

Caucasus International



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Social Media in Politics and Foreign Policy:
Can it Transform Eurasia?



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Social Media in Politics and Foreign Policy: Can it Transform Eurasia?



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Editor's Note

“THE TIME IS OUT OF JOINT”*: REVOLUTION IN MIDDLE EAST & CELEBRATION IN EURASIA

Azerbaijan and Georgia are focused on the future of the region

Radio Free Europe

Soviet regime reacted harshly
towards independence
movements in Baku and Tbilisi

This is the Caucasus

Armenia is not only geographically landlocked

20 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union

A comprehensive analysis of
the Middle Eastern revolutions
is needed

Arab
Awakening

Middle East and North
Africa

“Twitter Revolution”
was nothing more
than a cyber fantasy

Voice of America

The West focused on the role
on Western technologies rather
than the Iranian protestors.

Facebook

Green Revolution

What we most likely need is a psychological revolution

* William Shakespeare, 'Hamlet', Act I, Scene v.

For the past few months, social media has been the hot topic in world politics. Facebook and Twitter have dominated the headlines, and for the first time in the age of the internet, there has been discussion about the “revolutionary effect” of social networking sites in the so-called Arab Awakening.

As the struggle for freedom in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) continues to unfold, the causes of these popular revolts seem quite understandable. This was a historical challenge, and from the perspective of historical development, “the time is out of joint” in the MENA region: people were watching acts of state repression on YouTube; activists were using Facebook and Twitter to organize protests. The popular demonstrations have had a “domino effect,” leading the awakening of the Arab region, while the international community anticipated the “butterfly effect” on neighboring regions. While the initial results were not immediately impressive, the fragility spread from Libya to Syria and Yemen, and the new regimes in Tunisia and Egypt are already grappling with the many challenges of transitioning to democracy.

There were underlying grievances and dissatisfaction with the social, economic and political conditions in Arab countries; the uprisings were not caused by a Facebook update or a Tweet. It is open to discussion whether social media alone toppled the au-

thoritarian regimes in the Middle East. However, in the aftermath of the successful revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, the role of social media, being celebrated as an accelerator of revolution, is overstated. Social media is a tool that can facilitate revolution; it is quite another to say social media is a central factor in bringing about revolution. A comprehensive analysis of the Middle Eastern revolutions is needed, and such an analysis requires both the clarity of hindsight and proper investigative work, rather than simply attributing it to the society-altering phenomenon of social media tools like Facebook and Twitter.

The question of whether social media played a major role in the so-called Arab Awakening remains uncertain. Or was it a revolution in the more traditional sense? These are immensely difficult questions; they are also remarkably easy to answer incorrectly. The idealistic IT experts who developed the internet were sure that it would reinvigorate democracy and spread democratic values around the globe; similarly the Arab Awakening had a serious impact on perceptions of new social technologies like Facebook, Twitter, Youtube etc. But it seems undeniable that what we are seeing is the “Net Effect”, as opposed to the “Facebook or Twitter Effect”. Herein lies the problem: the erroneous presentation of the “Net Effect” as new phenomena. But if we look back to 1998, we find the article by

Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, "Power and Independence in the Information Age" published in *Foreign Affairs*, in which the authors identify and anticipate today's realities, pointing out that "the information age is also empowering smaller nations and changing the nature of power in international relations". Generally speaking, the internet, and in recent years, social media too, have dramatically increased the ability of citizens around the world to "seek, receive and impart information through any media and regardless of frontiers," as it is termed in Article 19 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. The internet might not create or destroy democratic institutions, but it may better equip citizens to cope with them, as has been discussed by contemporary political science scholars such as Seymour Martin Lipset, who theorized about the democratic pay-offs of access to the media by citizens. Two decades of internet development have shown that this globalized nirvana, and the increasing role of the citizen, are together expanding freedom via the internet.

It would be hard to deny that the "Facebook/Twitter Effects" have given new impetus to the internet and have had significant impact on recent political developments in MENA as also seen in Iran's 2009 Green Revolution. It is also worth noting that discussions of social media often neglect to acknowledge the role of the traditional media, such as Al-Jazeera,

the Qatar based satellite television channel. Al-Jazeera, has devoted huge amounts of time and effort to coverage of the Arab region, and has played a crucial role in giving a voice to ordinary citizens, and supporting reformist thinking in MENA. Al-Jazeera also provided a platform for critical discussion of the authoritarian Arab regimes, and the potential for reform in the Arab world. An additional concern is that "cyber-utopianism" may prevent policy makers from considering a whole raft of other important questions and developments, which is what happened during the June 2009 elections in Iran. During these elections, in Iran, there were big protests against the incumbent government; a number of people believed that the elections were unfair, and the subsequent "Green Revolution" was biggest challenge to this Islamic country since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Iran seemed like a revolution that the whole world was not just watching but also blogging, tweeting, Googling, and YouTubing. "The Revolution Will Be Twittered" was the quick response from the Atlantic's blogger Andrew Sullivan after the protests broke out in Tehran. However, when the Green Movement lost much of its momentum in the month following the elections, it became clear that the "Twitter Revolution" was nothing more than a cyber fantasy on the part of Western observers and commentators. The West focused on the role on Western technologies rather than the Iranian pro-

testors. If the only conclusion about the power of the internet that Western policymakers have drawn from the Iranian events is that tweets are good for social mobilization, they are not likely to outlast authoritarian adversaries.

Regardless of the precise role played by social media, this year's hot topic, this year is being experienced as the year of revolution in the MENA region and also the twentieth anniversary of the independence of the Eurasian post-Soviet countries. Back in 1991, few in the West had the guts or the imagination to believe such a brutal system as the Soviet Union could fall. Starting in 1988, popular revolutions in the geopolitically significant zone of Eurasia, the South Caucasus countries, brought about independence via the crowds that gathered in the streets of Baku and Tbilisi. Again, "the time [was] out of joint" – it was that notion that pushed countries to regain their independence. During this independence movement, there were no iPhones or iPads, no Twitter, no Facebook; there was no internet. A handful of international media outlets such as Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Voice of America along with local and international newspapers followed the independence movements in the South Caucasus countries. Despite the principle of glasnost ("openness") which had revolutionized the heretofore closed Soviet media, the regime reacted harshly towards independence movements in

Baku and Tbilisi. When Soviet troops invaded Azerbaijan's capital city in 1990, murdering innocent people, they first shut down the television and radio stations in order to limit access to information. Today, this measure would have much less impact than it did two decades ago, given that these days, internet technologies cover all breaking news. A comparison between the 2011 Arab Awakening with the post-Soviet Awakening is a difficult one, but history suggests that two decades is enough time to calculate the impact of independence on the South Caucasus countries, and what they have achieved. This is a very important question, and one that will illuminate the future.

Twenty years since independence, the South Caucasus states are still experiencing problems, among them the consequences of violent conflicts that influence internal and external political and economic developments as well as determine foreign policy priorities. Hence, the Caucasus states, with the exception of Azerbaijan, are still incapable of defending their national interests and providing for their security. After two decades, Azerbaijan drives the development of the region. The East-West dynamic of world politics shows itself in Baku's foreign policy; Azerbaijan is becoming a geostrategic-geo-economic hub between Asia and Europe. Azerbaijan, the 'geopolitical pivot' of Eurasia, as former U.S National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski

has described it, is, unlike Armenia, seeking more diversified relations with other world powers in order to respond both to its existential and economic challenges. Current energy projects and future geostrategic plans improve relations with neighboring countries like Georgia and Turkey, as well as boosting regional cooperation. The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway will represent these trilateral relations, just as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline has done. Azerbaijan is able to bring its energy resources to world markets, as well as diversifying transport routes to increase European energy security. The main challenge of its post-independence period has been the occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh and seven adjunct regions by Armenia. This bloody war has brought 1 million IDPs into unoccupied Azerbaijan, most of whom left their homes with little more than the clothes on their back- one of the great international human crises. As demonstrated, conflict plays a significant role in shaping the mirroring national identities of Armenia and Azerbaijan. It also continues to have a significant impact on the overall political-military and socio-economic developments in both countries and beyond. Azerbaijan is still focused on finding a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict- but after two decades Armenia has not showed its readiness to accept the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.

The conflict resolution process has

missed “golden moments” of peace during these past 17 years.

In terms of stabilizing its economy, the construction of the state system has shown the real results of Baku’s policy, as seen in the “2010-2011 Global Competitiveness Report” - on the macroeconomic stability sub-index, Azerbaijan is 16th of 142 countries. In addition, according to the 2010 UNDP Human Development Report, Azerbaijan is now in the category of “high human development.” Indeed, over the past five years, Azerbaijan has achieved the most rapid development of all of the 169 countries covered by the UNDP report.

Georgia, after two decades, has managed to stabilize its economy, opening up to international investors. Like Azerbaijan, unresolved conflicts and infringements on its territorial integrity constitute the main problems and challenges to its independence. Tbilisi, pushing for peace and prosperity, saw serious setbacks after the 2008 August War between Russia and Georgia. Regional cooperation has been crucial in difficult situations such as this. After the August War, Azerbaijani companies invested in the Georgian economy, which not only advanced Azerbaijan’s regional leadership, but also increased Georgia’s economic prosperity, which in turn has brought the relationship between these two states and their peoples to a qualitatively different level. Furthermore, political stability, economic policies and the maturity of

key sectors in the countries' economies generate conditions conducive to new geo-economic projects funded by the states. Azerbaijan and Georgia share an opportunity, and believe that the South Caucasus will be a place of peace and dialogue, with mutual understanding between people and complementary cultures.

Presently, Armenia stands largely separate from its two Caucasian neighbors and, unable to develop relations with Turkey, acts more as an observer than a participant in the emerging partnerships in the region. Armenia is not only geographically landlocked, but also (more dangerously) politically landlocked. It seems that if Azerbaijan and Georgia are focused on the future of the region, Armenia is still preoccupied by its past. Thus, not much room is left for thinking about the present, which is, perhaps, a common trend in transitional periods. As regional projects expand and develop, Armenia's non-involvement limits the possibilities for its integration into the South Caucasus as a whole, and means destructive isolation for Armenia. Should the current stalemate between Baku and Yerevan continue, in the future it may be even more difficult to bridge the differences and to help Armenia to become a fully integrated member of the South Caucasus region.

Even today, 20 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, we need to believe that it is our challenge to find common ground, to bridge divides, to

scale "walls". What we most likely need is a psychological revolution- a deep change in attitude and thinking. With the twentieth anniversary of the South Caucasus countries this year, it seems an opportune moment to consider these issues. *Caucasus International* is looking to focus on these questions in its next issue, as well as in a special edition.

Caucasus International has provided an intellectual platform for the debate of several challenges that confront the region and beyond. It strives to serve as a platform that gives all sides space to express their viewpoints. With this issue of *CI*, we combine these themes in seeking to identify the role of social media and the media in Eurasia, particularly in the South Caucasus and Turkey. In this issue, the contributors address a broad range of challenges that are likely to arise in the coming months and years.

In this issue, the Arab revolutions are high on the agenda. The nature of the broadcasting narrative of the revolutions, the factors behind the uprisings, and the role of Al-Jazeera are questions many are asking. Ayman Mohyeldin, Foreign Correspondent for NBC News, best known for his 18 day coverage of the Egyptian revolution for the pan-Arab English-language network Al-Jazeera, answers those questions and more in an interview with *CI*'s Managing Editor Mahir Zeynalov.

One of this year's most talked about topics has been Turkey's role in the Middle East. The political instability and developments across the Middle East remain at the center of the international community's attention.

Considering both the importance and relevance of this subject, we are enormously grateful for the opportunity to discuss these issues with the Pulitzer Prize winning New York Times journalist Anthony Shadid. In this colloquy, Shadid stresses that Turkey's relations with Iran are in trouble; it has no diplomatic relations with Israel; there is potential crisis in Cyprus; Syria is extremely unstable. As reflected by international media coverage, the international community is anxious about the prospect of civil war in Syria. However, Shadid does not agree that the defections in Syria pose a threat, adding that there is real integrity among Syrians right now.

Experts on the South Caucasus as well as journalists share their analyses of the role of social media from various perspectives as follows:

Dr. Randall Baker, Professor and Dean of Academic Affairs at the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy, examines how several key epochs of information technology have brought us to the Information Age. The author argues that in non-democratic countries, it has been relatively easy to control the dissemination of "subversive" information by "owning" the news outlets.

A colloquy with Ghia Nodia, Professor and Georgian political scientist, sees discussion Georgian foreign policy, media's role in society, the Rose Revolution etc. Nodia argues that seven years on from the Rose Revolution, we can more or less assess its results, while it is still too early for any such assessment of the Middle East revolutions. When comparing the Rose Revolution and the Middle Eastern popular revolts, the author describes the main difference as the nature of the regime that the Rose Revolution was rejecting; it was no autocratic, and clearly it was much less autocratic than the Middle Eastern regimes. The main cause of the Rose Revolution was that the regime was corrupt, inefficient, and sclerotic, which makes for an interesting comparison with the Middle Eastern uprisings.

