 2014 No. Pr.-2976.* <<http://rusemb.org.uk/press/2029>> accessed 15 Dec 2016.

4. Conflicts in the South Caucasus

There is no time left for anything but to make peace work a dimension of our every waking activity
-- Elise Boulding

The South Caucasus is one of those sub-regions where patterns of amity and enmity do play a big role in shaping the RSC. The delineation of the region during and after the collapse of the SU has been based on ambiguous and obscure decisions by the Soviet leaders making the domestic affairs of those states very vulnerable to instabilities and insurgency. Cultural, ethnical, political and historical factors have had huge influence on the formation of the amity and enmity patterns, characterizing state-to-state relations. In the case of the South Caucasus, the latter can be described by territorial claims accompanied by ethnic tensions considered as legacies of the Soviet epoch. Mikhail Gorbachov's glasnost policy and demise of the SU have contributed to the violent escalation of the regional conflicts. At the same time, as stated by Buzan and Waeever (2003), the clashes between the South Caucasian states have opened for Russia a corridor for Russia's penetration and involvement in those conflicts as a successor of the SU.

Dmitry Trenin had accurately predicted that the CIS could not exist as an entity, but during the upcoming decade, the world would witness a continued buildup of the various separate regions in the former Soviet space, i.e. Eastern Europe (Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine); the South Caucasus (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia plus disconnected Abkhazia and South Ossetia); and Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). "Despite major differences country-to-country, states within each group share many common economic, political and cultural characteristics, which can be expected to fade with the passing of those generations that remember the common state."¹⁵⁶

The research done demonstrates that Russian security interests in the region have sometimes been characterized by ambiguities. Though, at the beginning of 1990's Russia was facing both internal and external turmoil of conflicts, the Kremlin never remained unresponsive to them because those insurgencies and conflicts could have been instrumental in order to maintain and foster its influence outside of the borders. As T. Gordadze argues: "ethnic tensions in the region were indeed likely to

¹⁵⁶Trenin, D. (op-ed) (2013). Russia's Relations with the CUS Countries: Outlook for 2020' (Carnegie Moscow Center website) <<http://carnegie.ru/2013/03/28/russia-s-relations-with-cis-countries-outlook-for-2020-pub-51395>> accessed 25 Dec 2016.

arise. But without Russian involvement, their intensity and outcome would have probably been radically different”¹⁵⁷. Herzig confirms: “the original rationale for the maintenance of a strong Russian security presence in the South Caucasus was developed in the context of strategy that hoped to make the CIS function as a security structure, maintaining the old external borders and strategic defences of the SU”¹⁵⁸. Buzan and Waever also support the argument that the ethnic conflicts in the post-Soviet space were the result of

[...] a short-term policy of accommodating and even reinforcing national identity for purposes of divide-and-rule. The SU was structured by a four-layered system of ethnically based administrative political units, a system of ‘matrioshka nationalism’ First there were the Union Republics (Soviet Socialist Republics (SSRs); officially with a right to secede), second, twenty Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics located within the Union Republics. Then came eight Autonomous Regions (oblasti) and last ten Autonomous Areas (okruga). Each had a similar set of institutions, nested hierarchically within each other [...].¹⁵⁹

After the collapse of the SU, the South Caucasus became turmoil of hot conflicts because the system of ‘matrioshka nationalism’ turned out to be artificial. Those ethnics who were placed within different layers of ‘matrioshka’ with artificial borders drawn by the SU leaders demanded the right of self-determination. Although these demands and unrests came forth already during Gorbachov’s ‘glasnost’ policy¹⁶⁰, the fall of the SU accelerated the process. According to Buzan and Waever “Soviet drawing and redrawing of boundaries”¹⁶¹ lie at the root of many of the conflicts in present-day former Soviet republics and there seems to be no compelling reason to argue against it. As argued by Gordadze Russia, being a guarantor of CIS’s security, had to intervene in those conflicts. However, there is counter-perspective on it. Blank argues that Russia has intervened in the many ethnic wars, in general in the Caucasus not for a peacekeeping role, but to grasp the opportunity “to create a new status quo”¹⁶². According to Baev, while Russia’s military intervention in the regional conflicts contributed to the achievement of ceasefire, withal it also prevented any long-term political

¹⁵⁷ Gordadze 2011: 12.

¹⁵⁸ Herzig 1999: 48-49.

¹⁵⁹ Buzan and Waever 2003: 402.

¹⁶⁰ ‘Siegelbaum, L. (1985). Perestroika and Glasnost’ (Seventeen Moments in Soviet History – An Online Archive of Primary Sources website) <<http://soviethistory.msu.edu/1985-2/perestroika-and-glasnost/>> accessed 17 Dec 2016. For more information on ‘glasnost’ or ‘perestroika’, refer to the speech by the Soviet Leader M. Gorbachov: ‘Gorbachev Proposes Restructuring Mikhail Gorbachev, On Convening the Regular 27th CPSU Congress and the Tasks Connected with Preparing and Holding it. April 23, 1985’. Original Source: Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. XXXVII, No. 17 (May 22, 1985). (Seventeen Moments in Soviet History – An Online Archive of Primary Sources website) <<http://soviethistory.msu.edu/1985-2/perestroika-and-glasnost/perestroika-and-glasnost-texts/gorbachev-proposes-restructuring/>> accessed 17 Dec 2016.

¹⁶¹ Buzan and Waever 2003: 403.

¹⁶² Blank 1995: 66

solutions for those conflicts.¹⁶³ Since then, the “military footprint”¹⁶⁴ has underpinned Russia’s efforts to preserve the influence over the region.

Another perspective on the conflicts, by Christoph Bluth (2014), is that all conflicts which broke out in the Caucasus “had the potential for derailing Washington’s policy goals there. The US sought to support democratization, economic reform, US trade interests and the sovereignty of the newly independent states”.¹⁶⁵ He goes further arguing that “the prospect of serious investment to develop the Caspian oil fields [...] looked like a good opportunity for US companies ”. ¹⁶⁶ Azerbaijani oil resources were another key factor which has contributed to the interconnectedness of the Caspian Sea region with the West. In this context the stability and security of the South Caucasus is of crucial importance not only for regional players, but also for the West.

The fall of the SU has been accompanied by a dramatic rise in disorders which gradually turned into violent conflicts in its southern provinces of “the former Communist Empire”¹⁶⁷, and also in some parts of its successor’s territory. As stated by Emil A. Pain (1999), the emergence of those conflicts is typical of post-colonial areas, provoked in many cases by Soviet national policy.¹⁶⁸ With regards to the South Caucasus, the region has been plagued by growing tensions and instability already before the collapse of the SU. After the fall of communism these tensions and disorders have turned into violent conflicts. Thus, the three newly independent republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, “the troubled trio of the region”¹⁶⁹ have faced extreme clashes in NK, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The wars broke out in the context of the territorial adjustments of the SU’s administrative units “on the basis of minorities’ national aspirations, a process that led in the South Caucasus alone to three secessionist wars, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Nagorno-Karabakh”.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶³ Baev 1997: VII.

¹⁶⁴ German 2012a: 1652.

¹⁶⁵ Bluth 2014: 122.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid: 123.

¹⁶⁷ Pain 1999: 177.

¹⁶⁸ For more information on the roots of ethnic and border conflicts in the former USSR, see Здравомыслов, А. (1997). *Межнациональные конфликты в постсоветском пространстве*. — М.: Аспект-пресс, (Переиздание — М., 1999). (In English: Zdravamislov, A. (1997). *International conflicts in the post-Soviet space*. Moscow: Aspekt-Press (Reprint in 1999), pp. 3-9.

¹⁶⁹ Jafarova 2015: 19.

¹⁷⁰ Lorusso 2016: 2.



(map source: RFE/RL)

These three conflicts, broken out after the demise of the SU, have not met a peaceful resolution up-to-day. The unresolved nature of these conflicts impedes the stability and prosperity of the entire region. According to Armenak Minasyans,¹⁷¹ the roots of the “conflicts in South Caucasus have got their development during whole last century and most of present day problems are results of not so well-grounded and finally failed internal policy of the SU”.¹⁷² The conflict resolution processes are complicated since “in addition to local reasons for conflicts, the political-strategic and economic importance of the South Caucasus has been ground for (attempts at) involvement in this area by states and organizations, such as Iran, Turkey, Russia, the USA, NATO and the EU”.¹⁷³ These conflicts have been characterized by the fragile state of ‘no peace, no war’, leaving the governments of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia at the center of the security concerns and policies.¹⁷⁴ According to Novikova, the unresolved nature of the conflicts is viewed as one of the reasons for the growing interest in the region. As she states, “post-Soviet conflicts of the South Caucasus do not blend into the standard schemes of settlement”¹⁷⁵. Furthermore, Nation puts forward the claim that “with Vladimir Putin directing Russian policy from 2000 onward, waging a new war to repress Chechen separatism, and committing to a revival of Russian power and influence in its ‘near abroad’ – the Caucasus region regained its traditional salience in the spectrum of Russian security concerns”¹⁷⁶.

¹⁷¹ Eastern Partnership project team member, President of AEGEE-Yerevan and Speaker of International Politics Working Group.

¹⁷² ‘Minasyants, A. (2012). General Overview of the South Caucasian Conflicts’ (Association des États Généraux des Étudiants de l’Europe website) <<https://www.aegge.org/general-overview-of-the-south-caucasian-conflicts/>> accessed 25 Dec 2016.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Herzig 2000: 59.

¹⁷⁵ Novikova 2004: 214.

¹⁷⁶ Nation 2015: 3.

Especially with regards to the South Caucasus, the whole region became the center of Russian security concerns during this period. The region has always witnessed many violations of ceasefire. Its instability has been badly growing and gathering much force, following the outbreaks of violent clashes such as: the Russian-Georgian War of 2008, also known as “Five Day War”, and the most recent NK clashes referred to as “Four Day War”¹⁷⁷. The latter began along the NK line of contact on April 2nd of 2016 between the NK Defense Army backed by the Armenian Armed Forces on one side, and the Azerbaijani Armed Forces on the other, in the disputed region of NK.

To be able to understand the dynamics of the conflicts and Russia’s security interests in the region, first of all it is necessary to provide a historical overview of the existing conflicts in the South Caucasus, of the interrelation of the conflicting parties, and of the great power role played by Russia.

4.1. The Russia-Georgian Conflict

This subchapter provides a historical overview and analysis of the Russia-Georgia conflict’s roots. It also explores Russia’s involvement in the conflicts and how Russia has effectively reduced independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia almost to the status of protectorates.¹⁷⁸

4.1.1. Abkhazia

Abkhazia¹⁷⁹ is almost twice the size of NK and more than twice the size of South Ossetia.¹⁸⁰ Herzig (1999) describes Abkhazia as “far more strategic territory”¹⁸¹ than the other disputed territories of South Ossetia and NK. “Strategically located along the coast of the Black Sea, sharing a border with Russia, Abkhazia sits just south of a proposed South Stream Pipeline that would transport valuable Russian energy resources to the European continent.”¹⁸² Thus, it serves as an important road link to Russia. In addition, as it contains nearly the half of Georgia’s coastline, it offers

¹⁷⁷ For more information, see ‘Tuysuz, G. (April 3, 2016) Azerbaijan claims ceasefire in deadly feud; Armenia says violence still going’ (CNN website) <<http://edition.cnn.com/2016/04/03/asia/azerbaijan-armenia-violence/>> accessed 27 Dec 2016.

‘Fighting erupts on Nagorno-Karabakh front lines’ (Deutsche Welle website) <<http://www.dw.com/en/fighting-erupts-on-nagorno-karabakh-front-lines/a-19160034>> accessed 27 Dec 2016.

¹⁷⁸ Gerrits and Bader 2016: 308.

¹⁷⁹ For deeper historical background on the region and conflict, see Hille, C. (2010). *State building and conflict resolution in the Caucasus* (1st ed.). Leiden [the Netherlands]: Brill.

¹⁸⁰ Abkhazia has the territory of 8,600 sq. km. In 1989 its population was 537,000 (46 per cent Georgian; 18 per cent Abkhaz; 15 per cent Armenian; 14 per cent Russians. Source: Herzig 1999: 155.

¹⁸¹ Herzig 1999: 76.

¹⁸² Jones, E. (2014). Russia and the West: Fracture Points (Abkhazia)’ (Foreign Intrigue website) <<http://foreign-intrigue.com/2014/09/russia-and-the-west-fracture-points-abkhazia/>> accessed 26 Jan 2017.

wonderful tourist resorts, rich agriculture and major power station.¹⁸³ Coene describes the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict as one of the “bloodiest and atrocious in post-Soviet history” and “the prospects for a mutually agreeable solution do not look very promising”.¹⁸⁴ However, before turning to the issue of the conflict solution, the paper will provide a historical overview of the conflict to enable the reader to obtain better understanding of the issues under discussion in this project.¹⁸⁵

The SU was famous for “border delimitation”,¹⁸⁶ of the soviet territories. Conflicts over NK, South-Ossetia and Abkhazia are outcomes of such a policy. Like in the case of South Ossetia and NK, the Abkhazian conflict is also much deeply rooted in history and is characterized by extremely incompatible claims to the territory insisted by both conflicting sides; i.e. Georgia and Abkhazia.¹⁸⁷

Abkhazia proclaimed itself a separate SSR on March 1921, and already existed as an independent republic when the SU was formed. Several months later, Georgia and Abkhazia signed the confederative Union Treaty which enabled Abkhazia to enter the Transcaucasian Federation on an equal basis.¹⁸⁸ However, in 1931 the status of Abkhazia was demoted and it was formally incorporated into Georgian SSR as an autonomous republic.¹⁸⁹ During the SU period, the Abkhaz always complained of a Georgianization and the destruction of their culture. There were always disagreements and tensions between both sides, however “because of the authoritarian system open conflicts were averted”¹⁹⁰.