As we are keen to share the views of South Caucasus' experts on the current theme, we have included articles by Armenian, Georgian and Turkish authors. Onnik Krikorian, a freelance photojournalist and writer based in Yerevan, argues in his article that ArmenTel, the country's main telecommunication services provider (controversially privatized in 1998) has been one of the biggest obstacles to internet development in Armenia. Krikorian asserts that international donors are increasingly interested in funding online media projects in Armenia following the post-presidential election clashes in 2008 which left 10

people dead. To this end, Krikorian points out the importance of online media; bigger media outlets are now publishing online in an attempt to dissolve the near total monopoly of the broadcast media by the government or businessmen close to the regime.

The article by Zviad Koridze, a prominent Georgian freelance journalist, mainly covers Georgia's media problems and the challenges it faces in the establishment of civil society. The author discusses the media trends which infiltrated social networks, and the polarization of groups in the virtual environment. Ismail Hakki Polat, instructor at the New Media Department at Kadir Has University examines the role of social media in Turkey, drawing in examples of how social media was used as a political weapon during the Arab Spring and during the massive protests against internet censorship in Istanbul.

Eugene Chausovksy, Eurasia Analyst at STRATFOR, analyzes the impact of the Arab Spring on the former Soviet states, arguing that social media will serve as an important tool in shaping political processes across the region. The author points out that in the former Soviet space, social media makes communication easier in a certain way, but it is important to remember that historically, virtually all successful revolutions have had to appeal to the broader masses. In his comparative analysis of the South

Caucasus countries, Chausovsky reveals that despite having one of the lowest Facebook usage rates in the former Soviet Union, Armenia has had one of the largest protest campaigns in the region this year.

This issue focuses on the policies of regional actors towards conflict resolution, security problems in the region, in addition to successful international models which can be contribute to the resolution of the South Caucasus' open conflicts.

Dr. Svante Cornell, Research Director of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, explains that while Russia's policies toward the West have changed, Moscow continues to pursue its quest for a zone of privileged interests in Eurasia, and that a chief instrument in this respect is the manipulation of unresolved conflicts. To this end, the author points out that Moscow's policy in the region has largely failed, and has in fact contributed to increasing the instability across the entire post-Soviet space.

Dr. Stephen Blank, Research Professor of National Security Affairs at US Army War College, examines Georgia's current security environment, an analysis that can contribute greatly to academic discussions. He emphasizes that U.S is strongly backing Georgia, and not selling it the weapons it wants for self-defense, in the worry that this will anger Russia and jeopardize the reset policy. The au-

thor's policy recommendation is that Georgia does nothing in this respect, and waits for Washington and Brussels, who will not do more than they are already doing.

Dr. Gulshan Pashayeva, Deputy Director of the Baku based think-tank Center for Strategic Studies, examines the Åland precedent, the autonomy which will celebrate its own anniversary this year. The author suggests that specific characteristics of the Åland autonomy can be successfully applied in the context one of the unresolved conflicts of the former Soviet area - the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Another topic for discussion, among the articles on social media, conflict, and security, is provided by Dr. Erica Marat, adjunct professor at the Washington based American University. The author examines the Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan Customs Union and identifies the range of political motives hidden behind the Customs Union's economic façade.

From the EU, one of the actor in Caucasus' geopolitical arena, Licinia Simão, a postdoctoral fellow at Portugal's University of Coimbra's Centre for Social Studies, illuminates the ways in which EU policy interacts with the realities of the South Caucasus states, following the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty.

Kavus Abushov, Assistant professor at the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy, gives a theoretical analysis of

whether the South Caucasus is a region, and whether the nature of this regionalism sufficiently serves key processes such as regional cooperation and integration. The author argues that the components required for integration or a deeper level of regionalism seem to be absent from the South Caucasus region.

Dr. Kamal Makili-Aliyev contributes to the discussion of the "Net Effect" in his examination of international law regulation of cyberspace and cyber-warfare. He points out that the U.S. International Strategy for Cyberspace recognizes the possibility of responding to a cyber-attack with armed force, with other countries in the process of realizing that international law needs to better regulate the cyber-conduct of states.

As we can all see, and as well all experience, social networking sites are playing a crucial role. New ideas and thoughts are coming in the form of 140 character Twitters updates and in Facebook statuses. For example, in September here in Azerbaijan, at the forum of bloggers and new media experts "Blogosfer-2011", the Center for Strategic Studies was awarded for its far reaching and innovative use of social media, as seen in its live Twitter conference in June 2011: "The transformation of media: transition from traditional to a new media", via Twitter @SAM_Baku. *Caucasus International* prepared Twitterati-100, a list of a hundred Twitter users from around the world who will make you

smarter, infuriate you, and delight you -140 characters at a time.

We are very excited to see new members to the *CI* family. Mahir Zeynalov, a young and experienced journalist based in Istanbul has joined our team as Managing Editor, Celia Davies as proof reader. I would like to thank David Judson for his advice, which challenged us to think and to improve our journal. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my deep thanks to Mahir Zeynalov, managing editor of *CI*, and Celia Davies, proof reader of *CI*, who have made this issue a success through their hard work.

We are very happy to have reached partnerships and advertisement agreements with Hurriyet Daily News and Economic Review and Turkish Policy Quarterly. The current issue is the product of the hard work of other team members: Kamal Makili-Aliyev and Gunel Ismailzade, who helped to manage the overall process, and Ayaz Mammadov, whose help has been crucial. Thanks also to the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, with its academic atmosphere and abundant opportunities for discussion and critical thinking, and to Martha McSally, who helped by discussing, understanding and criticizing contemporary issues. The support of Center for Strategic Studies (CSS) remains central to all of our work. We are thankful to our readers, from whom we received several letters, critiques and

suggestions. We are not expecting that readers will sympathize with all of the ideas they find here, for some of our writers will flatly disagree with others, but we hold high our belief that *Caucasus International* can inspire intellectual debate with the region and beyond.

One important piece of information we would like to share *CI*'s new website: www.caucasusinternational.com. We hope this will provide a platform for more online discussion about both the articles and current affairs. You can also follow *CI* through our Facebook group "Caucasus International" and Twitter @CaucasusInterl. In the next issue we will include a "Regional Forecast" section, which will look at the Caucasus' current and forecasted development, and an exploration of "What Think Tanks Are Thinking", which aims to highlight for the international community the work of regional think-tanks. We hope to get information from think-tanks across the region, and to begin collaboration on this project.

While many people have been involved in this issue of *CI*, we are responsible for any errors. We always welcome your feedback, suggestions and constructive criticism to improve our work.

Zaur Shiryev,

Executive Editor,

Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany



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Colloquy

*Covering Egypt's revolution
and Al-Jazeera's success*

**Ayman
Mohyeldin**

** Ayman Mohyeldin is a Foreign Correspondent for NBC News based in Egypt. He has previously worked for Al-Jazeera, NBC and CNN. He is best known for his 18 day coverage of the Egyptian revolution for the pan-Arab English-language network, Al-Jazeera.*

The entire world fixed its gaze on the 31 year old reporter who was experiencing a historic journey with the Egyptians who flocked into Cairo's Tahrir Square earlier this year, to demand the ousting of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who ruled the Arab country with an iron fist for three decades.

Mohyeldin was a student in the U.S in the summer of 2000, when the Middle East was burning amid the second Palestinian intifada. He went to a barbecue party with one of his friends, where he met an NBC producer.

They discussed a wide range of issues, including Palestine. The producer told Ayman that he had some very interesting insights, and whether he had ever thought of going into journalism.

Ayman's response was negative.

The NBC producer told him to send along his resume, and that they would try to work something out. After six months, Ayman started working for the NBC, in a position just above an internship.

"It was a very basic entry-level job. In the morning, I would come in at 6 a.m., read the newspapers and do administrative tasks. At the time, I was going to night school, and so it was a very convenient job- nothing very exciting."

As it did for many Americans, 9/11 changed Mohyeldin's life and career.

There were tremendous opportunities in journalism to work on projects that had to do with understanding 9/11. The 9/11 terrorist attacks opened a lot of doors to Mohyeldin that otherwise would have remained closed, he says. "I was looking for investigative reporting roles. Even though I was doing a very basic job, I was involved in high level, very professional journalism."

"It was a very rewarding job, involving both language and cultural skills. I had found myself working in a branch of the news business, which was focused on what was happening in the Arab, Islamic and broader contexts. Because of my cultural orientation and my language skills, I found myself with a lot of good opportunities at a young age. I did that with NBC News, and then the following year, President George W. Bush started talking about invading Iraq. The focus of the entire press community shifted to Iraq. I left NBC and went to CNN, preparing for what was about to happen in Iraq. No one knew what would happen during the war. But everyone had some kind of intuition, and news organizations were launching their operations, setting up and bringing in more staff."

Despite his experiences in Gaza and Iraq, Mohyeldin has come to the attention of the international community through his fascinating coverage of the Egyptian revolution earlier this year.

“The anger inside Egypt was very much about change, and Al-Jazeera was focusing and carrying those feelings to the international audience,” he says, adding that the pan-Arab broadcaster was pro-people.

He had been touted as one of the most successful Western journalists as a result of his earlier reportage from Iraq, Gaza and Libya before he appeared before the audience of Al-Jazeera English to deliver breaking news on the rapidly unfolding events in Cairo. With hundreds of thousands of people behind him chanting slogans heralding a new Egypt, Mohyeldin had soon become what many call the “face of the Egyptian revolution.”

His task was not easy. He complains of a series of official measures against Al-Jazeera in January by the Egyptian government. Al-Jazeera’s license was eventually revoked; it was taken off the satellite broadcast service; its equipment was confiscated; staff were arrested.

“There was a lot of pressure on Al-Jazeera,” says Mohyeldin.

“We anticipated that the government would react like that. We made a decision to try to keep members of our team separate, so that if one person was arrested, somebody else would still be able to report. It was very important for us to have numerous positions. At one point, in Cairo alone, we had at least six correspondents, a staff cameraman, and a producer. With Al-Jazeera Arabic, the number

was even higher. We had people all across the country reporting the revolution. When the government started to crack down, we realized that we were going to face serious problems, and would have to relocate our team and find opportunities to report from somewhere else. That was our goal. We kept our cameras in Tahrir Square, which became the focal point, where people gathered every day. Maintaining a constant presence in Tahrir Square is what we were trying to do throughout the duration of the events,” he says, demonstrating the degree of risk he undertook for his work.

He likely exaggerates the extent to which a media outlet can help to restore order and to avert potentially devastating outcomes, but Mohyeldin believes that the presence of Al-Jazeera in Libya – during the early periods of the uprising – would have changed the government’s treatment of protesters, or as they are now known, rebels.

“If this massacre was going to unfold in full view of the international media, if people were going to see that Libyan army was killing people with helicopters and machine guns, then the [Libyan] government would have behaved differently,” he says, noting that there was nobody watching in February, when the Libyan uprising began. “They were able to do this essentially unobserved, and this, I think, is the real tragedy,” he emphasizes.

Mohyeldin was one of few present in Tahrir Square almost every single day of the 18 day uprising, absent only when he was briefly detained by the Egyptian authorities. He believes that the Egyptian revolution came about as a result of a combination of

“The Egyptian revolution was unique because it was leaderless, popular, and organic,”

many things, rather than a single discontent that led to the overthrow of the regime.

“The Egyptian revolution was unique because it was leaderless, popular, and organic,” he contends, claiming that the revolution came from the people themselves.

“It was not someone in exile banging the tune; in Egypt the revolution was organic and popular, no single individual, party, or leader could claim that they alone triggered the revolt,” notes Mohyeldin.

According to the reporter, the factors that led to these revolutions have been widely reported.

“Poverty, lack of democracy, corruption, abuse of power.” The people of Egypt, Mohyeldin argues, could see that the situation was unsustainable. “But nobody in Egypt could have predicted what the triggering mechanism was going to be, or whether it was going to spill over from an individual to a group action.”

He gives no credit to the movements, national associations, labor unions or the Muslim Brotherhood – the most organized political group in Egypt – who have tried to mobilize people (“unsuccessfully”, he says) over the past couple of years.

“They achieve what they achieved. They tried over the years, and it is difficult to say why this particular time became this particular tipping point. We had the revolution in Tunisia, and that was so important because it was the first time that the fear factor had been broken in any Arab country. Once the fear factor was broken, once the people in Tunisia saw that they could overcome their fear and challenge their government, this spread to Egypt. Egyptians said, “If the Tunisians can do it, why can’t we?”. It was about self-confidence, and inspiration.”

“People are watching Al-Jazeera and they think, these are the people, they are just like me, they are just like you and they have the same problems and they overcame the government.”

Mohyeldin says that Al-Jazeera, Facebook, Twitter and other outlets successfully conveyed the fear factor -- an individual act of one man burning himself. It started spreading to villages, cities, the government, the capital and to the country. “And it spread to Egypt.”

“People are watching Al-Jazeera and they think, these are the people, they are just like me, they are just like you and they have the same problems and they overcame the government. The government is doing the same thing, they saw it fall in Tunisia and Egypt, and they realize: we can do it!” he argues.

During the early days of the Egyptian uprising, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan called on former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to heed the demands of the Egyptian people and to relinquish power to a transitional governing body.

“Erdoğan’s speech was incredibly welcome in Egypt,” Mohyeldin says, noting that if the Prime Minister of Turkey gives advice, he is not dismissed as someone trying to interfere in the domestic affairs of Egypt - unlike the U.S president, or EU leaders.

Mohyeldin says that the Egyptian Foreign Ministry issued statements to other countries when they asked Mubarak to step down or when they criticized Egypt, saying that no country should interfere in Egyptian domestic affairs and that “we reject any Western influence in our country.”

He reports that Turkey had a great deal of credibility and popularity at this point.

“That’s why Erdoğan’s speech resonated so much louder than it normally would have. Turkey is a country that has close historical and cultural ties with Egypt. Many people are hopeful

that Egypt will follow a very similar path to the one Turkey has taken, and see Turkey as a model for development for change.

“When we speak about a Turkish model, we don’t mean ‘copy-paste’. Every country is different. Egypt can never be like Turkey. Egypt won’t be like Turkey. What is relevant about the Turkish model is the dynamic between the state and the people. Turkey is unique. Right now look at the Arab world. Look at the country and look at their property. When we speak about the transformation of state, we are speaking about the relationship between people and the institution. Turkey is a model because the country is predominantly Muslim. It is a country that has to deal with minority issues. It is a country that has to deal with issues of conservatism, existing on the border of two cultures and two civilizations – Europe and the Middle East. When I say model I don’t say that whatever Turkey is doing Egypt will be doing. I mean there is a lot to learn. Turkey is a country that enjoys a great deal of respect, popularity and credibility in the Arab world.

Mohyeldin describes how Al-Jazeera functions when there are a growing number of conspiracy theories which claim that the pan-Arab network is serving a hidden agenda.

“The policy of Al-Jazeera is to report on events, and report on the struggle of individuals. If the people in Kuwait go out, demonstrate and have a

revolution, Al-Jazeera will do its job and report. If the people in the United Arab Emirates don't go out on the streets, and if they are happy, Al-Jazeera will not do anything there, because there is nothing to report on. Al-Jazeera is an event-driven news organization. We are committed to cover events as they are. We don't say 'let's go to Saudi Arabia because Saudi Arabia is a monarchy.' There are people in Saudi Arabia who reject what is happening in Saudi Arabia.

"[Any possible events in Qatar] will be covered to the same degree; it would be no different from any other country and Al-Jazeera has proven this consistent treatment in the past. It is ironic when people talk about Al-Jazeera doing a contradictory job. They always say Al-Jazeera ignores what is going on in Qatar.

"Qatar is a very small country. How can it hold a significant presence in the international media? I find it interesting, because if we did a lot of reporting on Qatar, people would say "Al-Jazeera is reporting about Qatar, because this is where the network is based".

"If you ignore Qatar, if you don't report on it properly, then they would say that you are ignoring Qatar, you are not reporting on Qatar. What I always tell people is this: find me a story that has appeared in any international media about Qatar that has not appeared on Al-Jazeera or that Al-Jazeera has ignored. That is the

"When we speak about a Turkish model, we don't mean 'copy-paste'. Every country is different. Egypt can never be like Turkey.

best way to gauge the balance of reporting about Qatar. We have done issues that were difficult and important in the region- labor issues, human rights abuses against Indians, Pakistanis and other workers coming into the country, their working conditions and economic reforms. We deal with these issues in Qatar. I want somebody to come to me with a story that we haven't covered.

"I don't understand how Qatar should benefit from Al-Jazeera's role in reporting on Tunisia. The Qatari government does not have any political will towards Tunisia, even though a Qatari-based television channel played a major reformist role before and during the revolution. Qatar has begun to style itself as the broadcast hub of the region. There are so many questions about that logic, because many people would say that all countries prefer stability, thus why would they want instability, and why would they want people questioning whether the country really wants democracy. As we have seen, democracy and freedom are contagious. We have seen it in Eastern Europe and we have seen it in America. Thus if it spread to Tunisia and if it has spread to Egypt and Bahrain, it is going to spread everywhere in the Arab world.

“When a country has a government that is very much pro-stability and anti-democratic, it is unclear why Saddam would want to promote an agenda of pro-democracy, and create instability in the region. The logic does not add up. The relationship between Qatar and Al-Jazeera does not require all these conspiracy theories.

“First of all, I will talk about my personal experience. I have worked for Al-Jazeera for five years and I have never been told to do a story for any reason other than for its own editorial merits. No one told me ‘listen, I want you to do this story.’ That has never happened to me nor to any of my colleagues. That is no different from the model that exists in other countries.

“Al-Jazeera is no different. The State of Qatar pays for Al-Jazeera. It does not own Al-Jazeera’s editorial vision, it does not own Al-Jazeera’s profit; it simply finances the operation. It is an independent organization.”

Mohyeldin is also famous for his courageous coverage of the Gaza war in 2008-2009. “The experience in Gaza was incredible and intense. I have never lived in a war for 22 days,” says Mohyeldin, adding that not only was that an intense war, but also 22 days of war after nearly two years of being under siege.

Mohyeldin explains his experience in Gaza: “Gaza was destroyed. It was depressed and destitute. The war has made it more difficult for the people there. It was very frightening and in

the midst of all that, we found people’s resilience and determination to survive, their steadfastness. What I take from that experience is that even in the direst of situations, human beings can still endure. As a human being, you grow from that, live that and realize sacrifice, struggle, and discipline,” he reflects.

Mohyeldin is critical about mainstream American media and claims that it has failed in covering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict “objectively and fairly.”

“They tend to look at the conflict from specific narrative, through a very specific prism. With that prism, they see all these other stories. It is not objective; it is not fair. That is the fundamental problem. I think there are other elements too, and there are occasionally very good reports that break this pattern.

Mohyeldin believes that any leadership or government that is not built on the foundations of justice, democracy, pluralism and tolerance is bound to fail, no matter how much backing it has from the West, no matter how much the state tries to appease European powers, and no matter how much economic importance the state holds for the world.

“If you don’t build your own system of government whereby you govern fairly, equally and justly, it is going to come back, fail and explode. I think that is what we are seeing in Libya,” he stresses.

Mohyeldin thinks that the US is now playing “catch-up.”

“I think the US never imagined that its foreign policy in this region would fail so tremendously. Right now, the US is now establishing its intelligence community and it will have to reinvent its policy from scratch.

It is going to have new players to deal with- ones who are no longer going to be subservient. The tools at

portant. We see other Arab countries applying the same type of vision as Turkey.”

Colloquy conducted by Mahir Zeynalov, Managing Editor of CI.

“Al-Jazeera is no different. The State of Qatar pays for Al-Jazeera. It does not own Al-Jazeera’s editorial vision, it does not own Al-Jazeera’s profit; it simply finances the operation. It is an independent organization.”

the disposal of these countries have changed. What you are going to see is that the US foreign policy will be more engaging, and not so dictatorial, in contrast to the past, when the U.S foreign policy toward the Middle East was very didactic.

The U.S dictated to the Arab leaders what it wanted from them, but now it is going to be different. Now there are governments that have established genuine democratic systems that can reflect the will of the people, and that can say to the U.S what is and what is not in their interests.

Turkey has exercised that sovereignty in one occasion and it is very im-

Colloquy

*Turkey's foreign policy:
a dramatic success*

**Anthony
Shadid**

** Anthony Shadid is a foreign correspondent for the New York Times based in Beirut, Lebanon. He won the Pulitzer Prize in 2004 and again in 2010 for his dispatches from Iraq.*

Many of Shadid's readers were worried when news broke of his detention in Libya earlier this year, during which, it later emerged, he was subjected to mock execution rituals and constant beatings.

Known for his articulate and compelling writing for The New York Times, Shadid is without doubt one of the best journalists of our time, and deserves much credit for his coverage of events from both the perspective of his office in the heart of the Middle East, and his travels around the area.

The Pulitzer Prize winning journalist was arrested by the Libyan army earlier this year, along with three of his colleagues. He and his colleagues were repeatedly beaten with fists and rifle butts, and forced to undergo mock executions. "One of the soldiers pointed a gun at my head. And another one ordered him to shoot," says Shadid, re-living his four-day captivity.

Shadid believes that Turkish foreign policy demonstrates the current unsettled nature of the Middle East – and that Turkey is the only state that is taking real steps in trying to make sense of it.

They were eventually freed, thanks to Turkey's efforts, and were deported from Libya to Tunisia following the release.

He is very fond of Turkey and its

foreign policy in the face of sweeping protests in the Middle East and North Africa that have overthrown three regimes so far and pose challenges to the rest. He acknowledges that like other Western nations, Turkey was caught off-guard by the Arab Spring; but, he argues, Turkey is the only country that has been thinking systematically about the region.

According to Shadid, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan takes personal relationships with leaders of other countries very seriously, and this "kind of colors policy."

Shadid says Turkish foreign policy is "amazing" and deems the state visits to Tunisia, Egypt and Libya "a dramatic success."

Erdoğan, along with nearly 200 businessmen and couple of his ministers, paid a historic visit to Egypt, Tunisia and Libya in September to re-set ties with the post-revolution Arab countries, which are currently negotiating a chaotic transition to democracy.

Turkey initially balked at the idea of intervening in Libya, where more than 30,000 Turkish nationals were working with a \$15 billion contract, but Erdoğan's government later shifted its position and demanded that Libya's former leader Muammar Gaddafi step down. Turkey has become a frontrunner in recognizing Libya's National Transitional Council, and has pledged \$300 million to Libya's governing body for infrastructure and humanitarian assistance.

“You can argue that in another way, that Turkey got it wrong in the beginning,” Shadid reflects, adding that Turkey turned that initial policy error into a success. “A 180 degree turn in six months... Remarkable.”

Shadid believes that Turkish foreign policy demonstrates the current unsettled nature of the Middle East – and that Turkey is the only state that is taking real steps in trying to make sense of it.

“Turkey is turning around what was a disaster at the beginning, I mean Libya, to the success right now. Images of Erdoğan in Green Square in Tripoli; it was remarkable. [British Prime Minister David] Cameron and [French President Nicolas] Sarkozy could never do that. Joining the prayers in the Green square- that’s a very vivid, very dramatic moment,” Shadid underlined.

When Erdoğan was in Tunisia, one day before his scheduled visit to Libya, Cameron and Sarkozy unveiled their plan to be the first heads of state to visit post-Gaddafi Libya. Only hours before Erdoğan’s visit, Sarkozy and Cameron visited Tripoli but received scant coverage in the Western media. Erdoğan, on the other hand, received a hero’s welcome in the three Arab nations and performed his Friday prayer with leaders of Libya’s provisional government and people in Green Square, or as rebels call it, Martyrs’ Square.

Despite Shadid’s praise for Turkish

foreign policy, there have been harsh criticisms levelled against Turkey’s response to the recent developments in areas with which it claims historical and cultural affinity. Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, Erdoğan’s foreign policy advisor for years, pursued a controversial foreign policy of zero problems and maximum cooperation with neighbors. Critics argue that Davutoğlu’s policy is falling apart, given that ties with neighbors have deteriorated since he became foreign minister.

Despite efforts to reconcile with neighbors, sometimes successfully, Turkey’s relations with Syria and Israel remain poor due to what Davutoğlu says their irresponsible actions.

“It is true that in some ways ‘zero problems’ is more an aesthetic than a concrete policy,” Shadid says. “Relations with Iran are troubled right now; there are no diplomatic relations with Israel; there is a potential crisis in Cyprus; Syria is incredibly dangerous.”

“When you look at Turkey’s foreign policy successes,” Shadid argues, “they are not many, but nonetheless we must face the fact that Turkey’s profile in the region is unprecedented.”

“In Cairo, Erdoğan was walking around like a hero, and that matters. That is almost a desire for Turkey to play a big role in the region, due to the power vacuum there. There is a

dynamic whereby Turkey can play a more assertive role, at a time when the region is so unstable. Clearly Turkey is the only country that is thinking systematically about the region. The Americans and Europeans are not. The Israelis are isolated, and the Iranians are defensive,” says Shadid.

Turkey’s foreign policy makers repeatedly claim that their policy is a principled one: moving away from those who abandon basic moral principles like respect for human rights and democracy.