The tensions between Georgia and Abkhazia were gradually degrading into a conflict when in 1989, in a village of Lykhny, the Aidgyala People’s forum adopted a declaration raising Abkhazia’s ASSR status to SSR status, separating it from the Georgian SSR.¹⁹¹ It is noteworthy that all participants in the Lykhny assembly, numbering to around thirty thousand people - including all the party and government leaders of the ASSR, but also five thousand Armenians, Greeks, Russians and even

¹⁸³ Herzig 1999: 76.

¹⁸⁴ Coene 2010: 148.

¹⁸⁵ For deeper historical background, see Coene, F. (2010). *The Caucasus*. 1st ed. London: Routledge.

¹⁸⁶ Herzig 1999: 76.

¹⁸⁷ For more information, see Otyrga, G. (1994). “War in Abkhazia: the Regional Significance of the Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict”, in: Nadia Szporluk, R. (ed.). *National identity and ethnicity in Russia and the new states of Eurasia* (1st ed.). Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe.

¹⁸⁸ Coene 2010: 149.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. See also Herzig 1999: 76.

¹⁹⁰ Coene 2010: 149.

¹⁹¹ ‘Studenikin, A. (Press Secretary of the Abkhaz Ministry of the Republic of Abkhazia) Armed Conflicts: Roots of the 1992-1993 Georgian-Abkhaz Armed Conflict’ (The Moscow Defense Brief website) <<http://mdb.cast.ru/mdb/6-2002/ac/rgaac/>> accessed 28 Dec 2016.

Georgians - signed an appeal published in all local papers on 24 March, expressing their position on the causes of the conflict as outlined above.¹⁹²

While delivering his speech at the 1st Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR in 1989, Vladislav Ardzinba¹⁹³ focused his attention on 'the problem of the individual regions' because resolving all-state [obshchegosudarstvennyh] problems was unthinkable without taking into account the interests [..] of the country, regardless of where they were located. Furthermore, he stated:

I am focusing attention on this problem because several addresses were made in this hall today that touched on the problems of the small, or more precisely the numerically small peoples. The appeal¹⁹⁴ contained a request to restore the status of a Soviet Socialist Republic that Abkhazia had had in 1921 when Lenin was still alive. Contrary to affirmations, that does not mean that Abkhazia leaves Georgia, but that the status of treaty Abkhazia is restored. According to the 1921 treaty between the Georgian and Abkhaz SSRs, that status gave the Republic of Abkhazia the possibility to decide its fate independently of external constraint in the event that the question arose of the secession of the other union republic from the USSR.¹⁹⁵

The Lykny Declaration was followed by riots during ethnic Georgian demonstrations at the Sukhumi University.¹⁹⁶ The tensions and clashes between sides were gradually escalating into a full-scale war. After the fall of the SU in 1991, Abkhazia was placed as an autonomous region of Georgia, and became subject to Georgian law and rule.¹⁹⁷

The main fighting in the Abkhazian war took place in 1992-3,¹⁹⁸ which resulted in the de-facto independence of Abkhazia.¹⁹⁹ On April 4th, 1994, Georgia and Abkhazia signed a *Declaration of Measures for a Political Settlement of the Georgian/Abkhaz Conflict*, and committed themselves to strict observance of a cease-fire and cooperation in order to ensure the safe, secure, and dignified

¹⁹² Zverev, A. (1996). "Chapter I Ethnic Conflicts in the Caucasus 1988-1994", in: Coppieters, B. (ed). *Contested borders in the Caucasus* (1st ed.). Brussels <<http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/ContBorders/eng/ch0103.htm>> accessed 15 Dec 2016.

¹⁹³ Vladislav Ardzinba, the first President of de-facto Abkhazia. For more information about him, see 'Vladislav Ardzinba: Historian who became the first President of Abkhazia' <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/vladislav-ardzinba-historian-who-became-the-first-president-of-abkhazia-1948231.html>> accessed 17 Dec 2016.

¹⁹⁴ He refers to the Lykny Declaration.

¹⁹⁵ 'Speech by Vladislav Ardzinba | The 1st Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR | 1989' (Abkhazia in Vision website) < <http://abkhazia.co.uk/conflict/116-speech-by-vladislav-ardzinba-the-1st-congress-of-people-s-deputies-of-the-ussr-1989>> accessed 27 Oct 2016.

¹⁹⁶ Horace Mann Model United Nations Conference XXIV (2009) <<http://curryp.ism-online.org/files/2009/08/somalia-pirates.pdf>> accessed 21 Nov 2016.

¹⁹⁷ Horace Mann Model United Nations Conference XXIV (2009) <<http://curryp.ism-online.org/files/2009/08/somalia-pirates.pdf>> accessed 21 Nov 2016.

¹⁹⁸ Herzig 1999:77.

¹⁹⁹ Hille 2010: 230.

return of people who had fled the area.²⁰⁰ In several months, on the 24th of November 1994, the Abkhazian government adopted a Constitution²⁰¹ stating that Abkhazia was a “sovereign democratic state based on law, which has historically become firmly established by the right of a nation to self-determination”.²⁰² According to Toft M. (2003), the war in Abkhazia, where the ethnic Abkhaz were a minority of the total population, was a result of Russia’s military interference on the side of the Abkhaz, which substantially improved Abkhazia’s bargaining position.²⁰³ Accordingly, Abkhazia was able to declare *de facto* independence.

4.1.2. South Ossetia

Angelika Nußberger (2011) states that the clashes between Georgia and South Ossetia have to be analyzed within the context of the military confrontation between Russia and Georgia.²⁰⁴ The roots of the conflict between Russia and Georgia have a long historical background. The Soviet Union’s Southern governmental ‘oblasts’ were not based on ethnic divisions like the Eastern autonomous districts and, as a result, many rival ethnic groups were placed under the same rule. The breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia²⁰⁵ - backed by Russia - constitute a thorny issue for all the parties involved. Herzig draws parallels between the NK and South Ossetian conflicts. As he claims:

Like Karabagh, South Ossetia witnessed bloody conflict in the period between the Russian Revolution and the establishment of Soviet power, and also like Karabagh the present dispute owes much to the 1920s Soviet border delimitation which established South Ossetia as an autonomous region (oblast) within the Republic of Georgia.²⁰⁶

Both Georgian and South Ossetian sides were discontent with the decision of the SU, according to which on April 22nd, 1922 South Ossetia²⁰⁷ was established as an autonomous region within Georgia. However, South Ossetia didn’t pursue the goal of getting the status of autonomy, but rather

²⁰⁰ Declaration on measures for a political settlement of the Georgian/Abkhaz conflict signed on 4 April 1994 <http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/GE_940404_DeclarationOnMeasuresForPoliticalSettlementGeorgianAbkhazConflict.pdf> accessed 03 Jan 2017.

²⁰¹ Adopted by the 12-th session of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Abkhazia on the 26-th of November 1994 and approved by the national voting on the 3-rd of October 1999 with amendment adopted by the national voting (referendum) on the 3-rd of October 1999.

‘Constitution of the Republic of Abkhazia (Apsny)’ (Abkhaz World website) <<http://abkhazworld.com/aw/reports-and-key-texts/607-constitution-of-the-republic-of-abkhazia-apsny>> accessed 28 Dec 2016.

²⁰² Hille 2010: 230.

²⁰³ Toft 2003: 88.

²⁰⁴ ‘Nußberger, A. (2013) South Ossetia’ (Oxford Public International law website) <<http://opil.ouplaw.com/view/10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e2068>> accessed 29 Jan 2017.

²⁰⁵ For more information on historical roots of the conflicts, see Coene, F. (2010). *The Caucasus*. 1st ed. London: Routledge.

²⁰⁶ Herzig 1999: 73.

²⁰⁷ For more information on historical background of the region, see Chapter II Background in the Conflicts in South Caucasus, in: Jafarova, E. (2015). *Conflict Resolution in South Caucasus*. United Kingdom.

of gaining independence. Another reason for discontent was the separation of the Ossetian people, of whom the larger part lived in the North Ossetian Autonomous Republic of the RF.²⁰⁸ For the Georgian side; this decision was an attempt to create artificial boundaries within a state.

The glasnost policy of the then SU leader, Mikhail Gorbachov, gave the Georgian and Ossetian nationalists the advantage to advance their claims through -“Georgians asserting the primacy of Tbilisi’s authority and Georgian language and culture throughout the republic, while Ossetes responded by emphasizing their autonomy and links with North Ossetia”²⁰⁹. For the period of 1989-1991, the tensions between Georgians and Ossetians were gathering force. Clashes led to the outbreak of the conflict in South Ossetia with Georgians claiming official Tbilisi’s authority, and Ossetians insisting on the right of self-determination which was either independence or right to join North Ossetia in the Russian Federation.²¹⁰ In September 1990, South Ossetia declared its state sovereignty,²¹¹ and in December of the same year “elections took place in South Ossetia against the will of Georgia, which in turn abolished the autonomy and called it Samashablo (Motherland) and Shida Kartli (Heart of Georgia).”²¹²

The reluctance of the conflicting sides to arrive at a compromise or to negotiate, and the abolition of the autonomous status of South Ossetia turned the conflict into a full-scale war.²¹³ Following the killing of three people in a shoot-out²¹⁴, Georgia introduced a state of emergency in Tskhinvali, the capital of South Ossetia, and several thousand members of the Georgian forces were dispatched to enforce it. “On 7 January 1991, the Soviet president, Michael Gorbachov, issued a decree, in which he nullified both the south Ossetians’ declaration of independence and the Georgians’ abolition of South Ossetian autonomy, as these were in contradiction of the Soviet constitution”²¹⁵. However, these decree was not accepted by the Georgian Supreme Soviet since Soviet Georgia saw it “as interference in its internal affairs and an attempt to violate its territorial integrity”²¹⁶. Hostilities between the Georgians and Ossetians lasted until June 1992, when a ceasefire agreement was finally achieved in Sochi.²¹⁷ No representatives of international organizations took part in the negotiation

²⁰⁸ Herzig 1999:74.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Jafarova 2015: 28-29.

²¹¹ Per Gahrton 2010: 58.

²¹² Coene 2010: 152.

²¹³ Saparov 2015: 149.

²¹⁴ Coene 2010: 152.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Jafarova 2015: 29.

processes. Herzig refers to it as “an arrangement between Russia and the conflicting parties”.²¹⁸ The cease-fire was to be supervised by a combination of Russian, Georgian and Ossetian Peace-Keeping Forces (PKF) under a Joint Control Commission (JCC).²¹⁹ During the following years, Russian troops were deployed to the territory of South Ossetia as peacekeepers.²²⁰ Thus, the conflict ended in 1992 with a de facto secession of South Ossetia. The ceasefire agreement established a framework for the quadripartite negotiations involving Russia, Georgia, South Ossetia, and North Ossetia. The ceasefire was to be guaranteed by a peacekeeping force consisting of Ossetian, Georgian and Russian peace keepers.²²¹

In August 2008, the new war broke out between South Ossetia and Georgia, because of “more robust policy measures pursued by Saakashvili Administration and congruent reprisals on the part of the South Ossetians”, as argued by Jafarova (2015).²²² On July 17, 2006 Georgian Parliament adopted a resolution calling on Georgian government to start procedures in order to suspend Russian peacekeeping operations in Abkhazia, as they were considered to be one of the main hindrances on the way of conflict resolution.²²³ Georgia believed that Russia’s support for separatists in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia was part of a Russian plan aimed at downgrading Georgian sovereignty.²²⁴

At the United Nations (UN) General Assembly on September 22, 2006 Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili spoke sinisterly about the future of the conflicts. For the settlement of the so-called frozen conflicts, he offered a new “fresh roadmap” which was the replacement of Russian peacekeepers with an international force, since the former had proved to be “unable and unwilling” to prevent any grave violations. He stated that the primary elements of the conflict-resolution process should be, first of all, demilitarization of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but since Russia had made it clear that such a change was unacceptable, so he called on the active engagement of such international organizations as the UN, the OSCE and the EU. It is worth mentioning here the following statement made by Saakashvili: “if we fail to unite in support of new mechanisms to

²¹⁸ Herzig 1999: 75.

²¹⁹ Ibid: 74-75.

²²⁰ ‘King, C. (2008). The Five-Day War Managing Moscow after the Georgia Crisis’ (Foreign Affairs website) <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2008-11-01/five-day-war>> accessed 28 Dec 2016.

²²¹ ‘Georgia and South Ossetia’ (Russian Justice Initiative website) <<http://www.srji.org/en/echr/>> accessed 27 Dec 2016.

²²² Jafarova 2015: 29.

²²³ Noelle 2008: 283.

²²⁴ ‘Blank, S. (2006). Bracing for Conflict: Russia and Georgia in South Ossetia’ (EurasiaNe.org website) <<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav092506a.shtml>> accessed 29 Dec 2016.

advance peace - we give a green light to those who seek otherwise - and we risk plunging the region into darkness and conflict.’’²²⁵

Blank’s views on Georgians’ attempts to force the secessionist regions back would not only fail, but it would aggravate the situation. It is definitely noteworthy to quote his words from the article written two years before the “Five Day War” in 2008:

Any Georgian move to reconquer either Abkhazia or South Ossetia would stand to backfire on Tbilisi. An unsuccessful military campaign not only would crush any hopes of a political deal that could bring Abkhazia and South Ossetia back into Georgia's fold, it would likely deal a crippling blow to Tbilisi's efforts to join NATO, and could additionally bring about the collapse of President Mikheil Saakashvili's administration.²²⁶

This conflict which broke out concerning the status of South Ossetia became known as “Five Day War”. The Georgian attack on South Ossetia in August of 2008, which also killed Russian soldiers worked as an incentive for the violent five days’ war. According to Charles King, threatened fragile status quo made Moscow intervene with lightning speed. “At first glance, the Russian-Georgian war of August 2008 seemed little more than the stuff of adventure-book fantasy: a reawakened empire going to battle against an old viceroyalty over a mountainous principality of negligible strategic value to either side. But it has had momentous consequences.’’²²⁷

Thus, the attempts undertaken by Georgian government to re-conquer South Ossetia by means of a surprise coup using military force was an utter failure. With this step, Georgia disregarded the internationally binding principle of resolving territorial conflicts by mutual agreement and with peaceful means. As stated by G. Erler (2011), “not only that South Ossetia was lost for good but also Abkhazia. A re-integration of these two entities into the Georgian state territory has become less probable than ever before.’’²²⁸ Another perspective on the conflict expressed by Dimitrakopoulou and Liaropoulos (2010) is that the Russian-Georgian conflict demonstrated that Russia will not allow any neighboring country to use force or undertake autonomous steps in a region where Russia has special interests. As the authors argue further the “Five Day War” also

²²⁵ ‘Statement by H.E. Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia at the 61st session of the United Nations General Assembly’ (New York: September 22, 2006) <<http://www.un.org/webcast/ga/61/pdfs/georgia-e.pdf>> accessed 02 Jan 2017.

²²⁶ ‘Blank, S. (2006). Bracing for Conflict: Russia and Georgia in South Ossetia’ (EurasiaNe.org website) <<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav092506a.shtml>> accessed 29 Dec 2016.

²²⁷ ‘King, C. (2008). The Five-Day War Managing Moscow after the Georgia Crisis’ (Foreign Affairs website) <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2008-11-01/five-day-war>> accessed 28 Dec 2016.

²²⁸ Erler 2011: 8.

confirmed the declarations of President Medvedev, stated in the FPC of 2008²²⁹. According to this document, Russia supports collective actions and expresses its willingness and readiness to be a guarantor of security, but it also retains itself the right for undertaking unilateral actions, when its national interests are involved. With regards to the international community's passiveness in terms of the conflict, Dimitrakopoulou and Liaropoulos (2010) believe that "the voices within the transatlantic community varied, since Russia is no longer the Cold War enemy, but a crucial international actor, a business partner and an energy supplier."²³⁰

On August 26, 2008 Russia recognized the independence of Georgian secessionist regions. This act has been characterized by Trenin in the following way:

The importance of the Russian action is not only that it is basically irreversible. Moscow has assumed the right to decide for itself what is right and what is wrong in the affairs of the world, something that the Soviet Union claimed but which the Russian Federation abandoned in favor of pleasing the "the international community." With the war between Russia and Georgia, Russia challenged the wisdom of the West, which it saw as self-serving, and came up with its own interpretation of what constitutes, in this particular case, genocide, humanitarian intervention, and the responsibility to protect. In other words, Moscow took international law in its own hands, where its interests were directly affected.²³¹

On 11 May 2012, Putin met with Aleksander Ankvab²³², the leader of the separatist republic of Abkhazia, and on the following day he met Leonid Tibilov²³³, the leader of South Ossetia. These two leaders were the first foreign guests, Vladimir Putin hosted in Sochi during his term. According to Ekaterina Chirkova (2012) this fact pointed to the new President's foreign policy priorities.²³⁴

The chapter intended to provide historical background of the conflicts and to shed light on different perspectives on them. To sum this section up, it can be concluded that Abkhazia longed for independency, while South Ossetia was either for independency or was considering the possibility to join the North Ossetia because of ethnic reasons. Regarding the latter issue, Rahim Rahimov, an independent researcher on Russia and post-Soviet space has the following perspective: "no doubt

²²⁹ The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. *Approved by Dmitry A. Medvedev, President of the Russian Federation, on 12 July 2008*. Source: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation <<http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/4116>> accessed 15 Oct 2016.

²³⁰ Dimitrakopoulou and Liaropoulos 2010: 37.

²³¹ Trenin 2009: 149.

²³² 'Meeting with President of Abkhazia Alexander Ankvab May 11, 2012' (President of Russia website) <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/15302>> accessed 13 Jan 2017.

²³³ 'Talks with President of South Ossetia Leonid Tibilov, May 12, 2012' (President of Russia website) <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/15324>> accessed 13 Jan 2017.

²³⁴ Chirkova 2012: 26.

that Russia will not afford for them to unite as a nation independent of Russia. So, in the best case scenario they would be able to unite within Russia”²³⁵. Though in 2008 both Abkhazia and South Ossetia finally became nominally independent as a result of Russia’s military interference, they are considered as de facto independent and remain de jure parts of Georgia. This situation has trapped them into much deeper dependence on Russia. While South Ossetia and Abkhazia were happily celebrating their independence, the West described Russia’s move as “absolutely unacceptable”. German Chancellor Angela Merkel termed the decision as so, while the US President George W. Bush condemned the move, calling it an “irresponsible decision” and warning Moscow that it was escalating tensions.²³⁶ Later, the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia was also recognized by Nicaragua, Venezuela and Nauru²³⁷. Thus, as Amelina, Y. claims that Russia’s recognition of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia serves as a guarantee for their statehoods and safety.²³⁸ Withal, tensions and political conflicts still endure in these regions after almost two decades of their recognition by Russia and there is still strong criticism on Russia’s move. For instance, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg called on Russia to reverse its recognition of the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia as independent states at the NATO-Georgia Commission meeting in Brussels on the 11th of Feb, 2016.²³⁹

4.2. The Case of Nagorno-Karabakh and Russia

Nagorno-Karabakh was the last region to become an autonomous oblast in the South Caucasus in 1923, but Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict over NK was the first large scale violent ethno-natural conflict in the USSR. Unlike conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which gained momentum for several years, the conflict in Karabakh turned very quickly into a violent bloody war²⁴⁰. The conflict over NK is of ethno-territorial nature and can be characterized as multidimensional, involving political, socio-economic, and security-related issues ranging from territorial disputes to ethnic

²³⁵ Rahimov, R. (2016). Russia self-trapped in Abkhazia and South Ossetia? (Modern Diplomacy website) <http://modern diplomacy.eu/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=1826:russia-self-trapped-in-abkhazia-and-south-ossetia&Itemid=124> accessed 04 Jan 2017.

²³⁶ Russia recognizes Abkhazia, South Ossetia (August 26, 2008) (RFE/RL website) <http://www.rferl.org/a/Russia_Recognizes_Abkhazia_South_Ossetia/1193932.html> accessed 05 Jan 2017.

²³⁷ Jafarova 2015: 32.

For more information on which countries diplomatic relations with South Ossetia and Abkhazia, see ‘Positions Taken by Intergovernmental Organizations: International Recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia’ (World Public Library website) <http://www.worldlibrary.org/articles/international_recognition_of_abkhazia_and_south_ossetia> accessed 02 Jan 2017.

²³⁸ Amelina 2012: 13.

²³⁹ NATO Secretary General: “Abkhazia and South Ossetia are part of Georgia” 11 Feb 2016 - 17:14, Tbilisi, Georgia (Agenda.ge website), <<http://agenda.ge/news/52252/eng>> accessed 14 Dec 2016.

²⁴⁰ Saparov 2015: 158-165.

hostility. Like the South Ossetian and Abkhazian conflicts, this NK conflict can also be considered as one of the legacies of the SU, the roots of which go much deeper into the history.²⁴¹

First of all, it should be noticed that NK which is a direct party in this conflict, has been excluded from negotiations from the very beginning at the hands of Azerbaijan. “The Azerbaijanis took the position that the conflict was an irredentist war waged by Armenia on Azerbaijan and therefore refused to accept the Karabakh Armenians as a party to the conflict.”²⁴² The explanation for such a position lies in Azerbaijani fears that any official talks with NK may grant political legitimacy to Stepanakert²⁴³, whereas, Armenia considers that NK should seat at the negotiation table with Azerbaijan and not Armenia. As David Babayan, the Spokesperson of the President of NK Republic claims “without Artsakh²⁴⁴ this issue cannot be settled, and this war²⁴⁵ has also proven this. If Azerbaijan is attacking us, considering us to be a party to the conflict, how can we not be involved in the negotiations? This is the question. It is not logical to hold negotiations without Artsakh’²⁴⁶.

Twenty-three years have passed since the ceasefire was signed by Armenia and Azerbaijan. However, all these years have witnessed a number of ceasefire violations along the line of contact between NK and Azerbaijan, resulting in both military and civilian casualties.²⁴⁷ Withal, frequent skirmishes have increased mistrust between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Previously, the conflict had been referred to as frozen by many international observers. For example, de Waal, in his book *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War* (2003), describes it as frozen and inactive. However, over years, the frozen nature of the conflict has melted. Given the increasing number of ceasefire violations and sabotage cases²⁴⁸ the conflict can be described as escalating.

In his reference to NK, Svante E. Cornell (1999), analyzing the roots of the word “Nagorno-Karabakh” notes that “the disputed and confusing history of the Karabakh region can be seen in its

²⁴¹ For detailed historical background regarding those claims, see Coene, F. (2010). *The Caucasus*. 1st ed. London: Routledge (pp. 145-148). For more information on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, see De Waal, T. (2003). *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and Wall*. New York and London.

²⁴² De Waal 2003: 230.

²⁴³ Stepanakert is the capital of NK.

²⁴⁴ Artsakh is the Armenian version for Nagorno-Karabakh.

²⁴⁵ Here, he refers to the Four Day war.

²⁴⁶ ‘Interview by Panorama .am with David Babayan, the Spokesperson of the President of Nagorno Karabakh Republic, 12/04/2016’ (Panorama.am website) <<http://www.panorama.am/en/news/2016/04/12/David-Babayan/1561373>> accessed 07 Jan 2017.

²⁴⁷ ‘AFA Project Ceasefire’ (Americans for Artsakh website) <<http://americansforartsakh.org/ceasefire-project.php>> accessed 02 Jan 2017.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

very name’’.²⁴⁹ The word *Karabakh* is of both Persian and Turkic origin. It means black garden. The word *Nagorno-* is a Russian word which means mountainous. ‘‘The name dates back to the fourteenth century, when it began to replace the Armenian version Artsakh’’.²⁵⁰

Both Armenians and Azerbaijanis make historical claims to the territory of NK and, as a result, tensions between them existed over many generations.²⁵¹ The disputed territory of NK was incorporated into the Azerbaijan SSR as an autonomous region. However, it is worth mentioning that the Kavburo²⁵² originally voted to include Karabakh in the Armenian SSR in Stalin’s presence. However, the on following day the decision was changed, and on 7 July 1923, the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast was established within the Azerbaijan SSR²⁵³, though the borders were drawn only a month later. Though 94 percent of NK’s total population was Armenian, the new borders of the region broke the link it Armenia.²⁵⁴ Regarding the incorporation of the NK into the Azerbaijan SSR as an autonomous region, de Waal writes:

Gallons of ink have been expended in discussing why Nagorny Karabakh was made part of Soviet Azerbaijan in 1921. The arguments for and against the move go to the heart of the politics of the Karabakh question: the economics and geography of Azerbaijan on one side are ranged against Armenian claims of demography and historical continuity on the other. Put simply, a region populated overwhelmingly by Armenians and with a strong tradition of Armenian self-rule was situated on the eastern side of the watershed dividing Armenia and Azerbaijan and was economically well integrated within Azerbaijan.²⁵⁵

During the Soviet epoch several petitions were sent to Moscow by Armenia asking for NK to be made a part of Soviet Armenia. However, the NK question was always silenced by the Soviet leaders. ‘‘It was only when the sanctions against speaking out on national issues were relaxed under Gorbachev that people like the Armenians of NK felt safe enough to air their grievances and make

²⁴⁹ Cornell 1999: 3.

²⁵⁰ De Waal 2003: 8.

²⁵¹ Nagorno-Karabakh was assigned to Azerbaijan in 1921 by the Soviet Union while the borders were drawn in 1923 with the establishment of Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast within the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic. The Armenians comprised 94% of the whole population within newly created NKAO. For more information, see Chorbaijan, L. (2001). *The Making of Nagorno-Karabakh. From Secession to Republic*: Palgrave Macmillan.

²⁵² The Caucasian Bureau, i.e. the Caucasian section of the Soviet Communist Party.

²⁵³ Coene 2010: 146.

²⁵⁴ De Waal 2003: 130.

If one looks at the region’s map, s/he can clearly see the strategic importance of the town of Lachin. It serves as the strategic corridor connecting the Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia. Thus, this connection was lost, when Nagorno-Karabakh was incorporated into the Azerbaijan SSR, and the redrawn borders of the territory included the town of Lachin as well.

²⁵⁵ De Waal 2003: 130.

mass public demands for fundamental social changes.’’²⁵⁶ The dispute over NK reemerged at the end of the 20th century due to the weakening Soviet control and Gorbachov’s doctrine of glasnost. Those disputes took a form of peaceful protests and demonstrations going on not only in Stepanakert²⁵⁷ but also in Yerevan in support for the Armenians of Karabagh.