Shadid says he disagrees with the notion that Turkish foreign policy was principled in the beginning.

Turkey’s foreign policy makers repeatedly claim that their policy is a principled one: moving away from those who abandon basic moral principles like respect for human rights and democracy.

“I am not saying whether this is good or bad, but the Turkish Prime Minister got it right early on, [Egypt’s former President Hosni] Mubarak has to go. There was a reluctance to give up on Gaddafi, deep reluctance to give up on [Syrian President] Bashar [al-Assad]. Egypt was easy. What is remarkable is that they despite that ambiguity, contradiction and even failure early on, they have managed to regain their footing and cast themselves as principled at this point.

According to Shadid, NATO’s missile defense shield was key in maintaining strong Turkish-American relations.

Erdoğan was very successful in that.”

Shadid also thinks that Turkish-American relations are in their best shape yet, and undamaged by Turkey’s poor relations with Israel. It is claimed by many observers that Israel is capable of cutting Ankara’s connection with Washington, but the growing Turkish-American partnership has proved otherwise.

Shadid quotes American officials, saying that one can hear their anxiety over Turkey’s relationship with Israel. “I don’t see that,” he says, adding that this is a strong moment in American-Turkish relations -- there is a personal warmth between Erdoğan and [U.S President Barack] Obama.

“I think they like each other.” Erdoğan is topping the list of foreign leaders with whom Obama has spoken on the phone since the start of this year: ten conversations. Cameron follows Erdoğan with nine phone conversations as of October.

According to Shadid, NATO’s missile defense shield was key in maintaining strong Turkish-American relations. He claims that Turkish and American strategic interests have lined up, and most notably over missile defense. “Without missile defense, there would be a problem,” he says.

Turkey agreed to host NATO's early warning radar system in southern Turkey, close to Iran, Iraq and Syria. NATO has said that the warning system will be operational by the end of 2011. Shadid believes that the missile shield was a key objective for American officials.

Syria: a difficult case for Turkey

For Turkey, Syria has been one of the most successful reconciliation stories of late, and an exemplary case of how two states, on the brink of war just ten years ago, have been able to bury hostilities. It was also a litmus test for Davutoğlu, who claimed that his zero problems foreign policy is working successfully in the case of Syria.

“Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu went to Syria 60 times and to his hometown Konya 20 times. It is remarkable. That discrepancy is amazing to me. That is a success story. That was the success of Turkish for-

According to Shadid, Syria is going to be incredibly difficult. He thinks Turkey is exercising a great deal of influence in Syria, everywhere from the business community in Aleppo, to trade and potential effective sanctions.

ign policy,” Shadid says. “But now that is falling apart.”

Both the foreign minister and prime minister of Turkey have become

Assad's harshest critics. Assad, according to UN estimates, has caused the death of at least 3,000 Syrians since the uprising started in March this year. But some also argue that Turkey changed its foreign policy regarding Syria not because the Syrian regime became more brutal, but because both Davutoğlu and Erdoğan felt personally betrayed and insulted. Both officials said repeatedly – and publicly - that Assad had lied to them by telling them he was determined to make sweeping reforms.

“I think both the foreign minister and prime minister took that relationship personally,” Shadid asserts, “I mean, there was a friendship between Bashar and Erdoğan. Neither Erdoğan nor Davutoğlu expected Bashar not lie to them and apparently he did. It was personal at some level. Turkey definitely has given up on him by this point.”

According to Shadid, Syria is going to be incredibly difficult. He thinks Turkey is exercising a great deal of influence in Syria, everywhere from the business community in Aleppo, to trade and potential effective sanctions.

He says that Turkey is going to play a very crucial role in where Syria goes from now, mainly because Syria is “so explosive.”

“If it comes to a civil war there, and you can see that playing out, you can see Turkish intervention, Iranian intervention, Iraqi, Lebanese, Saudi, I

mean everything. Very dangerous. Potentially a very dangerous conflict,” he stresses.

Turkish officials, including Turkish President Abdullah Gül, have warned against looming civil war in Syria. There are increasingly troublesome reports coming out of the country (which remains largely closed to international media) saying that thousands of soldiers have defected from the Syrian army and have launched an armed resistance against national security forces.

Shadid notes that Turkish officials are very frightened of the prospect of civil war in Syria, but he disagrees that defections in Syria pose a threat, adding that there is integrity among Syrians right now.

“What I mostly see now is that 10,000 soldiers defected from what it is a big army. I think that this is more of a morale issue than a threat to the regime. I think it was remarkable that the regime stayed cohesive as it has throughout the crisis. There haven’t been any defections within the leadership. Stalemates occur when protesters can’t overthrow the government, and the government can’t put down the uprising,” Shadid argues.

Syria accused foreign powers of instigating instability in the country, and the Syrian leadership primarily based its legitimacy on its resistance to Israel. Being anti-Israel granted a kind of legitimacy to Arab leaders who remained antagonistic to Israel.

Shadid claims that the idea that Syria is representing resistance against Israel, along with the whole notion of resistance, is changing with the Arab revolutions.

He said that for Turkey, Syria is clearly more important than the Syrian government. “I think they have started looking to the future,” Shadid says, referring to the post-Assad period, for which Turkish government has already begun to make prepara-

He said that for Turkey, Syria is clearly more important than the Syrian government.

tions. But there are concerns that the opposition in Syria is not up to the task and that is the real question: what happens to the Syrian opposition? Both the Americans and Turks are thinking about that.”

Shadid said that in terms of Iran and Lebanon’s Hezbollah, there are signs that Hezbollah is toning down its rhetoric regarding Syria because they know that it hurts them to be so pro-Bashar, pro-Syrian government, making them look very sectarian.

“What Turkish officials tell me,” Shadid says, “is that Iranians changed their stance toward Syria after talking to Iranian officials.”

In a surprising move, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad also condemned the violence in Syria in September, and called on Assad to make sweeping reforms.

Shadid says he is unsure whether the change in Iran's position on Syria is related to negotiations with Turkey. He emphasizes the alarming nature of the situation in Syria, to which even Iran could not remain indifferent.

“So you can see people looking tentatively to the day after the fall of the Syrian government. One Turkish official told me this could be anywhere from six months to two years – this is a long process, and I do believe that it is impossible for the Turkish government to go back to the status quo we had before, but how this government changes, falls, or shares powers is very unclear.”

“I have no idea,” concludes Shadid.

Colloquy conducted by Mahir Zeynalov, Managing Editor of CI.

Politics & Media | **Randall Baker**

Abstract

We rarely look at the process and pace of change itself, but more at its manifestations. The way in which the technical ability to convey information, since the invention of writing, has changed is a good example of a “geometrical or exponential curve” in which the accumulating body of ideas promotes ever more change at a faster and faster speeds. The major impact of most technological changes can be covered by the term “unintended consequences”. So it is with the way that different information media have changed the operation of the political process. This paper examines this relationship through several key epochs of information technology that have brought us to the Information Age.

** Dr. Randall Baker is a Professor and Dean of Academic Affairs at the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy, a Distinguished Professor at the New Bulgarian University, and an Emeritus Professor at Indiana University.*

“*The Medium is the Message.*”¹

“...the printing press, the computer, and television, are not simply machines which convey information. They are metaphors through which we conceptualize reality in one way or another. They will classify the world for us, sequence it, frame it, enlarge it, reduce it, argue a case for what it is like. Through these media metaphors, we do not see the world as it is. We see it as our coding systems are. Such is the power of information.”²

Politics is, on the one hand, about delivering a series of messages to those empowered to vote so that they may make informed choices at the time of election. On the other hand, it is about putting pressure on representatives to influence the policy process and induce desired change. Consequently the nature of the information received by the public, how it is delivered and how timely it is, all will change the perception held by the voter: Plato’s “informed citizen.” But changes in the nature of the information medium change the nature of the message and the nature of the political process.

Some years ago, in a book,³ I examined the nature and pace of the process of *change* itself, and how it builds on science and the application of science as technology. We have gone through several revolutionary changes that have enabled radical changes in social organization. At first these were rare and widely-spaced, such as the discovery of agriculture and the domestication of animals approximately 10,000 years ago, which enabled us to lead settled lives, form communities, and develop the instruments of civilization. With the rise of science and the machine between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, the foundations were laid for a rapidly accelerating pace of change, to which we have less and less time to adapt. The same story is revealed if we look at the collection and distribution of information, especially the way it is distributed, and how it has become a—perhaps the—commodity of our times. This innovation has changed the face of the political message and how the process works. In the following table, I have attempted to indicate the main transformative points by which information has been disseminated over time:

1 McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York. Mentor. 1964.

2 McLuhan, Marshall. *The Playboy Interview*. Playboy. pp. 26–27, New York. March 1969.

3 Baker, Randall. *The Future isn't what it used to be*. Sofia. Paradigma. 2007.

Changes in Information Technology

4 eras or waves: 1. Premechanical, 2. Mechanical, 3. Electromechanical, 4. Electronic.	The innovations described below can be organized into 4 main eras as shown to the left.
3000 BC evolution of writing	Now possible to make a permanent record of thoughts and utterances, replacing oral tradition.
2600 Pens and Papyrus	Increase the ease of recording the message.
1450 Gutenberg's movable type, newspapers begin to appear. Printing popularizes information. 1 st daily paper 1650	Enables the "mass production" of information to reach a wider audience, replacing manuscripts, shaping opinion.
1830/7 Development of the electric telegraph (Morse code)	First step in wide distribution of <i>instant</i> information.
1840s cheap public mail system & railway development.	Rapid, cheap delivery of printed and written word. Steamship had same effect globally.
1876 Alexander Graham Bell invents the telephone.	Instant delivery of the spoken word.
1880s Portable photography (Kodak film)	Instant record of the visual aspects of a message.
1894 Guglielmo Marconi invents radio ("wireless")	Instant communication independent of wires to and from fixed or moving locations (ships).
1910 talking moving pictures (Edison) the <i>Newsreel</i>	Mass rapid diffusion of image and word globally.
1925 John Baird invents television.	Instant diffusion of live-time images and words into the home.
1927 Radio networks begin to form in the USA	Networking opinion and feeding into homes, forming local and national opinion.
1944 First computers and age of information begins.	Mass analysis of information, policy analysis.
1948 Transistor invented that will shrink communications devices.	Radios become personal and portable—no longer any need to "gather around them." Information goes with you, in the car, office, outdoors.
1949 Network TV starts in the USA. The visual aspect becomes important. "Sound bite" follows.	Networks able to shape the information taken into homes by TV. Visual image now part of message—image consulting born.
1958 The integrated circuit makes miniaturization easier.	Beginning of digital and miniaturization revolution
1969 ARPANET is first internet	Computers linked: instant, free interpersonal global communication among people.
1970s Personal Computers	Access to global networking expands. Censorship compromised—control of news less possible.
1980s Mobile Phone. First laptops sold.	Person no longer tied to location of phone—truly "interpersonal messaging."
1980 CNN launched—first 24-hour news channel, then CNN International begins global news (whose news?) Seen in 210 countries and territories.	Instant global dissemination of news raises question of "whose news?" and is global news shaped by the influence of the "West."
1992 Beginnings of the World Wide Web, streamed broadcasts. Continuous flow of information—news becomes increasingly live and immediate.	Multi-media, the result of digitization reduces all information to a common medium. Bloggers. Instant, live, global messages.
1996 Al Jazeera founded—first non-western challenge to global news domination.	The beginnings of a global choice of information rather than CNN, BBC etc. RT follows etc.
1998 Google founded	Global information sources, death of print medium, libraries etc.
2000 Smart Phone	Many media melded into one portable form
2001 iPod launched	Take your information with you when you want it.
2007 iPhone launched, putting it all together.	Many separate media made redundant.

When science and technology combine to produce radically new opportunities and products, the potential social impact of these technologies is rarely foreseen. When the car appeared, for instance, in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, it was essentially a “rich man’s toy.” Once Henry Ford applied the principles of mass production, with the Model T, it became widely accessible, and truly took off in the prosperity of the post-World War II era. In the process, it totally changed the geography of how we lived, with the rise of suburbia and the death of neighborhoods, the growth of malls and the death of downtown and small retailing, the merging of regional economies into a national market, and so forth.

Similarly, the arrival of innovations such as the personal computer brought about changes we could never have envisaged, such as the rapid demise of newspapers, printed books and libraries, as well as instant (and largely free) global communication. We have seen, over the period since the rise of the World Wide Web (WWW) in 1992, a “democratization” of information in a way that would have been impossible to conceive of even twenty years ago, when it began. In effect, if you have (or think you have) a message that needs to be heard, then you have a medium that potentially allows you to reach millions—even billions—of people. This has *never been possible before*,

and the political process is awakening to the changes that this enables—either by mobilizing the opportunities, or preventing them. Every word a politician says is recorded, out there waiting to come back to haunt him or her. Every thought, move and gesture is discussed in thousands of blogs, and politicians have an entirely new way of interfacing with potential voters anywhere and at any time. At the

We have seen, over the period since the rise of the World Wide Web (WWW) in 1992, a “democratization” of information in a way that would have been impossible to conceive of even twenty years ago, when it began.

same time, people have a new way of organizing, mobilizing and telling the rest of the world what is going on. This is changing the face of politics, and raising some fundamental policy dilemmas.

The Political Message

The current article is concerned with the emergence of the wider voting public.⁴ Before that, the right to vote, usually tied to property, was the preserve of a limited number of people (all men) who had a certain common perspective shaped by class, property, and literacy. Many advances combine to create the contemporary information age, and they are neither independent, nor exclusively technical.

⁴ Probably the period from about 1840–1860.

Each reinforces or changes the other. The ability to distribute the printed word, for instance, is somewhat limited in its impact if the majority of the population is illiterate. With democracy comes the spread of education—an essential component—and the incorporation of broader elements of the social spectrum in the political system and philosophy. Education, the vote, and the political process go hand-in-hand. Similarly, anti-democratic systems have found it necessary from their beginnings to control, restrict, censor and deny information in order to prevent political opinions from forming around news, or new ideas, whether internal or external to the system. It could be argued that once fax, the phone, satellite TV, and the Internet opened windows to other societies, the USSR could not control how people thought. Today, in North Korea, Syria, and China, among others, attempts are made to restrict the global information revolution, seen as an instrument that can foment change and thus threatening to those maintaining the status quo.

If we go back to the age of the printed word, particularly books and newspapers, literacy was the principal barrier, and the lack of democracy the second. However, pamphlets existed in abundance, and were particularly influential in pre-Revolutionary France, in shaping opinion. Cheap and rapidly produced, they were read aloud at meetings of political groups. Initially, the state found it easy to

control the press, and it was no accident that freedom of press was a constitutional underpinning of the American Revolution as an element of “freedom of speech.” Indeed, if we complain about the “tabloid press” at the present time, it is mild compared with the scurrilous personal character assassinations that featured in eighteenth century political commentary. However, the press, and books even more, faced the challenge of getting news out while it was still fresh. The railways changed that, but still the newspapers carried a variety of items, stopped in time, and articles were shaped by the perceived necessity of a “beginning and end.” Opinion was shaped by the political complexion of the newspaper and its writers, and was usually “preaching to the choir” because people bought newspapers that reflected what they wanted to hear. Nevertheless, by the 1850s, it was quite possible to be well-informed and up-to-date on *yesterday’s* world. The telegraph and the railroad made it quite possible for political news to be “around the country” for digestion by breakfast.⁵ News agencies emerged, and gathered and distributed news to outlets such as regional papers, and from different parts of the country—or world—to the metropolitan headquarters of national papers. These agencies, as we would say now, “networked” the

⁵ In the 1820s it took 6 months for news to cross America by river and wagon; the stage coach reduced that to 6 weeks, the railroad to 6 days. The telegraph reduced the transmission time to almost nothing.

news for papers all over the nation, who subscribed to their service (*Reuters* is a good surviving example).

However, opinion, even in democracies, was shaped by the outlook of the newspaper, though there were different newspapers to fit most tastes—even anarchists had publications. Politicians still found it necessary, as a way of delivering their message personally, to address large public gatherings (hustings) which could then be reported in newspapers. Presidential campaigns during the height of the newspaper era inevitably featured the “whistle-stop” tour, during which the candidates would address large gatherings of people from the back of a train. Otherwise the candidate was destined to be someone “reported on” by someone else in the morning’s newspaper. The more limited the opportunity for face-to-face campaigning, the larger the campaign became (local, provincial or national).

Radio

Radio changed the political medium in several ways. It was now possible for a politician to speak personally to large numbers of constituents, either in campaign speeches or in the “fire-side chats” developed by Franklin Roosevelt in the 1930s. This immediately “personalized” the process, and the listener was able to form an opinion of the candidate’s “personality”; their honesty, integrity, sincerity, etc, as conveyed by their method of address (accent, affectations, use

of colloquialisms, etc). By this point, the huge “delivered-speech” was not necessarily the primary medium; more important was the need to sound as though you were addressing a family. These families were, after all, listening to you in their homes, sitting around their large radio, not in some railyard with thousands of

In many countries without democracy, it was relatively easy to control the dissemination of “subversive” information during this era of radio and the newspaper - by “owning” the news.

other people waiting for the presidential train. This *personal* appeal was reinforced by the photographic press which worked on “image”, making the candidate a visible, “real” person who could be seen in the press as well as heard on the radio. The posed campaign photograph began to be replaced by family images, “at-home” photos and the like. This required the candidate to “look right.” They had to “relate” to the public - and so image-consulting began. Roosevelt was one of the first presidents to understand this, making sure that no image displayed his paralysis (from polio). He is almost never seen standing up or in any position that suggests his disability. He always appears to speak *to* rather than *at* the people when employing the “personalized” media communication strategy.

The other significant feature of radio is that it can be *live*; in other words, the constituents can hear things as they are actually happening. Indeed, the first live broadcast in the U.S covered the results of the campaign between Woodrow Wilson and Charles Evans Hughes in 1916. There was now a sense of immediacy in politics. Politicians and candidates could be asked, in real time, for their reactions to and opinions on every current situation.⁶ This reduced preparation time, and the candidates had to be able to think on their feet. Previously this time of immediate reaction was required only in question and answer sessions during campaigns, etc. Speechwriters had traditionally played a much bigger role. They remained central to larger occasions, but the broadcast press conference required very different skills—at which Ronald Reagan, as a former actor, excelled. The first non-stop live broadcasting of a major political event was the Munich crisis of 1938, when the nation assessed the threat of war from Europe in real time.

In many countries without democracy, it was relatively easy to control the dissemination of “subversive” information during this era of radio and the newspaper - by “owning” the news, (like *Pravda* and all broadcast media). People didn’t necessarily have to believe what was written in such “news”papers, but they had

⁶ This was greatly enhanced by the invention of the portable tape recorder, particularly the cassette recorder that became the journalist’s tool in the 1960s, replacing the notebook.

nothing against which to measure this information. As long as these barriers against “counter-revolutionary” or “subversive” attacks could be maintained, truth could be massaged in many ways. “Radio Free Europe” was a late child of this era, as were the “jamming wars” in which Communist states tried to block “American propaganda”, perceived as a threat to the state information apparatus.

As with newspaper conglomerates, radio *networks* (providing national coverage) became opinion shapers with their own political agenda, or served as national institutions that were largely independent (BBC, PBS). Once more people tuned in to the station that reinforced their own political beliefs.

Today radio has been sidelined and localized in most Western countries. The younger age-group (17-28) has been shown to listen to radio almost exclusively in cars and for entertainment, and almost never as a source of news or public affairs discussion.⁷

Television

Technically, the television age began in the 1920s, but it did not become a real force for change for another couple of decades, when it became affordable and there were networks to carry signals across countries. After World War II, television displaced radio, which meant that news and po-

⁷ I have never rented a car in the UK in which the radio was preset to a news or “serious” station. It is always music or chat shows.

litical messages had to be visual as well as audible. This would dramatically change the nature and delivery of the political message. News was shaped around what had immediate visual “impact.”

Politically, in the U.S, we can say that the defining moment for the transition to TV was the election campaign between Nixon and Kennedy in 1960. Nixon had not taken the “image” issue seriously and looked dreadful, perspiring profusely and tensely gripping the podium, while Kennedy maintained a poised, comfortable image. Those who *heard* this interview were strongly of the opinion that Nixon had “won.” Those who *saw* it televised were equally convinced that Kennedy had won. The important factor is that Kennedy *did* win. From there on, the TV could not be ignored. As with newspapers and radio, television in the U.S (and increasingly in Europe) has been consolidated into giant corporations with their own political agendas. Two notable modern examples are the Fox Network in the U.S; at the state level this exists in the *de facto* monopolization of the medium in Russia.

The importance of personal *image* in the age of television has encouraged “negative” campaigning, which has come to dominate so much of “paid-time” campaigning through advertisements. It now seems more important to weaken or destroy the “image” of the opposition than it is to have a coherent agenda of your own,

or a reasoned critique of the opposition’s message. Coupled with this is the phenomenal cost of campaigning, since it requires candidates to *buy* time. Many argue that the cost of this medium is restricting the political process and driving potential candidates into a frenzied attempt to raise money. The message isn’t enough—the cost of the medium may well be the defining element. Until very recently, the political campaign had been overwhelmingly a television phenomenon with enormous exposure time, commentary and commercials. But this is set to change.

Social Networking and the Internet

Since the arrival of the WWW in 1992,⁸ and the emergence of social networking - *Facebook 2004, YouTube 2005, Twitter 2006* - the information/politics interface has been changing dramatically and impossibly fast. Essentially, the web is potentially *anarchic*, or totally democratic, if you wish to express it that way. Now everyone’s opinion can be posted for the world to see without an editor, agent or publisher to impose their views. It is global, immediate, visceral, and rapidly increasing in size. Now, with “smart-phones,” this interactive information and communication source goes with you wherever you are, so the flow of information is immediate and ubiquitous. Of course, it excludes those who do

⁸ The essential difference between the WWW and the Internet before its arrival, is that the former is multimedia, consolidating all forms of media. The internet carried the written word.

not have a computer or smart phone, such as the poor and, often, the older segment of society. But smart technology is much too big to ignore. It is, furthermore, a two-way street; you can *participate* in the political process full time. You can derive your information from literally thousands of sources, and from every type of political bias or leaning. With the disappearance of edited news and prepared speeches, there is potentially no way to evaluate the quality or veracity of the message you are accessing. Conspiracy theory, for instance,

The power of the Internet political campaign was truly seen in President Obama's winning campaign. Reaching out directly to the younger Internet savvy voters in 2008, Obama engaged potential voters, campaign funders, and campaign workers very personally through my.BarrackObama.com, and his campaign was accessible and incorporative.

can provide a substantial part of your online diet, if you so choose. How to know what to believe? There is no quality control unless you go back to, say, online newspapers, or broadcasting companies. The challenge for the young is how to evaluate the news and the political messages they encounter.

Everyone, after all, has the medium

and potential to become a political pundit, or “go viral”.

The online political process began with Jessie Ventura's 1998/9 gubernatorial campaign in Minnesota, unsurprising for someone launching a political career out of nothing (Ventura was a former professional wrestler). It worked. The next candidate to use the Internet, particularly for his direct fund-raising appeals, was Howard Dean in his 2003 presidential campaign. Interestingly, his phenomenal online success (adding 1.1 million Democrats to the registered electorate) was wiped out by his hysterical behavior on *television* and he disappeared instantly from the race.

The power of the Internet political campaign was truly seen in President Obama's winning campaign. Reaching out directly to the younger Internet savvy voters in 2008, Obama engaged potential voters, campaign funders, and campaign workers very personally through my.BarrackObama.com, and his campaign was accessible and incorporative. Previous campaigns used cold-calling—a strategy that is often perceived negatively, on the grounds that it can be intrusive. Online, you take the message at your own convenience, and you are more receptive—it never interrupts you. There is no doubt that Obama's was the first online campaign, and it worked.

So, now we have multi-media messages delivered to us personally any-

where, anytime. This will be the vehicle for future political campaigns as more and more computer-savvy people get older; older people will increasingly be incorporated in the online mode of campaigning. But this very freedom, this personalization and “anarchy”, are also threatening. This same medium (the *Blackberry*, with its coded signal) was the

The “Arab Spring” was mobilized by Facebook, Twitter, and the mobile phone. Recently, Syria has been shutting down mobile-phone servers to prevent protesters from organizing and gathering; the CSTO has announced that it will take control of social networking sites in CIS cyberspace to prevent “destabilization”.

instrument of choice for mobilizing and directing the looting and burning of British cities during the summer of 2011. Calls from the police for this service to stop were resisted by *Blackberry*. The “Arab Spring” was mobilized by *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and the mobile phone. Recently, Syria has been shutting down mobile-phone servers to prevent protesters from organizing and gathering; the CSTO has announced that it will take control of social networking sites in CIS cyberspace to prevent “destabilization”. This, of course, looks like good old-fashioned censorship to muzzle change. The battle is between

anarchy or democracy and the “privacy” issue on the one hand, and the perceived need to prevent dangerous or threatening misuse of the medium on the other. During the recent London riots, while the *Blackberry* coordination of crime continued, it was later possible to arrest 1,600 of the participants within a week because of the ubiquitous nature of the closed-circuit TV coverage in London. In London you are photographed over 300 times a day.⁹ So, the question arises, what is the role of the information medium, since it can serve many purposes: control or safety, order or chaos, monitoring or spying? Privacy and freedom of expression will be the central issues in shaping the Information Age. The stand-down by Google over the censorship of its site in China was a notable expression of this dilemma. Google argued that it was able to play a more useful role in promoting free speech by working with China’s information industry than by refusing, and being entirely excluded from China.