The conflict which started with peaceful unification campaigns demanding for NK’s unification with Armenia very soon turned into a war for independence. Following the referendum passed in 1991, the territory declared its independence. ‘‘In a referendum organized in NK on 10 December 1991, 99.9% of those participating voted in favour of secession. On 2 September 1991 the Soviet of the NK Autonomous Oblast announced the establishment of the NK Republic, consisting of the territory of the NKAO and the Shahumyan district of Azerbaijan²⁵⁸, and declared that it was no longer under Azerbaijani jurisdiction. However, up to now the self-proclaimed independence has not been recognized by any state and, despite the efforts taken by the OSCE Minsk Group²⁵⁹, no final settlement of the conflict has been reached yet. According to Nixey, (2012) Russia being one of the co-chairs of the Minsk Group views its mediation over NK as a solid opportunity for fostering its influence. For this region, he doubts that Russia might be genuinely interested in the settlement of the conflict. He claims, that ‘‘[it] is shown by Russian objections to an international peacekeeping force and to changes in the make-up of the Minsk Group, which has been mediating on the conflict since 1992. Russia has proposed deploying its own forces instead.’’²⁶⁰

As stated by Buszynski, traditional rivalry with Turkey over the Caucasus region forced Russia to maintain a position in the area and to cultivate Armenia as an ally. The reason would be that Russia’s relationships with Georgia were worsening because of Russia’s backing of the secessionist regions. Rich oil resources gave Azerbaijan a privilege of choice between Russia and the West. Azerbaijan was trying to develop its relations with Western countries and was not inclined for establishing ‘‘Russian-Azerbaijan’’ friendship on conditions dictated by Russia, and letting Russia manipulate the relations between them. Buszynski’s explanations for Russia’s support for Armenia are enlightening:

²⁵⁶ Chorbaijan 1994: 25.

²⁵⁷ Stepanakert is the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh.

²⁵⁸ In February 1991 the Shahumyan district was abolished as a separate administrative region and was formally incorporated into the present-day Goranboy region of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

²⁵⁹ The Minsk Group, the activities of which have become known as the Minsk Process, spearheads the OSCE’s efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It is co-chaired by France, the Russian Federation, and the United States. ‘Mandate for the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Process: OSCE, 23 March 1995’

<<http://www.osce.org/mg/70125?download=true>> accessed 10 Nov 2016.

²⁶⁰ Nixey 2012: 4.

Russia had interests that went beyond Armenia and that limited its support for Armenian objective in the Nagorno-Karabakh war. Russia also wanted to involve Azerbaijan in the CIS, and indeed, unmitigated Russian support for Armenia would strengthen the Azerbaijan-Turkish connection thereby impairing Russia's position in the Caucasus. Moscow's interests demanded a balanced position between Armenia and Azerbaijan with the long-term objective of bringing both under Russian influence within the CIS. For this reason, Russia's Foreign Ministry criticized Armenian seizure of territory in May 1992 as annexationist. Russia moved to mediate between the warring sides, beginning with the abortive cease-fire of September 1992.²⁶¹

Negotiations continued with different demands regarding peacekeeping forces. The Russians were calling for the introduction of CIS peace-keeping forces, whereas Azerbaijanians requested that Turkish peace-keepers be involved, while the then Armenian President Ter-Petrosyan declared that only Russian peace-keepers could ensure the stability of the area. Armenia, with Russia's endorsement, rejected any Turkish involvement in peace-keeping operations.²⁶² Russia was insisting for a negotiated solution over the NK dispute "while maintaining Armenia as an ally",²⁶³.

Buszynski states that "Russian support for Armenia makes compromise less likely in the dispute with Azerbaijan and ensures that the Armenians will continue to pursue a military solution. That may be the long-term result of the Russian efforts to strengthen the alliance with Armenia in 1994".²⁶⁴ Taking into consideration that the book was written in 1996, maybe then these arguments could have been plausible, but not now. During these years, Russia did strengthen its alliance with Armenia; withal the statement that Armenians would continue to pursue a military solution is a big question. As already mentioned above, the controversy *per se* lies in the fact that Russia being one of the co-chairs of the Minsk Group, which aims at peaceful solution to the NK conflict, is the main weaponry provider to both sides²⁶⁵, and it does not even try to hide this fact²⁶⁶.

Thus, as it is obvious, the relationship pattern between Armenia and Azerbaijan is described by historical enmity. Moreover, referring to Armenia-Azerbaijan relations S. Minasyan, M. Aghajanyan

²⁶¹ Buszynski 1996: 137.

²⁶² RadioFree Europe/Radio Liberty Daily Report (129), 11 June 1994, cited in Buszynski 1996: 138.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ «Рогозин подтвердил продолжение продаж российского оружия Азербайджану и Армении, 13:56, 8 апреля 2016» (Lenta.Ru веб-сайт) <<https://lenta.ru/news/2016/04/08/mustflow/>> доступ 23 октября 2016. (In English: 'Rogozhin has confirmed that Russia continues selling Russian weapons to both Azerbaijan and Armenia' (Lenta.Ru веб-сайт) <<https://lenta.ru/news/2016/04/08/mustflow/>> accessed 23 Oct 2016).

²⁶⁶ 'Russia's prime minister has defended Moscow's policy of selling arms to both Armenia and Azerbaijan, whose military forces have faced off in a sharp escalation of fighting around Nagorno-Karabakh April 9, 2016, at 12:48 p.m.' (U.S. News & World Report *website*) <<http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2016-04-09/russia-defends-selling-arms-to-both-azerbaijan-and-armenia>> accessed 10 Nov 2016.

and E. Asatryan (2005) imply the concept of ethnic demarcation which applies to the incompatibility of different ethnic groups to live side by side.²⁶⁷ The situation has badly worsened over years. Loss, displacement, separation from families and other destructive consequences of the war have increased contempt and hatred between Armenians and Azerbaijanis.²⁶⁸ Furthermore, the years which followed the ceasefire are characterized by an increasing number of violations²⁶⁹ which has widened the gap of mistrust between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Hatred propaganda by Azerbaijan has fueled more resentment and aggression among the people.²⁷⁰ All these factors have exacerbated the situation. Giragosian and Minasyan (2011) were right when analyzing the development of *Recent Trends in Security and Stability in the South Caucasus*²⁷¹ and predicted above mentioned diplomacy could rapidly turn the conflict into a new hot war. Escalation of innumerable clashes and attacks, in response of which “the primary focus of diplomatic engagement has been modified to a more “back to basics” approach, moving from outright conflict resolution to a more basic mission of conflict prediction”²⁷² Thus, the tension between sides had mounted significantly and reached its climax in April of the previous year. The fighting of April which became known as “Four Day War” left both sides with dozens of killed soldiers²⁷³ and made the bridging the gap of mistrust between two states much more challenging.²⁷⁴ “Since the restoration of the truce in 1994, it’s the most large-scale warfare, which Azerbaijan has tried to carry out,” said the Armenian President Sargsyan at the National Security Council meeting.²⁷⁵

²⁶⁷ Minasyan, S. et al (2005). *The Karabagh Conflict: Refugees, Territories, Security*. Nairi Yerevan.

²⁶⁸ De Waal refers to the statistics produced by Dr. Arif Yunusov as the most objective statistician of the period (De Waal 2003: 285). Based on other sources as well, the approximate number of refugees on the Armenian side can be estimated at around 360, 000 and on the Azerbaijani side, it comes about 750, 000.

²⁶⁹ ‘AFA Project Ceasefire’ (Americans for Artsakh) <<http://americansforartsakh.org/ceasefire-project.php>> accessed 02 Jan 2017.

²⁷⁰ ‘Anti – Armenian propaganda and hate dissemination carried out by Azerbaijan as a serious obstacle to the negotiation process’ (OSCE website) (7 October 2008) <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/34195?download=true>> assessed 01 Dec 2016.

²⁷¹ Giragosian, R. and Minasyan, S. (2011). “Recent Trends in Security and Stability in the South Caucasus”, *Connections: The Quarterly Journal*, 11(1), 69-76.<<http://dx.doi.org/10.11610/connections.11.1.06>> accessed 17 Dec 2016.

²⁷² Ibid: 69.

²⁷³ ‘Nagorno-Karabakh violence: Worst clashes in decades kill dozens, 3 April 2016’ (BBC website) <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35949991>> accessed 12 Dec 2016.

Movsisian, H. (2016). Karabakh Defenses ‘Bolstered after April War’ (Ազատություն Ռադիոկայան/Radio Liberty website) <<http://www.azatutyun.am/a/27854520.html>> accessed 14 Dec 2016.

²⁷⁴ ‘Kramer, E. (2016). Fighting between Azerbaijan and Armenia Flares Up in Nagorno-Karabakh’ (The New York Times News website) <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/03/world/europe/nagorno-karabakh-fighting-azerbaijan-armenia.html?_r=0> accessed 03 Jan 2017.

²⁷⁵ ‘Burr, E. (2016). The Caucasus: Fighting Breaks Out Between Armenia and Azerbaijan’ (YoursNewsWire website) <<http://yournewswire.com/the-caucasus-fighting-breaks-out-between-armenia-and-azerbaijan/>> accessed 02 Jan 2017).

According to Jarosiewicz, A. and Falkowski, M. (2016) the intensive skirmishes and clashes during the four-day war between sides also revealed the balance of military power between Armenia and Azerbaijan. They state:

Yet the heavy fighting and the inability to break through the Armenian defense line, together with the inability of the Armenians to launch a rapid counteroffensive, have shown that there is a balance of forces in the area of conflict. Paradoxically, this could – although it need not – contribute to a de-escalation of tensions in the near future. [...] Although Azerbaijan's success was merely symbolic, it has had the effect of overcoming the nation's trauma at losing the previous war.²⁷⁶

Armenia is a small country with four neighboring countries, having closed borders with two of them. As de Waal writes: “in response to this massive loss of territory²⁷⁷, Azerbaijan, in concert with Turkey, kept its borders with Armenia sealed, crippling Armenia's economic prospects.”²⁷⁸ Moreover, in 1993, the Republic of Turkey expressed solidarity to its brother land Azerbaijan, joining the latter in the implementation of a blockade in response to the NK War, leaving approximately 80 per cent of the length of Armenian borders closed. As stated by Buszynski (1996): “Armenian dependence on Russia was confirmed by the Turkish blockade imposed in 1991, which limited the transit of supplies by railway from Turkey to food supplies only”²⁷⁹.

This has had devastating negative implications on the Armenian economy and has hindered the nation's growth and prosperity over the past two decades.²⁸⁰ At that period Georgia was in crisis with its gas pipelines, roads and railways frequently shut down, and as De Wall states it was Iran that became “Armenia's friendliest neighbor, but it was remote and could be reached only by winding mountainous roads. Nonetheless, without Iranian trade, Armenia might not have survived the two miserable winters of 1991–1992 and 1992–1993”²⁸¹. The positions of regional powers such as Turkey and Iran also change the balance of power in the region. However, due to the constraints of space and time the paper won't investigate those issues. Still, regarding the “Four Day War”, it is worth bringing the words by David K. Babayan, a spokesman for the president of the NK Republic, who directly accused the other regional power in the South Caucasus, Turkey, of stoking

²⁷⁶ ‘Jarosiewicz, A. and Falkowski, M. (2016). The four-day war in Nagorno-Karabakh’ (OSW website) <<https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2016-04-06/four-day-war-nagorno-karabakh>> accessed 03 Jan 2017.

²⁷⁷ The seven Azerbaijani territories controlled by the Armenian forces are Lachin, Kelbajar, Jabrayil, Gubadly and Zangilan, and substantial parts of Agdam and Fizuli.

²⁷⁸ De Waal 2003: 3.

²⁷⁹ Buszynski 1996: 136.

²⁸⁰ ‘Janbazian, R. (2014). Land-Locked: The Necessity of Open Borders in Armenia’ (the Armenian Weekly website) <<http://armenianweekly.com/2014/12/23/land-locked-necessity-open-borders-armenia/>> accessed 03 Jan 2017.

²⁸¹ De Waal 2003: 225.

the violence. Mr. Babayan told journalists that “Azerbaijan could not have taken this decision on its own.”²⁸²

Over years the Armenian economy has become heavily dependent on Russia, the country’s largest foreign investor and trade partner as well as the source of vital remittances sent home to Armenia by migrant workers. As Moscow Times writes, “Armenia has also cultivated a close political relationship with Russia in order to secure itself against neighbors Turkey and Azerbaijan.”²⁸³

The principal institution of the CIS is the CSTO. Ekaterina Chirkova (2012) questions the purposes of CSTO claiming that it is not clear whether it serves as a tool for security integration or security expansion.²⁸⁴ Another issue which has always caused much debate concerns Russian military bases stationed in the South Caucasus. Much of the current debate revolves around the fact that Russia has reinforced its military presence in the ‘near abroad’ - for example by prolonging its contract with Armenia for the Gyumri military base until 2044²⁸⁵ and by building up its military might in the separatist regions of Abkhazia and Ossetia. Since the 2008 Russia-Georgia conflict, it has deployed considerable military contingent to both Abkhazia and Ossetia²⁸⁶. The establishment of Russian bases in Armenia was the result of Pavel Grachev’s visit to Yerevan from 8 to 10 June 1994 when he came to an agreement with the then President Ter Petrosyan for the establishment of Russian bases in Armenia. According to the agreement, Russia was spared from paying any rent for the bases, and as stated in some reports, Armenia wanted a greater Russian military presence on its territory as a means of breaking the Turkish blockage.²⁸⁷ Chirkova argues that “Russian government’s foreign policy efforts to strengthen the country’s security presence and relationships in the region - as well as to boost revenue from arms sales²⁸⁸ - might constitute a dangerous

²⁸² ‘Kramer, E. (2016). Ethnic Conflict Between Armenia and Azerbaijan Flares Anew’
<<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/05/world/europe/ethnic-conflict-between-armenia-and-azerbaijan-flares-anew.html>>
accessed 03 Jan 2016.