The real dilemma is: when are you protecting internet users from predatory organizations or individuals, and when are you intruding further and further into free expression and participation in the social and political processes? How universal are the Western values of democracy underpinning “free expression” in other cultures? The U.S has an historic

⁹ Norris, C and Armstrong, G. *The Maximum Surveillance Society: The Rise of CCTV*. Oxford U.P. 1999.

sense of “Exceptionalism” which has put it on a missionary track to bring democracy to all who suffer under tyrants, on the basis that democracy is a “one size fits all” philosophy. To some cultures, it might be that too much democracy further destabilizes dangerous situations—like bringing democracy to a country like Iraq, which is not a nation in the European sense,¹⁰ but elements of much broader religious and cultural and ethnic groupings through which history drew arbitrary lines. Is the basis for democracy there?

powering and free. It threatens some states because it can become a mobilizing instrument for radical ideas and change; it can promote pornography and scams as easily as it can bring knowledge and information. No government has ever been faced with the threat of total openness and potential lack of control over ideas and information before. It is, quite possibly, the biggest and fastest moving element of change since the Industrial Revolution and the Age of the Machine.

The real dilemma is: when are you protecting internet users from predatory organizations or individuals, and when are you intruding further and further into free expression and participation in the social and political processes?

Politics is now set to become much more global, continuous in real-time, personal, interactive and immediate as the online community continues to grow, and move from the computer to the smart phone and iPad. Image is now total, and the sound-bite and the photo-op have come to represent that. Campaigning has become personal and negative, focused on destroying image. The process of the Information Age is as dangerous and misleading as it is enlightening, em-

¹⁰ But, of course, neither is the U.S. However, the US is collected around an idea to which hundreds of years of immigrants have subscribed. Madison said that “America is an idea.”



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Colloquy

*Ambivalence: Georgian
perceptions of the
Arab Spring*

**Ghia
Nodia**

* Ghia Nodia is Professor of Politics at Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia.

CI: *My first question is about the impact of the five day August War in 2008, especially within the larger context of Georgia's independence. What has been the biggest problem for Georgia in the aftermath of the August War? Was the decision to invade the result of lengthy discussions and observation on the part of the Georgian government?*

Nodia:The main changes brought about by the August War relate to two areas: the status of the conflicts and actual control over territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

With regards to the status issue, the position of most of the international community did not change: before the war, it considered Abkhazia and South Ossetia to be parts of Georgia, even though they were de facto *not* under Georgian control, and this did not change.

But Russia's role in the conflict has changed dramatically. Before the August War, Russia was considered an impartial mediator. While Tbilisi did not genuinely believe that this was the case, formally the Georgian government did accord Russia this role. Russia previously recognized Georgia's territorial integrity, by recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia as part of Georgia. With Russia's unilateral recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states, that has changed. As a result, from Georgia's perspective, these

territories are now Russian-occupied, which makes this a conflict between Russia and Georgia, as opposed to issues of separatism. What this means, essentially, is that a dispute that had previously been perceived as the "Georgia-South Ossetia" conflict has become a conflict between Georgia and Russia over South Ossetia (the same applies to Abkhazia, obviously).

Secondly, before the war Georgia actually controlled parts of both Abkhazia and S.Ossetia: Kodori Valley in Abkhazia, and Akhalkgori district and several vallies in S.Ossetia. Now, territorial control of these areas is consolidated, in practice they are fully controlled by Russia, though formally they are being run by de facto governments in Sukhumi and Tsinkhvali.

There is also a third difference: the attitude of Georgian government, and the Georgian political elite towards the solution of this conflict. Before the August War, the Georgian government spoke of the potential for a relatively fast solution of the conflict. President Saakashvili in 2004 and then again in 2008 promised to resolve this conflict during his term of office, and he appeared to believe that was plausible. However, after the August War Georgian government recognized that this is a long-term problem that cannot be quickly or easily resolved. Now the problem is Russian occupation; and everybody understands that ending it, or even changing the occupation regime, is very difficult to achieve.

CI: *You have mentioned the attitudes of the Georgian political elite. Do you see any differences between the current government and the opposition parties in terms of their attitudes towards the solution of this conflict?*

Nodia: Generally speaking, opinions on these issues do not vary greatly, between government, the public, and of the majority of the political opposition. This is not to say that there are not some differences. For instance, some opposition parties accord a portion of the blame for the war to the Georgian government. Furthermore, others, such as Irakli Alasania, argue that we need to open a dialogue with the Sukhumi and Tshkinvali authorities right now. The Georgian government does not believe that there is any point in developing contacts with Sukhumi and Tshkinvali, on the grounds that at this stage the issue is Russian occupation, and for as long as that continues, there is nothing to be gained by engaging with the de facto authorities.

CI: *Last year, the Georgian government released a new strategy document that suggests they are ready to start negotiations with the occupied territories. In this regard, don't you think having a strategy paper containing a practical vision is enough, given the security concerns?*

Nodia: There are two pillars of the government's current policy: non-recognition [of independence] and

engagement. In practice, these two approaches do not necessarily sit easily together. "Non-recognition" means that the Georgian government does not recognize the de-facto authorities as legitimate representatives of the population, and urges international community to maintain the same position; but "engagement" implies Tbilisi's wish to maintain contact with the people who reside there because from Georgia's perspective, they are Georgian nationals and should be able to enjoy benefits of Georgian citizenship. This means human contacts, economic ties, cultural and scholarly cooperation, etc. But doing this without being in contact with the government that controls the situation there is, obviously, very difficult. The Georgian government recognizes that this is a problem, and it has accepted the possibility of establishing some level of contact with the Tskhinvali and Sukhumi authorities, in order to discuss issues relating to the everyday life of citizens. But there is no official political negotiation with the de facto authorities, even though this makes actual engagement with the people there very difficult.

CI: *The current focus of the international community is the Middle East and certain Arab states, often called the "social media revolutions". During this turmoil, the Georgian government said very little, and their silence invited criticism from some quarters. Do you think that the fact*

that the current Georgian government is itself the product of a revolution has something to do with this? When the revolutions started in the Middle East and Arab world, the policy of the Georgian government seemed to be “keep quiet and don’t react”, and so it was not clear whether or not they supported the uprisings. What is your opinion on the Arab Spring? Why was the Georgian government so ambivalent?

Nodia: I think there are two reasons behind this ambivalence. First of all, Tbilisi shared the ambivalence of the whole democratic world, including the Americans and Europeans, who were initially quite slow to define their position towards the uprisings in the Arab countries. On the one hand, they recognized that the incumbent regimes were autocratic, and it is against principles of western democracies to support autocrats against the people. But on the other hand, they thought that these regimes might constitute a lesser evil, for example, in comparison to fundamentalist Islamic regimes that might have come to power through popular uprisings. Eventually, of course, the position of Europeans and Americans became much clearer, and Georgia is also supportive of the Arab spring but not too active in expressing this support.

But in addition to this, the Georgian government has its own specific motive to be ambivalent: it was aware that the radical arm of the opposition

perceived the revolutions in Middle East as a kind of model that could be emulated in Georgia. They identified with the rebels, and projected the Georgian authorities in the role of the autocratic government. This also made the Georgian government less inclined to praise the revolutions, for fear they might indirectly encourage the radical opposition at home.

CI:*How can we compare the Rose Revolution and the revolutions in the Middle East and Arab world?*

Nodia: Seven years on from the Rose Revolution, we can more or less assess the results. I think it is still too early for any such assessment of the Middle East revolutions. In fact, the uprisings are still going on in some countries. We do know that people revolted against autocratic regimes, and we believe that the impulse and motivation to overthrow the autocratic government was democratic. But we do not know what the outcome will be. How will the power vacuum be filled, and where will the new governments take their respective countries? In the Middle East, the alternative to existing autocracies was not clear; in fact, it remains unclear.

In Georgia’s revolution, we had a much clearer picture: there was an incumbent regime, and there was an alternative. When people went to Rustaveli Avenue in November 2003, they knew not only whom they were protesting against, but also whom they were bringing to power. We

knew that if Shevardnadze went, Saakashvili would come. It is not clear in Tahrir, or in Tunisia, or Libya, or Syria etc. That, I think, is one obvious difference.

Another difference is that in the Rose Revolution, the main reason why the old regime was rejected was not it being autocratic. It was much less autocratic than the Middle Eastern regimes. It was corrupt; it was inefficient; it was sclerotic.

Seven years on from the Rose Revolution, we can more or less assess the results. I think it is still too early for any such assessment of the Middle East revolutions.

The revolution was not aimed against dictatorship, because Shevardnadze was not a proper dictator; the main slogan was ‘Georgia without corruption’. In that, the promise of the Georgian revolution was met: Georgia is now much less corrupt country, it has much more effective government that can and does produce public goods, although there is no comparable breakthrough in consolidating democracy.

In the Arab and Middle Eastern countries the regimes that people were fighting were clear-cut dictatorships, although arguably this was not the only reason for protesting against

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them: there was corruption, poor living conditions, what not.

However, one can also find something in common: in all cases old regimes had been led for decades by the same people, now quite old, and the regimes themselves became somewhat sclerotic. In that sense, Shevardnadze was like Mubarak or Ben Ali. People simply got tired to death of them.

CI:*People are unsure exactly what role social media played in the Middle East North Africa (MENA) revolutions. It seems too much to say that Facebook or Twitter started these revolutions; equally the line between a “demonstration” and a “revolution” is blurred. A change in government does not mean that a revolution has occurred. Looking at the Georgian and MENA revolutions in this context, what was the role of the Georgian media during the Rose revolution?*

Nodia:In the Rose Revolution, the media was extremely important. Non-print media, particularly the pro-opposition Rustavi 2 television channel, played a key role in sup-

porting the Georgian Revolution. Later on, when there were rumblings against Saakashvili, Imedi TV in 2007 and Maestro TV in 2009 tried to play the same role as Rustavi 2 did in 2003. But again, the key difference is that Georgia under Shevardnadze or Saakashvili is not and has never been as autocratic as the Middle Eastern countries in question. Georgia has pluralistic traditional media, which means both print and broadcasted media, and if there arises a revolutionary situation, traditional media can provide sufficient support. This was not the case in the Middle Eastern countries.

It is true that social media is becoming important in Georgian society, but as yet we have not seen these networks playing a decisive role in protests. There may be one example so far: a protest rally against alleged police brutality after the police dispersed a protest rally led by Nino Burjanadze on May 26 this year. That non-political protest was mainly organized through social media, such as Facebook.

CI:*The Rose Revolution brought the liberalization of media legislation, and from this perspective, it was a huge victory for the Georgian media. Back then, the media was the country's most trusted institution, according to 73% of the population. But what about now?*

Nodia:The Georgian media is a very controversial subject. I believe that it is free from censorship, which is crucial, and means that people who want to criticize the government can do so. Georgia also offers a much more liberal legal environment for journalists than most European countries. In European countries, you hear all the time that journalists are being persecuted with libel charges. In Georgia, libel has basically been decriminalized, which means that there is total freedom for journalists: They can write anything true or false about

In the Rose Revolution, the media was extremely important. Non-print media, particularly the pro-opposition Rustavi 2 television channel, played a key role in supporting the Georgian Revolution. Later on, when there were rumblings against Saakashvili, Imedi TV in 2007 and Maestro TV in 2009 tried to play the same role as Rustavi 2 did in 2003.

anybody: government, the opposition, public figures, whoever. From that perspective, the Georgian media is free.

But the problem is that it is politically polarized. I would say we have media freedoms, but the independent media is weak, in the sense that it is not independent from various political forces. The media is over-politi-

cized. Television is the most widely discussed problem, because it is the most influential. There are television companies that are essentially political tools of the government, namely Rustavi 2 and Imedi TV. This is obvious, and they do not attempt to conceal this. Public channel is more

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balanced, but still biased in favor of government. We also have Maestro and Kavkasia, which are the tools of the opposition. But there are barely any media organizations that follow standards of truly independent media and try to inform the public instead of mobilizing it one way or the other. That is the biggest problem, in my opinion.

But this is not the only one. Once we accept this political polarization between government and opposition media outlets, we can see that the impact of the government media is more powerful; because the two most popular television companies, Rustavi-2 and Imedi, both of which provide national coverage, are completely pro-government.

The opposition channels only broadcast in Tbilisi and in some other regions. This disbalance is also a very important problem.

CI:*The annual Freedom House reports have an assessment scale for media independence, and according this the best time for media independence was in 2002, under Shevardnadze's rule, before the Rose revolution. Since then, the general trend is a worsening of media independence.*

Nodia: In the past I also wrote reports for Freedom House, and I can say that it is very difficult to quantify these issues. Both in 2002, and in 2011 the Georgian media is uncensored, and there is real pluralism. The difference is in details. Right now, we have better media legislation, but on the other hand, the lack of political balance between pro-government and pro-opposition media has become more of a problem: relative strength of the pro-government media in comparison to the opposition media has increased. It is likely on these grounds that the Freedom House ratings have declined.

CI:*Let's continue to discuss domestic policy - I have two further questions. First of all, August War is very important not only for Georgia, but also for the region. What is your impression of the role of the media during the August War? We can see that there is a great deal of struggle between the Russian and Georgian media. What was the role of the Georgian media, in terms of its support for the government during the August War? The media's reaction is important in sensitive situations, wartime, for example, and during*

a war, the most important thing for the population and the government is mutual trust – which the media can either support or undermine.

Nodia: I think there are two aspects to this problem. The first is that today's wars are not just military events, but information wars as well. Moreover, for a small country like Georgia the information war can be even more important than the combat on the ground, because it is obvious that Georgia cannot defeat Russia in a conventional war. Of course Georgia was involved in such an information war. Initially, it was very difficult for Georgia to compete with Russia in this. I think there were moments when Georgia did not do too badly, but on balance I think Georgia lost the information war to Russia.

Moreover, for a small country like Georgia the information war can be even more important than the combat on the ground, because it is obvious that Georgia cannot defeat Russia in a conventional war.

It is another thing what the war does to the national media. It creates a natural tendency to self-censorship; in the name of patriotism, journalists are loathe to write anything that reflects well on the enemy. In the way, domestic pluralism recedes. This is especially so when the war is on your own territory rather than abroad

(like the U.S in Vietnam). During the August War, it was not clear whether Georgia would maintain its truly independent statehood at all. The stakes were very high. So, most journalists try to support national cause, and this does not necessarily require pressure and censorship.

Having said that, I do remember that even in the midst of the war, while the fighting was going on, many Georgian newspapers published critical articles or critical interviews about the behavior of the Georgian government, for example, blaming it for misguided policies that led to the war. Even in that period of deadly threat to the country the Georgian media was not uniform in its coverage of the war.

CI:Dr. Nodia, do you believe that the Information War between the Russian and Georgian media is continuing? The media will play an important role in resolving the Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflicts - if you say that the information war is ongoing, it seems unlikely that the media will contribute significantly to the resolution of the conflicts. How could media relations influence the resolution of this conflict, and what role is expected of the media?

Nodia: First of all, yes: the information war between Georgia and Russia is ongoing. It is of course very important for Georgia to project posi-

tive image in the international media. This is first of all a war in the inter-

One should note that the information conflicts are also going on inside Georgia and inside Russia. For instance, Ekho Moskvi, a Russian media company, has broadcast interviews with both Saakashvili and Medvedev; interestingly, its viewers and listeners tended to like Saakashvili better, and considered his version of events more convincing.

national media. This information warfare is not a way to resolve of the conflict; rather, it is a war tool. This may be a bad thing, but it is part of life, and we cannot change that.

Of course it is extremely important that there are independent media sources available, whether international or domestic. So that even if you have an international information war, both Georgia and Russia can present their side of the story, and the coverage is not fully dominated by either version.

If we speak about the role of the media in conflict resolution, one should first ask: What conflict are we talking about? At least from the Georgian perspective, at this point, the conflict is between Georgia and Russia. And the dispute between these two countries is not based on a misunderstanding; it stems from specific choices made by the political elites of both

countries. Unless these fundamental choices are modified, media cannot help much.

One should note that the information conflicts are also going on inside Georgia and inside Russia. For instance, *Ekho Moskvi*, a Russian media company, has broadcast interviews with both Saakashvili and Medvedev; interestingly, its viewers and listeners tended to like Saakashvili better, and considered his version of events more convincing. Many people in Georgia believe that Russia also tries to use Georgian media to project ideas that it considers beneficial.

Looking to relations between Georgians and Ossetians, or Georgians and Abkhazians, media may play a role as well. Unfortunately, these relations are not on the radar of the media; they are not deemed sufficiently interesting or sensational. There is no relationship between Tbilisi and Abkhazia or Ossetia, and if there are contacts, people tend to shy away from media coverage. For instance, if an Abkhazian comes to Tbilisi, he or she does not want to be quoted in the media for fear of reprisals at home. So, yes, potentially, the media can play a positive role in the reconciliation process. But at this point, I am skeptical about the media's possible impact, because there are few points of contact between the parties.

CI: Moving on from domestic policy, let's talk about one of the crucial

aspects of foreign policy: relations with neighboring countries and the international community. Historically, Georgia had economic and political relationships at a high level with both Turkey and Russia. However, a significant number of local analysts along with government officials with whom I have personal contact believe that Turkey can play a big role in the South Caucasus. So the Turkish government is improving both Georgian-Turkish relations and Russian-Turkish relations. What is your opinion on this Russian-Turkish relationship, versus the Turkish-Georgian relationship? How do they affect one another?

Nodia: First of all, I would say that over the past 20 years, after Georgia gained its independence, Turkey has been considered a strategic partner and ally of Georgia, both politically and economically. The economic aspect obviously includes the strategic pipelines and other communications. In addition, Turkish business is heavily involved in many different areas of Georgia – for example, in Batumi, Turkish investment is important and has always been very welcome. Politically, Turkey was important to Georgia because it balanced the Russian influence, and also acted as a kind of bridge to NATO, as Turkey is a NATO member and it is Georgia’s aspiration to join it. Turkey was active in numerous NATO programs in Georgia. In that sense Georgian-Turkish relations have been very im-

When Turkey launched the design of a regional policy via the Caucasus Cooperation and Stability Platform, I think Georgians felt ambivalent. There is no established Georgian opposition to that notion, but Georgians don’t really understand how exactly Turkey is going to play that role.

portant for Georgia, and that continues; nothing has changed there.

We know that there have been some changes to Turkish foreign policy. While Turkey continues to be a NATO ally and aspires to EU membership, it also wants to play a more independent role, acting as Turkey rather than just on behalf of NATO. It is not always clear to the Georgian political elite (as well as to international commentators) what this means in practice, but there seems to be consensus among this political elite that despite these changes, Turkey remains to be a very valuable strategic partner for Georgia.

When Turkey launched the design of a regional policy via the Caucasus Cooperation and Stability Platform, I think Georgians felt ambivalent. On one hand, why not? Turkey can be a key regional player. There is no established Georgian opposition to that notion, but Georgians don’t really understand how exactly Turkey is going to play that role.

I think the first project, in which Turkey attempted rapprochement with Armenia, was met with ambivalence in both Turkey and in Georgia. The Georgian government perceived potential benefits for the region if relations between Turkey and Armenia were improved; however, we also understood that this could destabilize the Turkish-Azerbaijani relationship, which is also important for us. In any case, it is not clear that the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement project has failed. However, one of its legacies is increased tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which Georgia considers a very serious threat.

CI: *You mention this stability pact, but no one has seen any documentation, only goodwill on the part of the Turkish Government. In this regard, Armenian-Turkish rapprochement has failed, and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict will paralyze the future of the region. We have on occasion heard that the Turkish government officials or political circles believe that only means of constructing an effective foreign policy strategy in the region is to achieve rapprochement with Armenia. But on other hand, Baku believes that without the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, there is no way to start this process. From that perspective, it does not seem as if the Georgian government will see any risk from Turkey before this of this conflict is resolved. What do you think?*

Nodia: It is generally agreed that the

Stability pact is more of a general idea than a specific strategy, and that was my initial impression. The three years following the August War have shown that it has not been developed beyond this general idea. It seems that the idea was not well thought through. I think it was somewhat naïve to think that Turkish-Armenian rapprochement would succeed without taking into account the problem of Nagorno-Karabakh, and the resulting complication of Armenian-Azerbaijani and Turkish-Azerbaijani relations. After this point, we did not see any important initiatives coming from Ankara on how to improve stability.

Currently, there are two big interstate conflicts in the Caucasus: Armenia-Azerbaijan and Georgia-Russia. In the Armenia-Azerbaijan dispute, unfortunately, the dynamic is more negative since the August War, which as I have said constitutes a serious practical concern for us. So, the Turkish initiative has so far failed there. With regard to Georgian-Russian relations, supposedly Turkey may have ambitions to improve the situation, because it wants to have good relations with both countries, and is successful in having them. But we do not see how Turkey can contribute to the improvement of Georgian-Russian relations. If we do not have progress in at least one of those two conflicts, however, there will be no progress in the regional security.

CI: *Ok, if we start to talk about se-*

curity in the region, one of the important international players is the U.S, not only for Georgia but also for Azerbaijan and Armenia. The U.S played an important role in the region during the 1990s. But right now, we are seeing a “reset” of U.S-Russian relations, which concerns not Georgia but other countries that are anxious about Russia, such as Poland. After the August War, former U.S President George W. Bush was a big supporter of the Georgian government. At this point, how do you perceive the relationship between Georgia and US? Is it the same as it was four years ago?

Nodia: Generally, it is understandable that Obama wanted to differentiate himself from Bush, and I think it was this desire that lies at the heart of this “reset” policy. In isolation, there is nothing bad about the improvement of relations between the US and Russia. But I think that the current administration did not think through the dynamics of the American role in the region, beyond the relationship with Russia. The U.S has hardly any policy regarding this region, so the problem is not the improved relationship with Russia, but the lack of a strategy to deal with larger regions nearby. The American role in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus has declined, and there are some concerns about that in Georgia.

But this decline is relative to the previous administration or even to the Clinton administration. In general,

American support continues to be very important for Georgia and the financial support we receive remains rather high; it is just that the political attention is somewhat lower than Georgia would like. It is true, though, that the August War was a topic for debate during the pre-election period in the U.S, when it was debated by Obama and McCain. Georgia is a talking point for the Democratic and Republican parties, in discussions between liberals and conservatives, and it remains on the table. Georgia has many friends on the Hill who criticize Obama’s passive role in the Caucasus. This means that the U.S continues to play an important role for Georgia specifically as well as for the region as a whole.

CI:*It has been said many times that Euro-integration, or even EU membership is an important component of Georgia’s foreign policy. Do you think that there is still hope for EU or NATO membership?*

Nodia: I do not think that we have lost anything in terms of the prospect of EU membership, because there had been no real prospects anyway, at least in the foreseeable future. There is a change with regards to prospects of NATO membership. The change occurred in 2008; I do not think that it was necessarily the result of the war, the decisions of the Bucharest summit were more important for that, but certainly the hope of NATO membership has been postponed.

I think that these two factors: the loss of momentum in the movement towards NATO membership and the reduced role of US have been partly compensated for by the increased role of the EU. Georgia-EU relations have significantly developed and intensified over the past couple of years. Now we have the Eastern Partnership as a new instrument of EU, which was an indirect result of the August War. Georgia has seen some progress with visa requirements, there are negotiations on the Association agreement, and we expect that there will be a start date for negotiations on a more in-depth, comprehensive free trade agreement. There has been a steady trend in terms of the increasing role of the EU. When we judge all this we should remember that the EU never does anything quickly. They always progress slowly. But in general I would say that this slow increase of the EU's role is a positive development for Georgia.

CI: *On August 5th, the Russian President in an interview with “Ekho Moskvi” said that the August War was a serious lesson for Armenia and Azerbaijan. But Azerbaijan is operating within the bounds of international law by improving its military capacity and continuing negotiations under the umbrella of Minsk Group, with the intention to liberate the occupied territories if the negotiations fail. Do you see any developments that could suggest war might be on the horizon?*

Nodia: A new war would be a disaster – certainly people in Georgia think it will be a disaster for both Armenia and Azerbaijan (as well as for Georgia). In Georgia nobody doubts that. But the fact is that at least the possibility of war has risen in the wake of the August War, and so in that sense I do not know what Mr. Medvedev means when he says that other countries have learned their lesson. What is the lesson they have learned? I assume that the “lesson” implied by Medvedev is that Russia must be respected. There is nothing new about the fact that Russia demands special kind of respect, but I do not think that the August War brought anything positive to other countries in the region.