²⁸³ ‘Armenia Joins Russia-Led Economic Union (Jan 2, 2015)’ (The Moscow Times Website)
<<https://themoscowtimes.com/articles/armenia-joins-russia-led-eurasian-economic-union-42666>> accessed
10 Nov 2016.

²⁸⁴ Chirkova 2012: 25.

²⁸⁵ ‘Russian base in Armenia to be deployed until 2044, protocol came into effect’ (News.am website)
<<https://news.am/eng/news/66934.html>> accessed 05 Jan 2017.

²⁸⁶ Jafalian 2011: 23.

²⁸⁷ Buszynski 1996: 138.

²⁸⁸ The 2010-2011 periods saw a major increase in arms exports to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). As an arms exporter, Russia remains the best choice of the ex-Soviet bloc, particularly among the member states of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

For more information, see ‘Russia revs up arms exports, 22 February 2012’ (The Voice of Armenia website)
<https://sputniknews.com/voiceofrussia/2012_02_22/66659787/> accessed 04 Jan 2017.

impediment to resolving the region's 'conflicts on edge'.²⁸⁹ Given the considerable Russian military presence in the region and highly militarization of all the states of this RSC, Chirkova's argument seems to be very plausible.

The military cooperation agreements between Armenia and Russia have made the latter's already predominant status in Armenia much deeper. Moreover, according to Hawk "current Russian national security plans foresee the Russian force grouping in Armenia to be increased, as part of the overall enhancement of the role of CSTO in guaranteeing regional security and in response to increased NATO activity in the region."²⁹⁰

Along with France and the US, Russia co-chairs the activities of the OSCE Minsk Group. The Minsk Group is the main mediating body aiming at achieving a peaceful solution to the NK conflict.²⁹¹ Unfortunately, no settlement variant has been developed which would be accepted by both sides.²⁹² Every time the conflicting parties seem to get close to agreement and "are expected to shift from talking to decision making, the process has entered a deadlock, proving that the negotiations are imitational"²⁹³. The Kremlin has presented itself as a mediator between the two, while also selling arms to both, writes the NY Times.²⁹⁴ Both sides are heavily armed. Armenia manages to maintain the existing balance of power at higher levels of military capability through buying arms from Russia at a discounted price.²⁹⁵ Giragosian and Minasyan define this "maintenance of parity" as a deterrent for military actions. Nevertheless, the 'Four Day War' proved the contrary.

The CSTO is another important organization, Armenia can get vast direct military assistance from a third country (Russia). However, as Giragosian and Minasyan note "formally, the obligations of Russia and the CSTO in matters of mutual defense cover only the internationally recognized borders of the Republic of Armenia."²⁹⁶ This treaty does not apply to the NK, which being a self-

²⁸⁹ Chirkova 2012: 25-26.

²⁹⁰ 'Hawk, J. et al. (2016). Russia Defense Report: Russian Forces in Armenia' (SouthFront: Analysis & Intelligence website) <<https://southfront.org/russia-defense-report-russian-forces-in-armenia/>> accessed 30 Dec 2016.

²⁹¹ 'Minsk Group' (OSCE website) <<http://www.osce.org/mg/108306>> accessed 20 Sept 2016.

²⁹² NK which is a direct party to this conflict has been excluded from negotiations from the very beginning at the hands of Azerbaijan. "The Azerbaijanis took the position that the conflict was an irredentist war waged by Armenia on Azerbaijan and therefore refused to accept the Karabakh Armenians as a party to the conflict." See, De Waal 2003: 230.

²⁹³ Shahnazaryan 2006: 357.

²⁹⁴ 'Kramer, E. (2016). Ethnic Conflict Between Armenia and Azerbaijan Flares Anew' (The New York Times website) <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/05/world/europe/ethnic-conflict-between-armenia-and-azerbaijan-flaresanew.html?_r=0> accessed 03 Jan 2016.

²⁹⁵ Giragosian and Minasyan 2011: 72.

²⁹⁶ Ibid: 73.

proclaimed independent republic with the disputed borders has not gained international recognition yet. Thus, if CSTO fails to provide effective military support to a member state, it might discredit the CSTO.²⁹⁷

According to Chirkova, the NK conflict resolution is much complicated because of the regional players, such as Russia. First of all, Turkey's strategic partnership with Azerbaijan affects the balance of power in the region and, second as Chirkova writes: "it divides the region into two blocks — the Russian-Armenian and the Turkish-Azerbaijani."²⁹⁸ International actors, such as the EU and its members have not been involved at a high level in this conflict. However, the strategic importance of the region has increased for the EU as a result of the region's energy resources and trade opportunities. Chirkova calls on the EU to encourage Russia to strengthen stability in the region to achieve any tangible results.²⁹⁹

5. Russia's Involvement in the Regional Conflicts: A Mediator or Provocateur?

Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved through understanding.

-- Albert Einstein

This chapter aims at understanding Russia's position in the conflicts in the South Caucasus, especially in the case of NK and whether Russia is really interested in the settlement of those conflicts. The focus is on the NK conflict because, if compared to the other two conflicts previously analyzed here, Russian position is more complicated, demanding more work in order to obtain a better understanding of what role Russia plays in the conflict. With regards to all of the three conflicts, the overriding argument is that Russia is interested in preserving the status of quo.

In terms of other disputes, from Trenin's points of view though the situation with self-proclaimed republics such as Abkhazia and South Ossetia appears to be different from the Transnistria conflict, Russia's ability to solve the latter may bolster Russia's status as a great power and it would help to demonstrate its ability "to build and not destroy"³⁰⁰. Furthermore, Russia should aim at the

²⁹⁷ Giragosian and Minasyan 2011: 72.

²⁹⁸ Chirkova 2012: 26-27.

²⁹⁹ Chirkova 2012: 26-27.

³⁰⁰ 'Trenin, D. (op-ed) (2013). Russia's Relations with the CIS Countries: Outlook for 2020' (Carnegie Moscow Center website) <<http://carnegie.ru/2013/03/28/russia-s-relations-with-cis-countries-outlook-for-2020-pub-51395>> accessed 25 Dec 2016.

normalization of its relations with Georgia, and the settlements of the Georgian-Abkhazian and the Georgian-Ossetian conflicts. Trenin sees the settlement of these conflicts being of primary significance to Russia's security in the whole Caucasus. "Finally, achieving a lasting peace in Transcaucasia will to a great extent depend on the efficiency of multilateral efforts, involving Russian participation, regarding the Nagorno Karabakh conundrum."³⁰¹

5.1. Nagorno-Karabakh and Russia

According to Markedonov (2011), contrary to the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia's and US positions have not substantially differed in terms of the NK conflict since the ceasefire agreement. It seems that despite their involvement and interest in the negotiations between the parties aimed at peaceful solution, both of them have been interested in avoiding the "unfreezing" of the conflict.³⁰²

According to other analysts, namely Jarosiewicz, A. and Falkowski, M. (2016), regarding the NK conflict, the Four-Day War played to Russia's interests and served as another opportunity to reinforce "its position as the de facto principal conciliator and guarantor of the ceasefire"³⁰³. Furthermore, they argue that it is not excluded that the current phase of the NK conflict is part of a broader Russian plan aimed at deploying Russian troops into the region as peacekeepers. All this would foster Russia's geopolitical position in the region, which would mean that Western influence is being gradually dropped out.³⁰⁴ Jarosiewicz, A. and Falkowski, M. (2016) continue to explain that:

The main beneficiary of the four-day crisis, however, is Russia, which maintained an ostentatiously reserved attitude for several days, and then within just a few hours (according to press releases) most likely delivered the ceasefire. The strengthening of the Russian position contrasts with the acknowledgement of the OSCE Minsk Group's powerlessness, which only arranged a meeting on the fourth day of fighting, and the parties announced the ceasefire before the meeting even began. In view of the above, it seems that one of the main results of the current crisis is the *de*

³⁰¹ 'Trenin, D. (op-ed) (2013). Russia's Relations with the CIS Countries: Outlook for 2020' (Carnegie Moscow Center website) <<http://carnegie.ru/2013/03/28/russia-s-relations-with-cis-countries-outlook-for-2020-pub-51395>> accessed 25 Dec 2016.

³⁰² For more information, see Markedonov, S. (2011). "Unfreezing Conflict in South Ossetia: Regional and International Implications", in: Jafalian, A. (2011). *Reassessing Security in the South Caucasus*. (1st ed.). Burlington, VT: Ashgate. 33-47.

³⁰³ 'Jarosiewicz, A. and Falkowski, M. (2016). The four-day war in Nagorno-Karabakh' (OSW website) <<https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2016-04-06/four-day-war-nagorno-karabakh>> accessed 03 Jan 2017.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

facto (although not necessarily formal) end of the peace talks under the aegis of the OSCE, and their replacement by Russian mediation.³⁰⁵

Indeed, there was only a statement by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, the German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier³⁰⁶, expressing his concerns about the escalation of the conflict and calling on both sides to cease clashes immediately. This statement was made on 2 April 2016, and only on 5 April 2016, which was already the fourth day of violent hostilities, the representatives of the OSCE co-chairs met in Vienna to discuss the escalation of the conflict.³⁰⁷ It was only after Russia had already showed “its enthusiasm to play the role of conciliator”³⁰⁸, and by the time the OSCE co-chairs met in Vienna, that the Russia-brokered ceasefire had already been agreed upon by conflicting sides in Moscow.

According to many analysts and experts, all the parties involved in the conflict are the beneficiaries of the *status quo*. The Minsk Group of the OSCE has been, many times, criticized for its weaknesses. Twenty-three years have already passed since ceasefire, however, the conflict still remains unresolved and, moreover, as already illustrated in other chapters, it has been characterized by numerous violations causing frustration and contributing to the rising hatred between two nations. For all of these reasons, the outbreak of clashes in April of 2016 is considered to some extent as “the logical consequence of the lack of progress in the talks being held under the aegis of the Minsk Group of the OSCE (which have been at a standstill for years), as well as the rising tension on the front line”.³⁰⁹ Jarosiewicz, A. and Falkowski, M. (2016) also consider other factors which contributed to the escalation of the conflict, such as Azerbaijan’s desire to redirect attention from domestic problems to the war, such as economic difficulties associated with the decline of oil prices. This fact has sparked social frustrations which resulted in protests by the population earlier in 2016.³¹⁰

³⁰⁵ ‘Jarosiewicz, A. and Falkowski, M. (2016). The four-day war in Nagorno-Karabakh’ (OSW website) <<https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2016-04-06/four-day-war-nagorno-karabakh>> accessed 03 Jan 2017.

³⁰⁶ OSCE Chairmanship. (2016). *OSCE Chairperson-In-Office Steinmeier Expresses Concern Over Developments in Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict Zone* [Press Release]. <<http://www.osce.org/cio/231221>> accessed 6 Jan 2017.

³⁰⁷ OSCE Chairmanship, Minsk Group. (2016). *OSCE participating States discuss recent escalation in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone* [Press Release]. <<http://www.osce.org/cio/231431>> accessed 6 Jan 2017.

³⁰⁸ ‘Gigitashvili, G. (2016). Nagorno-Karabakh: four days of conflict have interested Russia’ (New East Platform website) <<https://neweastplatform.org/2016/04/18/nagorno-karabakh-four-days-of-conflict-have-interested-russia/>> accessed 10 Jan 2017.

³⁰⁹ ‘Jarosiewicz, A. and Falkowski, M. (2016). The four-day war in Nagorno-Karabakh’ (OSW website) <<https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2016-04-06/four-day-war-nagorno-karabakh>> accessed 03 Jan 2017.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

Also, scholars and politicians don't exclude that Azerbaijan did not act alone. They state: "Russia may have at least been aware of Baku's intentions."³¹¹ Furthermore, they argue that in recent years, one of Russia's primary objectives has become to bolster its dominance in the region. This aim could be achieved by Russia only "by changing the *status quo* and the format of the ceasefire in NK (including by marginalising the OSCE's Minsk Group), and imposing a resolution on the warring parties that only Russia could guarantee (primarily involving the introduction of Russian peacekeeping forces in the conflict zone)."³¹² However, Russia itself does not seem to be truly interested in the conflict settlement because, first of all, "this conflict affords Russia leverage and influence over Armenia and Azerbaijan and keeps Moscow a step ahead of regional rivals such as Turkey and the US"³¹³.

When the clashes erupted between Armenia and Azerbaijan, it was hotly debated which side started first and whether Russia's hand had its role in escalating the conflict. Here the question comes: *What role does Russia play in the conflict: the role of a mediator or a provocateur?* Different scholars have different views on this question; however regarding the Four-Day War in 2016, there is evidence proving that Russia acted under the guise of provocateur in this specific case, which is asserted by a number of regional and international experts. Of course, the next question which appears is: 'why?'. This chapter rests upon this assumption and will proceed providing confirmatory evidence to the argument and try to explore the reasons behind that 'why'.

It is worth mentioning that when clashes broke out in April of 2016, the presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia were visiting Washington to attend a nuclear security summit during which a separate visit was organized between each of the presidents and the Previous Secretary of State John Kerry in order to discuss potential resolution of the long-lasting conflict.³¹⁴ According to Shaffer, B. (2016), "the timing of the new hostilities - on the heels of the Washington visit and while Aliyev was out of the country - strongly indicates that Moscow was the instigator. If so, the message is clear: Washington should stay out of Russia's backyard, and Baku should think twice about strengthening

³¹¹ 'Jarosiewicz, A. and Falkowski, M. (2016). The four-day war in Nagorno-Karabakh' (OSW website) <<https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2016-04-06/four-day-war-nagorno-karabakh>> accessed 03 Jan 2017.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ 'Gotev, G. (2016). Talking around the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh' (EuroActive website) <<https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/talking-around-the-conflict-in-nagorno-karabakh/>> accessed 18 Jan 2017.

³¹⁴ 'Schaffer, B. (2016). Fighting in the Caucasus: Implications for the Wider Region' (Policy Analyses. The Washington Institute website) < <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/fighting-in-the-caucasus-implications-for-the-wider-region>> accessed 10 Jan 2017.

its relationship with the US.’’³¹⁵ Whereas, according to a regional scholar, Gigitashvili, G. (2016), this timing could have been used by Azerbaijan to draw the international community’s attention to the forgotten unresolved conflict or, as Giragosian Richard (2016) puts it, “that timing only suggests that the Washington visit was in many ways a last chance, or an ultimatum, by the Azerbaijani leader to the US to move more forcefully on the Karabakh conflict’’.³¹⁶ Indeed, this escalation was a reminder to the international community that ‘frozen’ label does not suit this conflict, since numerous violations on the contact line are the proof of it. As the recent developments have illustrated this conflict is characterized by a high potential of violent escalation and spillover effect over the wider region. As Thomas de Waal states, “the violence opened up a new security vacuum around Nagorno Karabakh’’,³¹⁷ and this vacuum needs and can be filled in “by a sustained international push’’,³¹⁸. De Waal holds the perspective that this outbreak of violence was mounted by Azerbaijan in order “to shake the status quo, put the conflict back on the international agenda, and put the Armenian side under pressure’’,³¹⁹.

Along similar lines with Shaffer, the regional scholars also argue that the escalation of the conflict was in Russia’s interests, and it is unlikely that Azerbaijan started military actions without taking into consideration Russia’s position. Gigitashvili writes: “After Russia’s (claimed) successful campaign in Syria, Russia might be trying to play the role of arbitrator in South Caucasus conflicts.’’,³²⁰ The same view is also shared by a political analyst Aghasi Yenokian, the director of Yerevan’s Armenian Center of Political and International Relations, who assumes that after leaving Syria, Russia is in active search of new opportunities in order to assert itself, and the NK conflict offers many opportunities for it. “Russia, with its active response, shows that if the OSCE Minsk Group works slowly, [and] international structures work slowly, then a serious chance opens up for Russia to resolve [the] Karabakh conflict in a Russian way; that is, by putting Russian peacekeepers

³¹⁵ ‘Schaffer, B. (2016). Fighting in the Caucasus: Implications for the Wider Region’ (Policy Analyses. The Washington Institute website) < <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/fighting-in-the-caucasus-implications-for-the-wider-region>> accessed 10 Jan 2017.

³¹⁶ ‘Giragosian, R. (2016). Nagorno-Karabakh: the death of diplomacy’ (Aljazeera website) <<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/04/nagorno-karabakh-death-diplomacy-russia-azerbaijan-armenia-160403105406530.html>> accessed 12 Jan 2017.

³¹⁷ ‘De Waal, T. (2016). Prisoners of the Caucasus: Resolving the Karabakh Security Dilemma’ (Karabakh Facts website) <<http://karabakhfacts.com/thomas-de-waal-prisoners-of-the-caucasus-resolving-the-karabakh-security-dilemma/>> accessed 23 Jan 2017.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ ‘Gigitashvili, G. (2016). Nagorno-Karabakh: four days of conflict have interested Russia’ (New East Platform website) <<https://neweastplatform.org/2016/04/18/nagorno-karabakh-four-days-of-conflict-have-interested-russia/>> accessed 10 Jan 2017.

on the [ground]”³²¹. Giragosian Richard also assumes that Russia may want to play a role of mediator and use this situation as a chance for the deployment of Russian peacekeeping troops in the region in order to remedy the collapsing ceasefire in the region.³²²

Indeed, even before the escalation of the conflict, in 2015, the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov proposed the deployment of international peacekeepers to both Armenia and Azerbaijan.³²³ The deployment of Russian peacekeeping forces to the region has always been on Russia’s agenda. As assumed by de Waal, this mission would have granted Russia an essential role in the conflict zone. As already discussed in the one of the chapters, in its Military Doctrine up to 2020, Russia expresses its concern about unresolved regional conflicts and destabilizations in the regions close to the Russian border and views those conflicts as threat to its national security. For this reason, Russia finds the development of politico-military cooperation with the CSTO and CIS member states very important and aims at strengthening the collective security system in the frame of CSTO and increasing its capacity of vital significance. As stated in the Military Doctrine “Russian Federation shall provide military contingents for the CSTO peacekeeping forces to participate in peacekeeping operations as decided upon by the CSTO Collective Security Council”³²⁴.

However, Giragosian puts the real aim of Russian peacekeeping troops’ mission in the region under suspicions. As stated by him, the deployment of Russian peacekeeping troops in the South Caucasus would first of all serve Russia’s interests and not local ones. By increasing its military presence in the region, Russia would first of all enhance its position in the South Caucasus and second, the presence of Russian troops would give Russia a privilege to obtain a bigger and more powerful role in the regulation of the NK conflict. This claim is also supported by Jarosiewicz and Falkowski, who argue that: “it is possible that in the near future, Moscow will seek to impose a provisional solution to the conflict, involving for example the introduction of peacekeeping forces to NK *de facto* Russian, *de jure* under the aegis of the CSTO or CIS”.³²⁵ Already in 2014, when bloody

³²¹ ‘Grigoryan M & Safarova D. (2016). Can Karabakh pull back from the brink?’ (Eurasianet.org website) <<http://www.eurasianet.org/node/78096>> accessed 13 Jan 2017.

³²² ‘Giragosian, R. (2016). Nagorno-Karabakh: the death of diplomacy’ (Aljazeera website) <<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/04/nagorno-karabakh-death-diplomacy-russia-azerbaijan-armenia-160403105406530.html>> accessed 12 Jan 2017.

³²³ ‘Grigoryan M & Safarova D. (2016). Can Karabakh pull back from the brink?’ (Eurasianet.org website) <<http://www.eurasianet.org/node/78096>> accessed 13 Jan 2017.

³²⁴ III. Military Policy of the Russian Federation: Employment of the Armed Forces, other troops and bodies, and their main tasks in peacetime under the conditions of an imminent threat of aggression and in wartime, Point 29, in: the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2020. *Approved by Russian Federation presidential edict on December 25, 2014 No. Pr.-2976.* <<http://rusemb.org.uk/press/2029>> accessed 15 Dec 2016.

³²⁵ ‘Jarosiewicz, A. and Falkowski, M. (2016). The four-day war in Nagorno-Karabakh’ (OSW website)

clashes erupted between Armenia and Azerbaijan³²⁶, a claim was made that the escalation of tensions between sides was in the Kremlin's interests. As stated by Anar Valiyev the Azerbaijani side considered those tensions a result of Russian pressure on the eve of a meeting between the presidents of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia. Valiyev writes: "Authorities feared that through these tensions Russia was sending a signal to Azerbaijan not to align closer with the West and even to consider the possibility of joining the Eurasian Union"³²⁷. This assumption is supported by Gigitashvili, who sees these tensions as a hint from the Russian side to Azerbaijan "that the door of Eurasian Economic Union remains open"³²⁸ and will be glad to have Azerbaijan as a new member. Thus, the literature review shows that there is a consensus among the majority of scholars in the field who argue that Russia might have had its share in escalating the conflict to feed its interests.

As to Russian perspective itself, there were different opinions on the escalation of the conflict. For example, according to Deputy Chairman of State Duma, Sergei Zheleznyak, there was the "third force" that provoked the violent outbreak of clashes. By this "third force" he meant Turkey.³²⁹ The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Sergey Lavrov, said that they didn't accuse any external players of provoking the outbreak of tensions in NK, however, he went on to say that "in general, now it is important for our Turkish neighbors to set a course for stopping interference in the affairs of any countries, be it Iraq or be it Syria."³³⁰ The Foreign Minister also expressed his concerns regarding any attempts to discourage or hinder efforts by the OSCE Minsk Group on NK. "It would be right (...) not to frustrate the role of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs, not to seek erode this role and the results the co-chairs have reached in contacts with the parties in the past ten years and which have great significance,"³³¹ added Sergey Lavrov. The statement on the outbreak of tensions in NK

<<https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2016-04-06/four-day-war-nagorno-karabakh>> accessed 03 Jan 2017.

³²⁶ 'Clashes between Armenian and Azerbaijani Forces Leave Many Servicemen Dead (01 August 2014)' (Foreign Policy News website) <<http://foreignpolicynews.org/2014/08/01/clashes-armenian-azerbaijani-forces-leave-many-servicemen-dead/>> accessed 18 Jan 2017.

³²⁷ 'Valiyev, A. (2014). Azerbaijan's Balancing Act in the Ukraine Crisis. PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 357' (PONARS Eurasia website) <<http://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/azerbaijans-balancing-act-ukraine-crisis>> accessed 20 Jan 2017.

³²⁸ 'Gigitashvili, G. (2016). Nagorno-Karabakh: four days of conflict have interested Russia' (New East Platform website) <<https://neweastplatform.org/2016/04/18/nagorno-karabakh-four-days-of-conflict-have-interested-russia/>> accessed 10 Jan 2017.

³²⁹ 'State Duma vice speaker says "third force" is behind Nagorno-Karabakh events (3 April 2016)' (TASS Russian News Agency website) <<http://tass.com/politics/866824>> accessed 17 Jan 2017.

³³⁰ 'Russia doesn't blame Turkey for tensions in Nagorno-Karabakh - Lavrov (4 April 2016)' (TASS Russian News Agency website) <<http://tass.com/politics/866982>> accessed 17 Jan 2017.

³³¹ Ibid.

made by the Russian Foreign Minister can be described as very obscure. It is obvious from the statement that Russia sees some other external powers which try to frustrate efforts of the Minsk Group and warns them to stay aside and not to hinder the process. But it seems as if they avoid naming those external players openly. This statement raises more questions rather than providing a comprehensive explanation of Russia's view on the escalation of the conflict.

David K. Babayan, a spokesman for the president of the breakaway NK Republic, also believes that Azerbaijan could not act without Turkey's say-so. Thus, he directly accused the other regional power in the South Caucasus, Turkey, of exacerbating the violence. As he told journalists, "Azerbaijan could not have taken this decision on its own".³³² Russian analyst and researcher, Dmitry Minin (2015) states:

The rulers of re-emerged Ottoman Empire are trying to rekindle the conflict in NK [and] as the NATO allies have flatly refused to side with Turkey in its conflict with Russia. Now Ankara is urgently looking for new opportunities to boost its influence in the region and divert the Russia's attention making it face other 'fronts'³³³.

The previous Prime Minister of Turkey, Ahmet Davutoğlu, in one of his speeches said: "The whole world needs to know that Turkey will stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Azerbaijan against Armenia's aggression and occupation until doomsday."³³⁴ The Turkish side, in all possible levels always, expresses unconditional support to their "brotherly Azerbaijan". According to the regional analyst Arpine Hopsepyan, Turkey is doing everything in order to prevent any influence of other regional players on Azerbaijan, in this specific case – Russia.³³⁵ Turkey and Azerbaijan have made efforts to change the format of the OSCE, as the Azerbaijani Presidential Administration department head stated already in 2010: "Turkey's joining the OSCE Minsk Group, mediating in resolving of the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, is on the agenda".³³⁶ However, all these attempts were in vain and not supported by Russia. While delivering his statement on the outbreak

³³² 'Kramer, E. (2016). Ethnic Conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan Flares Anew' (The New York Times website) <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/05/world/europe/ethnic-conflict-between-armenia-and-azerbaijan-flares-anew.html?_r=0> accessed 03 Jan 2016.

³³³ Minin, D. (2015). Ankara vs. Russia: Caucasus Turns into New Battlefield' (Online Journal Strategic Culture Foundation website) <<http://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2015/12/08/ankara-vs-russia-caucasus-turns-into-new-battlefront.html>> accessed 16 Jan 2017.

³³⁴ 'Turkey backs Azerbaijan in conflict with Armenia (5 Apr 2016)' (Hürriyet daily news website) <<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-to-stand-by-azerbaijan-until-doomsday-pm.aspx?pageID=238&nID=97338&NewsCatID=510>> accessed 16 Jan 2017.

³³⁵ Hovsepyan, A. (2016). Karabakh Four-Day war and Turkish Calculations' (Armedia website) <<http://armedia.am/eng/news/32516/karabakh-four-day-war-and-turkish-calculations.html>> accessed 25 Jan 2017.

³³⁶ 'Azerbaijan wants to see Turkey in OSCE Minsk group, 22.04.2010' (Public Association for "Protection of Rights of Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons in Azerbaijan" website) <<http://azerbaijanfoundation.az/en/news/1051-azerbaijan-wants-to-see-turkey-in-osce.html>> accessed 24 Jan 2017.

of tensions, Sergey Lavrov mentioned: “any ideas to move these efforts beyond the Russian-US-French co-chairmanship will probably be used by those seeking if not frustrate the process but serious hamper it. And I am sure there are such sides.”³³⁷

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan criticized the Minsk Group and blamed the escalation of the conflict on the weaknesses of the Minsk Group. According to him, those developments could have been avoided if the Minsk Group had taken “fair and decisive steps” in the settlement of the conflict.³³⁸ During his visit to the US, he told one of the reporters: “if the Minsk Group had taken fair and decisive steps over this, such incidents would not have happened. However, the weaknesses of the Minsk Group unfortunately led the situation to this point”.³³⁹ The Director of Azerbaijan Democratic Association – UK, pro-democracy opposition group based in London, Murad Gassanly,³⁴⁰ also supports the above-brought argument by President Erdogan. According to him the Four Day War underlined institutional weaknesses and the shortcomings of the OSCE Minsk Group format. Azerbaijan believes that Russia can influence the negotiation processes and “places stakes on Moscow to break the diplomatic deadlock”,³⁴¹.

The Four Day war and agreement upon ceasefire reminds one of the preceding outbreaks, when on the night of July 31 - August 2014 a number of bloody skirmishes were launched on the line of the contact³⁴², which was followed by a trilateral meeting initiated by Russia. It was hold in Sochi between President of the Republic of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan, President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, and President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev.³⁴³ This outbreak had also been interpreted by many analysts as an opportunity for Russia to play the role of a mediator, and in such

³³⁷ ‘Russia doesn't blame Turkey for tensions in Nagorno-Karabakh — Lavrov (4 April 2016)’ (TASS Russian News Agency website) <<http://tass.com/politics/866982>> accessed 17 Jan 2017.

³³⁸ ‘Sims, A. (2016). Turkish President backs Azerbaijan in conflict with Armenia’ (The Independent website) <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/turkish-president-backs-azerbaijan-in-conflict-with-armenia-a6966376.html>> accessed 20 Jan 2017.

³³⁹ ‘Nagorno-Karabakh fighting: Azerbaijan 'calls truce' (3 April 2016)’ (BBC News website) <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35953916>> accessed 19 Jan 2017.

³⁴⁰ ‘Murad Gassanly’ (The Huffington Post website) <<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/author/murad-gassanly>> accessed 29 Jan 2017.

³⁴¹ ‘Gassanly, M. (2016) Azerbaijan and the Four Day War: Breaking the Karabakh Deadlock’ (British Institute of Turkish Affairs website) <<http://www.bitaf.org/azerbaijan-and-the-four-day-war-breaking-the-karabakh-deadlock/>> accessed 29 Jan 2017.

³⁴² ‘Clashes between Armenian and Azerbaijani Forces Leave Many Servicemen Dead (01 August 2014)’ (Foreign Policy News website) <<http://foreignpolicynews.org/2014/08/01/clashes-armenian-azerbaijani-forces-leave-many-servicemen-dead/>> accessed 18 Jan 2017.

³⁴³ President of the Republic of Armenia (10 August 2014). *Sochi Hosts Trilateral Meeting between Presidents of Armenia, Russia, and Azerbaijan* [Press Release]. <<http://www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2014/08/10/President-Serzh-Sargsyan-meeting-in-Sochi-with-Presidents-of-Russia-and-Azerbaijan/>> accessed 14 Jan 2017.

a way to enforce its dominant position in the region once again. Ayunts interprets the Russian-brokered meeting of the Presidents in Sochi on August 10 as “a sign of Russian willingness to re-establish dominance over the peace process and dictate its own rules for possible conflict settlement. There were speculations that the Russians wanted to use the situation on the Line of Contact to deploy Russian peacekeeping forces in the region.”³⁴⁴

According to Zaur Shiriyev (2016) so far, Azerbaijan’s expectations that the negotiation processes will be reinvigorated, have not been fulfilled. As stated by the analyst, although Russia has undertaken an active role in the negotiations in case of NK, the diplomacy of the Russian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister is described as “shuttle”. Furthermore, he assumes:

The reality is that the Azerbaijani authorities believe that Moscow can solve the conflict, but perhaps not in a way that satisfies both parties. Azerbaijan’s dilemma is that a strong Russian role in conflict resolution will increase Moscow’s political clout, and Baku will likely be asked to join the Eurasian Economic Union and the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Until now, the Karabakh conflict has served as a pretext for the authorities in Baku to decline Moscow’s request, on the grounds that Armenia is also a member of those organizations.³⁴⁵

Nixey also interprets Russia’s mediation over NK in terms of its influence. He argues that Russia may not be genuinely interested in a settlement which is proved by Russian objections to an international peacekeeping force and also to any changes in the composition of the Minsk Group.³⁴⁶ The common view is that Russia is trying to maintain the status of quo of no peace, no war. As to de Waal the reality is much more complicated because of Russia’s dual relationships with conflicting sides. To explain it properly, de Waal writes:

Russia has a military alliance with Armenia and a fairly close relationship with Azerbaijan. One thing is certain: a new round of fighting would be harder to contain than previous conflicts. It is likely that the geographical range would be bigger, the weaponry more destructive, and the bloodshed much greater. Both Baku and Yerevan would be under pressure to invoke the security assistance treaties they have signed with Turkey and Russia respectively and to try to drag Ankara and Moscow into a proxy war. These security dynamics make both local and international actors prisoners of the Caucasus.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁴ Ayunts 2014: 2-4.

³⁴⁵ Shiriyev, Z. (2016). “The “Four-Day War”: new momentum for Nagorno-Karabakh resolution?”, *Analytical Articles* (The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst website) <<https://cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13356-the-four-day-war-new-momentum-for-nagorno-karabakh-resolution?.html>> accessed 04 Jan 2017.

³⁴⁶ Nixey 2012: 4.

³⁴⁷ ‘De Waal, T. (2016). Prisoners of the Caucasus: Resolving the Karabakh Security Dilemma’ (Karabakh Facts website) <<http://karabakhfacts.com/thomas-de-waal-prisoners-of-the-caucasus-resolving-the-karabakh-security-dilemma/>> accessed 23 Jan 2017.

Indeed, a new outbreak of clashes could have devastating implications not only for the whole region, but it may also transfer the borders and drag other both regional and international actors into the conflict. Brenda Shaffer (2016) argues that the escalation could also draw in the Middle East. For instance, Iran, bordering with both conflicting sides, is in a very close proximity to the lines of contact, and a mortar shell that had fallen on the territory of Iran³⁴⁸ during the Four Day war only proves how easily the conflict can draw in regional actors. Moreover it can spread beyond the whole Caucasus.³⁴⁹

As to the regional level, Turkey will try to support its ‘brother’ Azerbaijan. Russia might get involved in the conflict as a co-chair of the Minsk Group, with the mission of a mediator, or it will have to get involved based on the charter of the CSTO, which Armenia is also a member of. This charter aims at strengthening peace, international and regional security, and ensuring collective protection and counteraction to any threats posed to its member-states.³⁵⁰ Moreover, according to J. Hawk, Daniel Deiss and Edwin Watson, “current Russian national security plans foresee the Russian force grouping in Armenia to be increased, as part of the overall enhancement of the role of CSTO in guaranteeing regional security and in response to increased NATO activity in the region”³⁵¹. Many Russian analysts in the field interpret Armenian membership in the OSCE as crucial for its own security reasons. For example, Yevgeniya Klevakina states that this membership comprises the main component of Armenia’s security system.³⁵²

5.2. Georgia and Russia

The situation with the two self-proclaimed republics, namely Abkhazia and Ossetia appears to be completely different from the NK case. Despite differences, they can still be characterized by some similarities: first, all of them are not resolved until today, and have the status quo. The second factor is Russia’s involvement in those conflicts, be it direct or indirect, and be it under the guise of a mediator, protector or aggressor.

³⁴⁸ ‘Iranian village hit by shells fired in Nagorno-Karabakh fighting, 03.04.2016’ (Sputnik website) accessed <<https://sputniknews.com/world/201604031037418940-conflict-village-shelling/>> 16 Jan 2017.

³⁴⁹ For more information, see ‘Schaffer, B. (2016). Fighting in the Caucasus: Implications for the Wider Region’ (Policy Analyses. The Washington Institute website) <<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/fighting-in-the-caucasus-implications-for-the-wider-region>> accessed 10 Jan 2017.

³⁵⁰ ‘Организация Договора о коллективной безопасности’ <http://www.odkb.gov.ru/start/index_aengl.htm> доступ 23 января 2017. (In English: ‘The Collective Security Treaty Organization’ <http://www.odkb.gov.ru/start/index_aengl.htm> accessed 23 Jan 2017.

³⁵¹ Hawk, J. et al. (2016). Russia Defense Report: Russian Forces in Armenia’ (SouthFront: Analysis & Intelligence website) <<https://southfront.org/russia-defense-report-russian-forces-in-armenia/>> accessed 30 Dec 2016.

³⁵² Klevakina 2013: 114.

As stated by A. Nußberger, in the case of South Ossetia, Russia used various arguments to justify its intervention in the conflicts. Some of these assertions are: self-defense against a Georgian attack on the Russian peacekeepers deployed in South Ossetia, fulfillment of the peacekeeping mission, answer to an invitation by the South Ossetian authorities (Intervention by Invitation)³⁵³, collective self-defense; humanitarian intervention³⁵⁴, and action to rescue and protect nationals abroad³⁵⁵. Thus, Russia used the principle of “the responsibility to protect”, embraced by the UN General Assembly in the 2005 World Summit³⁵⁶, to justify its intervention in Georgia in August of 2008. Accordingly, Russia believed it acted as a ‘protector’. This principle of the protection of Russians abroad has always been one of the key points of Russia’s Foreign Policy and Security Concepts. However, Russia’s intervention as ‘a protector’ is highly questionable.

Sergey Markedonov interprets the actions by Georgia and Russia in August of 2008 as follows: Georgian President Saakashvili was trying to gain the attention of the international community, whereas for Russia, its aim was to “annihilate Georgian statehood”³⁵⁷, and of course, to enhance its influence in the region, “in view of the multifaceted interaction between this area and the North Caucasus”³⁵⁸. Nevertheless, one more point should be considered when it comes to the aggravation of the conflict: Georgia's bid for NATO membership, which got rejected during the Alliance's Bucharest Summit in April 2008 (however, the membership-application should have been reviewed in December of the same year).³⁵⁹ The idea of NATO's membership also had its share in the provocation of Russia to use hard power in the conflict.

Georgia’s actions against South Ossetia in August of 2008 were described by Russian leaders, such as the then President Dmitry Medvedev, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and UN Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, as “genocide”.³⁶⁰ Following the Five Day war, in his statement on 26 August 2008, Dmitry

³⁵³ For more information, see ‘Nolte, G. (2010). Intervention by Invitation’ (Oxford Public International law website) <<http://opil.oup.com/view/10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e1702>> accessed 29 Jan 2017.

³⁵⁴ For more information, see ‘Lowe, V. and Tzanakopoulos, A. (2011). Humanitarian Intervention’ (Oxford Public International law website) <<http://opil.oup.com/view/10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e306>> accessed 29 Jan 2017.

³⁵⁵ ‘Nußberger, A. (2013) South Ossetia’ (Oxford Public International law website) <<http://opil.oup.com/view/10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e2068>> accessed 29 Jan 2017.

³⁵⁶ UN General Assembly, “World Summit Outcome 2005”, Resolution A/RES/60/1 (October 24, 2005), paras 138-9; <<http://www.refworld.org/docid/44168a910.html>> accessed 21 Jan 2017.

³⁵⁷ Markedonov 2011: 36.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ Jafarova 2015: 30.

³⁶⁰ ‘Official Statements on Russia-Georgia Conflict: Dmitry Medvedev, Vladimir Putin, and Vitaly Churkin also Nicholas Sarkozy, Eduard Kokoity, Sergei Bagapsh (the School of Russian and Asian Studies website)’ <http://www.sras.org/statements_on_russia_georgia_conflict_2> accessed 28 Jan 2017.

Medvedev announced that “the Presidents of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, based on the results of the referendums conducted and on the decisions taken by the Parliaments of the two republics, appealed to Russia to recognize the state sovereignty of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The Federation Council and the State Duma voted in support of those appeals”³⁶¹. From Markedonov’s point of view, this decision became historical because it has also changed Russia’s role in the Abkhazian and South Ossetian affairs.³⁶² Markedonov believes that, first of all, the Five Day war broke the status quo and made Russia a direct party to the conflict. Furthermore, from a peacekeeper, Russia turned into a political protector of Abkhazia and the South Ossetia.

During the meeting of Presidents Dmitry Medvedev (Russia), Eduard Kokoity (South Ossetia), and Sergei Bagapsh (Abkhazia), on August 14, 2008, the presidents of South Ossetia expressed their gratitude to Russia for its intervention and prevention of “the total destruction of the Ossetian people”³⁶³. The president of Abkhazia also joined Eduard Kokoity to express his gratitude and readiness to sign all the documents subject to peacekeeping forces from Russia and in general support all the initiatives that the RF makes³⁶⁴.

Trenin describes Abkhazia and Ossetia as “long-standing de facto members of Russian economic space”.³⁶⁵ Russia has always been seen by Ossetia and Abkhazia as the main partner to counter Georgia in what they consider to be their fight for independence.³⁶⁶ Although the international community largely uses the terms *de facto independent states* while referring to NK, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, in case of Abkhazia and South Ossetia views differ. For example, Gerrits and Bader argue that while these ‘entities’ got independency from Georgia, they have become heavily dependent on Moscow.³⁶⁷ The countries depend on Russian funding and, “moreover, the protection of the regions’ borders is carried out by Russian troops”.³⁶⁸

³⁶¹ ‘Statement by President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev, 26 August 2008’ (President of Russia website) <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/1222>> accessed 20 Jan 2017.

³⁶² Markedonov 2011: 38

³⁶³ ‘Statement by President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev, 26 August 2008’ (President of Russia website) <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/1222>> accessed 20 Jan 2017.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ ‘Trenin, D. (op-ed) (2013). Russia’s Relations with the CIS Countries: Outlook for 2020’ (Carnegie Moscow Center website) <<http://carnegie.ru/2013/03/28/russia-s-relations-with-cis-countries-outlook-for-2020-pub-51395>> accessed 25 Dec 2016.

³⁶⁶ Jafarova 2015: 30.

³⁶⁷ For more information, see Gerrits, A. and Bader, M. (2016). “Russian patronage over Abkhazia and South Ossetia: implications for conflict resolution”, *East European Politics*, 32(3), 297-313. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2016.1166104>> accessed 17 Jan 2017.

³⁶⁸ Ibid: 309.

On the regional level, the conflict has affected both Armenia and Azerbaijan. The war of 2008 has had specifically negative implications for Armenia. As Markedonov states, “ (...) Russia’s victory over Georgia created many problems given the fact that all of its relations with Russia went through Georgia”³⁶⁹ It caused a substantial amount of economic damage to Armenia. Furthermore, the blowing of the railway bridge by Russian soldiers caused much harm given the fact that it served as an important route for international cargo traffic between Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.³⁷⁰

As to negotiation processes, with regards to the EU-UN-OSCE, co-sponsored Geneva talks did not prove to be much effective since the majority of the UN initiatives did not get improvement because of Russia’s right of veto. Thus, as in the case of South Ossetia, OSCE established a mission in Georgia in 1992 and took over the leading role to promote the negotiation between conflicting sides in Georgia. In the same year, OSCE created Joint Control Commission (JCC) in order to promote confidence and security-building measures. The JCC consisted of South Ossetia, North Ossetia, Russia and Georgia.³⁷¹ The OSCE was merely facilitating the whole process, however, it did not have any voting rights or any saying in the decision making processes. Russia’s membership in the JCC was much criticized by the Georgian side. According to Georgia, Russia decreased the JCC’s effectiveness, “as so for instance in 2004-2005 Russia withdrew from about fifteen protocols that had been signed by all parties to the JCC on the demilitarization of South Ossetia. The sentiment of Russia’s omnipresence was also exacerbated by its overrepresentation in the JCC via membership in the OSCE”.³⁷² For Georgia, the mediator’s role of North Ossetia was also highly questionable. The work of the JCC was gradually becoming less effective and the bloody war of August 2008 marked the end of the JCC. In addition, “the Mission to Georgia’s mandate expired as of 31 December 2008 after the OSCE Permanent Council failed to reach consensus on its renewal in the wake of the hostilities in South Ossetia in August.”³⁷³

As Herzig argues, Russia took advantage of the regional conflicts in the South Caucasus. It just exploited the conflict debate “insisting on great-power status and internal weaknesses to pressure them to fall into line on joint defence of the external borders of the former SU, the maintenance of

³⁶⁹ Markedonov 2011: 36.

³⁷⁰ For more information, see Kakachia, K. (2011). “Challenges To The South Caucasus Regional Security Aftermath of Russian–Georgian Conflict: Hegemonic Stability or New Partnership?”, *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 2(1), 15-20.

³⁷¹ Jafarova 2015: 40-65.

³⁷² Ibid: 46.

³⁷³ ‘Mandate’ (OSCE website) <<http://www.osce.org/georgia-closed/43386>> accessed 24 Jan 2017.

Russian bases on their territory and the deployment of exclusively Russian peace-keepers for the region's conflicts."³⁷⁴

What are the possible future scenarios for these conflicts? The NK conflict remains the key regional conflict for a number of reasons. David Shahnazaryan (2006) differentiates three reasons accounting for it: first of all, unlike Abkhazia and South Ossetia, two of the three regional states, Armenia and Azerbaijan, are involved in the conflict. "The conflict is a major impediment to regional integration and the implementation of regional projects. Second, the conflict is an obstruction to communication, which is the main geopolitical and economic asset of the region."³⁷⁵ By the same token, though Russia plays the major role as an international actor in the Karabakh case, there are both regional and international actors besides Russia, such as Turkey and Iran, the US and France which "pursue a settlement based on their individual interests"³⁷⁶. As stated by the analyst, the NK conflict will achieve a negotiated resolution only if the Armenian and the Azerbaijani sides are actually interested in it. "Their power is derived from the conflict, and any change of the status quo is perceived as a threat to their legitimacy."³⁷⁷

According to Rondeli (2000), given the vulnerability and sensitivity to Russian security perceptions, a buffer zone could be the ideal role and function for the three Caucasian states. It will give them the possibility to maneuver, more flexibility and bargaining ability in advancing their own interests. As he states, "to be a buffer is not a blessing for small countries, but in the Caucasus context the "bufferization" of the region under the "responsible supervision" of all interested parties (Russia, Iran, Turkey, and the West) would be a serious step toward regional stability and cooperation".³⁷⁸

David Shahnazaryan³⁷⁹ holds the opinion that that regional security will be possible in the South Caucasus when the three South Caucasian states belong to the same international security system. Furthermore, "the resolution of the major South Caucasus conflicts, NK, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia, could lead to an accelerated pace of democratization and political and economic integration of the region".³⁸⁰ In order to foster the security of the region, the factors defining the South Caucasus as a regional security sub-complex, namely the secessionist regions in Georgia, the

³⁷⁴ Herzig 1999: 48-49.

³⁷⁵ Shahnazaryan 2006: 356.

³⁷⁶ Ibid: 356 – 357.

³⁷⁷ Ibid: 357.

³⁷⁸ Rondeli 2000: 53.

³⁷⁹ Shahnazaryan 2006: 356.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over NK, spillover between the North and South Caucasus through the pattern of ethnic groups must be addressed in a comprehensive stability pact.

6. Conclusion

The research illustrates that the South Caucasus stability is very fragile. As the RSCT demonstrates, interrelated nature of security threats in the South Caucasus and Russian involvement as a great power within the South Caucasian sub-complex makes the security threats in the region more complex. The frequent clashes, escalation of the wars in the region and Russian meddling contribute to present and potential threats to the security and stability of the region, as well as to national security of Russia.

After the demise of the SU, the regional predominance became crucial for the Kremlin in order to maintain its status as a great power in the world, and the CIS countries became the top priority for Russia's foreign policy. Establishing Russian hegemony over the former Soviet space has always been essential to Russia's political, security and economic interests. Since the fall of the SU, the main objectives of Russian foreign and security policies have been to counterbalance Western influence, particularly resist NATO enlargement, within its 'sphere of interest', maintain a security belt around its periphery and in Russian rhetoric, to protect its 'compatriots' abroad. Russian foreign policy is dominated by military dimension: the use of hard power serves as a key way for Russia to achieve its objectives, when soft power fails.

Since Vladimir Putin's first inauguration as President of the RF in May 2000, the objective of sustaining Russia's military presence in the post-Soviet space has become into prominence in Russian foreign policy-making, especially with respect to the South Caucasus. Indeed, the policy pursued by the Putin administration towards the South Caucasus and the regional conflicts in recent years illustrates that Russia regards the region as one of the most effective arenas within the former Soviet space in order to advance Russia's interests and significance. There is a plenty of IR literature which confirms the assumption that Russian intervention in the regional conflicts is one of the primary ways for Russia to bolster its dominance and perpetuate its hegemony. The conflicts in the South Caucasus have provided Russia with a solid opportunity for the penetration into the region and preconditioned its heavy military presence, which according to many analysts and experts in the field is contributing to Russia's stand as a great power. Withal, Russia's overriding interest in the region is connected with Russian own security interests. The RSCT has been used to

demonstrate that the security of all the South Caucasian republics and Russia, as a global power within the South Caucasus Regional Security Sub-Complex are interconnected and instability in one country is having implications for the other component states. Moreover, the instability of the region is being characterized by a potential of spill-over the unstable North Caucasus. For this reason, it threatens Russian national security. This all explains Russia's concerns about its security interests in terms of the South Caucasus.

The South Caucasus hosts three unresolved conflicts: NK, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The Kremlin uses these conflicts in order to maximise its own political leverage such as for justifying its military presence and advancing Russian geopolitical strategy in the region. Russian military intervention in South Ossetian-Georgian and Abkhazian-Georgian conflicts threatened Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The original and primary motives behinds Russia's support of both South Ossetia and Abkhazia have been first of all to dismantle Georgia's military capability, to impede Georgia's membership in NATO and it was also a message to other former Soviet republics that when necessary Russia would use hard power to solve the issues in its favour. *What role does Russia play in these conflicts: the role of a mediator, protector or provocateur?* The answer depends very much on from which perspective the question is viewed. As to South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Russia was perceived as a protector saving them from assaults launched by Georgia. As to Georgia, Russia was an aggressor and provocateur. The thesis supports the Georgian perspective for the below-brought reasons. The Five Day war in August of 2008 contributed a lot to the achievement of Russian foreign policy objectives in the regions: first of all, it badly reduced Georgian military capacity; second it impeded Georgia's membership in NATO. Last but not least, it served as a 'green light' received from South Ossetia and Abkhazia for the deployment of considerable Russian military contingent on their territories. All of this contributed to enhancing Russia's dominance in the region and also controlling the borders with the North Caucasus which is crucial for its security policy. Furthermore, it also changed the balance of the power.

The case of the NK conflict is different from the other two. Russia was not directly involved in the conflict. Russia acted as a 'mediator' and its role of mediator was affirmed with the establishment the OSCE Minsk Group. The question raised in the paper was whether Russia was really interested in the settlement of the NK conflict. What is certain is that Russia prefers the status of quo. The unresolved conflict serves as a window of opportunities for Russia to play the role of a mediator and enhance its dominance in the region, and endorse its status of a great power. However, Russian

foreign policy towards Armenia and Azerbaijan is twofold and controversial. It is characterized by such elements which are provoking the escalation of the conflict. For example, Russia being one of the Minsk Group co-chairs is the main provider of enormous military armaments to Azerbaijan, and to Armenia as well. But, the latter's purchase of military equipments is rather modest. However, the presence of the Russian military base in Gyumri contributes to maintaining the balance of power between the countries.

Hypothesis I: Instability in the South Caucasus is not in Kremlin's interests.

The theoretical framework applied in the paper does prove that instability in the South Caucasus does not suit Kremlin's interests because of possible spillover of external conflicts. Especially, taking into consideration the adjacency of Georgia and the two separatist regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia to the North Caucasus, any instability in the South Caucasus poses a threat of conflict with spillover effect. Moreover, it may even drag not only regional but also international military interventions.

Hypothesis II: Controlled instability in the region suits the Kremlin's interests.

The overwhelming evidence proves this hypothesis to be true. First of all, it is necessary to mention one more time what under 'controlled instability' is meant here. In the context of the research work, this term implies to Russia's ability to influence instability which may evolve in the region. *How is it possible to influence or control instability?* As it has been demonstrated, every time there has been an outbreak of hostilities in the region, Russia has been involved in. Especially, in case of the NK conflict it has always got involved as a mediator and managed to bring the conflicting sides to the negotiation table. Doing so it has been 'controlling the instability' to certain extent which in its turn has bolstered its image of a great power.

Hypothesis III: Russia aims at preserving the status quo of the conflicts in the South Caucasian.

One of the evolutions to an RSC is the maintenance of the status quo. Russia as a great power within RSCT is interested in preserving status quo because it tries to avoid any changes in the essential structure of an RSC. For Russia, stability is tied to the status of quo. 'No war, no peace' situation plays to Russia's interests; first of all, it does not pose a spillover threat to the unstable North Caucasus. Second, it allows Russia remain the dominant regional player. Thus, within the RSCT among three main possible evolutions for a RSC, namely maintenance of the status quo, internal transformation and external transformation, the South Caucasus is characterized by the first evolution, preservation of the status quo. However, any developments in patterns of amity and

enmity, in the distribution of power or balance of power and changes in the essential structure of the South Caucasus sub-complex would cause internal and external transformations.

The unresolved conflicts and heavy militarization of the countries make the region unstable with a potential of escalation of those conflicts which might turn into large-scale conflicts transferring the borders of the region. *What are the possible scenarios?* The heavy militarization of the region constitutes a dangerous impediment to resolving the conflicts. One of the primary preconditions for the creation of stability in the region could be the unified strategy of the three South Caucasian states aimed at the regional cooperation and integration in order to achieve security and stability of the region. It would mean that each of the countries should abandon individual pursuits of security in favour of common ones. Yet, the pattern of enmity characterizing state-to-state relations in the region demonstrates that such a development of events seems impossible for the moment. Another impediment for the regional cooperation is a high level of foreign penetration, namely predominant presence of Russia, as a global power. Russia is playing a crucial role in the region in terms of influencing the balance of power. Another question which emerges here is: *what can give an impetus for the process of regional cooperation?* Unfortunately, this question is left unanswered since it has not been within the scope of this paper. However, this question could be a starting point for another follow-up research.

To sum up, it is worth bringing a small part from the speech delivered by the former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili at the UN General Assembly. “If the Russian Federation persists in attempting to make [this] dangerous linkage and undermine that fundamental order - its impact will be far reaching - and the Pandora’s box of violent separatism and conflict will be unleashed not only on the Caucasus, but across many parts of our globe”.³⁸¹

This paper has covered crucial points regarding Russian foreign policy towards the South Caucasus in the context of security, the conflicts over Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and last but not least Russia’s role in those conflicts. The high potential and the burning interest in further research on the topic of the paper can serve as a foundation for further analysis for a PHD dissertation.

³⁸¹ ‘Statement by H.E. Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia at the 61st session of the United Nations General Assembly (New York: September 22, 2006) <<http://www.un.org/webcast/ga/61/pdfs/georgia-e.pdf>> accessed 02 Jan 2017.

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