CI: *Let's talk about Georgia-Azerbaijan relations. When foreigners visit Tbilisi, they can see SOCAR petrol stations, and evidence of Azerbaijani investments. In 1990s, Georgia and Azerbaijan became involved in a number of joint projects, such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, and now there is the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway. After the August War, some said that Azerbaijan had stayed neutral, but in reality Azerbaijan gave support to Tbilisi in its time of trouble. What do you see as objectives in improving bilateral Georgia-Azerbaijan relations?*

Nodia: Firstly, I agree that Georgia-Azerbaijan relations are very stable and positive. And I think both countries recognize that they need to

maintain a friendly and cooperative relationship. I do not think that Georgia is unhappy about Azerbaijan's behavior during the war. Theoretically, Azerbaijan was neutral but in reality, Georgia felt the support of Azerbaijan, especially through economic cooperation during the war, the related energy supplies and so on. This support was very important for Georgia in maintaining its internal functionality. So I think the war did not weaken Georgian-Azerbaijani relations. It was difficult to strengthen the relationship, because it was already strong; I could say that it reconfirmed that Georgian-Azerbaijani relations should continue. With regard to possibilities for improvement, I think there is a lot of potential in the human sphere. It is clear that we have well-developed economic relations, and lots of political goodwill, but we

First of all, with regard to relations with Armenia, I think that there is ground for some uneasiness, due to Armenia's reliance on its strategic partnership with Russia. This creates mistrust in Georgia.

need to enhance interpersonal relations, through more cultural and academic exchanges, for instance. I think that beyond relations at political and economic levels, we need more human relations.

CI: *The last question is about Armenian-Georgian relations. The Georgian war had a negative impact on the Armenian economy. Russian-Georgian borders remain closed, but Armenia has opened up a passage allowing travel to Russia via Georgia. So how would you describe current Georgian-Armenian relations? And what about the foreign policies of the countries in the region? Azerbaijan is always described as having a balanced foreign policy and Armenia as having a "complementary" foreign policy, but what about Georgia?*

Nodia: First of all, with regard to relations with Armenia, I think that there is ground for some uneasiness, due to Armenia's reliance on its strategic partnership with Russia. This creates mistrust in Georgia. For instance, Georgia was unhappy that in the UN, Armenia voted against Georgia's resolutions on IDPs and refugees in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. But on the other hand, I think both countries and both governments are very pragmatic about these strategic differences, and know how to maintain very good relations in practical terms.

I would say that one of the consequences of the war for Georgia's foreign policy is that it has become more pragmatic. Earlier, it was more ideologically driven, for instance, in terms of supporting color revolutions in Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, or a failed revolution in Belarus, and so

on. Now Georgian foreign policy is more about “Realpolitik”. It has too many problems with Russia, and so it strives to eliminate problems with anybody else in the neighborhood. But at the same time, the government wants to combine this pragmatic sense of balance with a clear sense of general direction, and that is European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

Colloquy conducted by Zaur Shiryev, 16 August 2011, Tbilisi, Georgia

Armenia Online: *Activism or slacktivism?*

**Onnik
Krikorian**

Abstract

The development of the internet in Armenia has been frustrated by the problematic privatization of the ArmenTel monopoly in the late 1990s. Closed borders with Azerbaijan and Turkey have exacerbated the problem, making connection speeds the slowest and most expensive in the region, though how this has actually affected internet penetration remains unclear. Despite these problems, usage is increasing, notably since the mid-late 2000s, when three cellular phone companies entered the domestic market.

Given constraints on media freedoms and freedom of expression, many independent and pro-opposition news outlets are reliant on the internet as the only means to disseminate alternative information to the population. For example, blogs also moved in to fill the information gap when a 20-day state of emergency imposed restrictions on mass media activity following post-presidential election clashes in 2008 which left 10 people dead. As a result, international donors are increasingly interested in funding online media projects in Armenia.

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Armenia was once known as the “Silicon Valley of the Soviet Union”. Nowadays, however, internet development there is problematic, even in comparison to its immediate neighbors. Although the government has prioritized the IT sector as an area of economic and development importance, internet penetration was reported to be the lowest in the region until recently. According to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), it stood at just 6.4 percent in September 2009¹, compared to 18 percent in Azerbaijan² and 22.2 percent in Georgia³ the same year.

Unexpectedly, however, the following year the Armenian government submitted its own statistics to the ITU which put internet penetration at 47.1 percent, compared to 44.4 percent in Azerbaijan and 28.3 percent in Georgia. The argument that the huge increase was due to an increase in the use of mobile internet by cell phone subscribers was deemed unconvincing, with many people remaining skeptical, based on the relatively low number of users on the popular social networking site, Facebook. Although it is one of the most frequently accessed sites in the country, there are just 208,800 users in Armenia co-

pared with 655,700 in Georgia at the time of writing.

A recent household survey⁴ by the Caucasus Resource Research Center (CRRC) put internet penetration at just under 20 percent, though it did confirm significant growth in the activation of online services via mobile phone. Reports that high-speed, low-cost internet from Turkey would be available in the event of Ankara and Yerevan normalizing relations came to nothing after attempts to establish diplomatic relations in 2010 stalled, and so the majority of Armenia’s internet service continues to come from the Trans-Asia-Europe fiber-optic cable system via Georgia⁵, with the rest mainly from Iran.

The situation is not ideal, given that fiber optic cables are vulnerable to damage, and disruptions on the Georgian side involving outages of a few days are known to occur.

In March 2011, for example, a 75 year old ethnic Armenian woman in Georgia accidentally cut off the internet for 90 percent of Armenia⁷, as well as parts of Georgia and Azerbaijan, reportedly while digging for copper

1 *Internet World Stats, Armenia*
<http://www.internetworldstats.com/asia/am.htm>

2 *Internet World Stats, Azerbaijan*
<http://www.internetworldstats.com/asia/az.htm>

3 *Internet World Stats, Georgia*
<http://www.internetworldstats.com/asia/ge.htm>

4 *Facebakers, Facebook Statistics by Country*
<http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/>

5 *Epress, Internet Penetration in Armenia Tripled in Past 2 Years: Caucasus Barometer*
<http://www.epress.am/en/2011/04/12/internet-penetration-in-armenia-tripled-in-past-2-years-caucasus-barometer.html>

6 *Telecommunications in Armenia*
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telecommunications_in_Armenia#International_System

7 *Georgian woman cuts off web access to whole of Armenia*
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/06/georgian-woman-cuts-web-access>

wire. The situation stems from the lack of diplomatic relations with Azerbaijan and Turkey, its neighbors to the east and west respectively. Locked in a stalemate with Baku over Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, a major obstacle to the country's economic development in general, the two borders remain closed, making Armenia extremely reliant on Georgia.

The situation took a turn for the worse with the indifference of Armenian businessmen to the 2009 auction of Georgian Railway Telecom (GRT),⁸ the company responsible for much of the internet traffic coming into Armenia. Critics argue that buying shares in GRT would have increased bandwidth and reduced tariffs. ArmenTel, the country's main provider of telecommunication services, uses most of the bandwidth from the six other lines through which internet is brought into Armenia for its own national interest purposes. This Soviet-era company- controversially privatized in 1998- has shown itself to be one of the biggest obstacles to internet development in Armenia.⁹

Granted a 15 year monopoly on tele-

⁸ *Internet Cable Servicing Armenia was Sold, No Armenian Bidders Participated in Auction*
<http://www.armeniadiaspora.com/news/881-internet-cable-servicing-armenia-was-sold-no-armenian-bidders-participated-in-auction.html>

⁹ *Armenia's Greek-owned telecommunications operator put up for sale*
http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=31856

ArmenTel, the country's main provider of telecommunication services, uses most of the bandwidth from the six other lines through which internet is brought into Armenia for its own national interest purposes. This Soviet-era company- controversially privatized in 1998- has shown itself to be one of the biggest obstacles to internet development in Armenia.

phone and Internet services in the country by the government, ArmenTel has failed to invest significantly in the country's Soviet-era communications system, causing major setbacks to the development of the sector, which lags years behind its neighbors. Thus ArmenTel maintained its monopoly on internet service providers, setting prices too high for re-sellers to offer lower cost Internet services to the population. It was not until 2004 that the monopoly was partially lifted, opening up the market to other cell phone companies. In particular, the appearance of VivaCell, which offers mobile internet in addition to standard cell phone services, has dramatically changed the situation.

ArmenTel's monopoly collapsed almost entirely in 2007, with the exception of domestic landlines. The arrival of mobile internet was a significant development, given the constraints on the the local economy and

the relatively poor access to computers. In line with the international trend, the number of mobile internet subscribers rose significantly, with official statistics putting the number of internet-capable phones at 1.5 million¹⁰, although it is uncertain how many are actually used for going online. These figures should also be treated with some caution, given how cheap and readily available SIM cards are for tourists.

In addition, many Armenians use multiple providers, which further complicates the picture.

Even so, the market is sure to gain more attention, especially with the arrival of the French Orange company in Armenia, increasing the number of cellular phone companies to three, the other being the Russian Beeline alongside VivaCell. Indeed, many analysts believe that it is mobile internet that is more likely to empower citizens, rather than traditional domestic broadband services. Nonetheless, 13,500 domains were registered in the .AM zone last year¹¹ and internet services are available in most major urban centers in Armenia, with around 100 ISPs believed to be offering connections.

Wimax is also available in Yerevan and 18 other cities, and it is intending to introduce country-wide coverage

¹⁰ Over 1.5 million internet users listed in Armenia
<http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/details/56422/>

¹¹ News.am, Armenian domain market needs development
<http://www.armeniadiaspora.com/news/1822-armenian-domain-market-needs-development.html>

in the near future. Additionally, free wifi is available in many locations in the center of the Yerevan, though its quality varies widely. 3G connectivity is offered by all of the cellular phone companies, but, as mentioned above, the number of enabled handsets in circulation remains uncertain.

Engaging the Masses?

Despite serious problems with bandwidth and connection speeds, the Armenian government does at least appear to be prioritizing the development of the internet. The Broadband Armenia project is seeking to install the necessary infrastructure for higher speeds and more reliable internet connectivity throughout the country, in partnership with the private sector. The initiative is seen as particularly important for the development of the country's IT sector, as well as laying the foundations for e-society and e-commerce. The government has also stated its aim to link all primary and secondary schools through an online education network by the end of 2011.

As of last year, 624 schools were connected to the internet as part of the World Bank funded project, but 750 remain offline.¹² Although attempts to introduce internet and computer technologies as a means of advancing education and democratization are progressing, there are still some areas of concern. Internet security,

¹² PanArmenian, Government plans to further expand IT in the education system
<http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/details/44727/>

for example, is particularly important in light of the unresolved conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh. A tit-for-tat hacking war of attrition¹³ has become as much a part of the continuing hostilities as regular skirmishes on the frontline.

As a result, the National Security Council in Armenia considers internet security as one of its areas of concern.¹⁴ Plans to install equipment to monitor and protect against potential online attacks have proven particularly controversial; some civil society activists fear that such equipment could also be used to monitor political opponents or critics. Given the use of new media during Armenia's last presidential election as well as the use of social media during uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa earlier this year, such concerns are probably valid.

The 2008 presidential elections, which led to ten days of street protests against the official victory of President Serge Sargsyan, are seen by some to have encouraged greater use of the internet in Armenia. The protests, led by Armenia's first president Levon Ter-Petrossian (now leader of the extra-parliamentary opposition) resulted in violent clashes with po-

lice and security forces on March 1st 2008. Ten people were killed and a 20-day state of emergency was declared.¹⁵ During that time, all media was censored and publication was restricted to official government press releases and news. Sites such as Radio Free Europe and even YouTube¹⁶ were also temporarily blocked.

Yet despite the government's attempt to control news and information, blogs were left untouched, with many activists and media outlets using them to circumvent the restrictions. In fact, some observers likened their role in the post-election environment to that of samizdat during the Soviet era.¹⁷ In much the same way, while some blogs generated and published their own pro-opposition information, others instead used their own resources and information to increase their reach. The heavily polarized environment on the ground was also replicated in cyberspace with pro-government bloggers spreading information against the opposition or posting updates in support of the newly elected president.

In fact, during the state of emergency, the president-elect launched his own blog on the LiveJournal platform (a network popular among bloggers

13 Nagorno-Karabakh Dispute Takes to Cyber Space
<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav020807a.shtml>

14 The Armenian Observer, Armenia plans measures to beef up cyber security
<http://ditord.com/2009/05/05/armenia-plans-measures-to-beef-up-cyber-security/>

15 Armenia Liberty, At Least Eight Killed In Armenian Post-Election Unrest
<http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/1593576.html>

16 YouTube Blocked in Armenia?
<http://blogoscoped.com/archive/2008-03-10-n27.html>

17 Global Voices, Armenia: Samizdat & the Internet
<http://globalvoicesonline.org/2008/03/05/armenia-samizdat-the-internet/>

writing in the Armenian and Russian languages) where the public could ask him questions.¹⁸ The questions were not answered live, but on March 13th, a two-hour tape was aired in its entirety on Armenian Public TV. A prominent pro-government blogger was among a handful of loyal journalists invited to read out the questions to Sargsyan.

Naturally, international organizations and donors noticed the use of blogs during the state of emergency and started to promote and support their use in existing media development programs. The U.S. Embassy in Armenia is currently funding a four year \$4 million program to be implemented by Internews, Yerevan Press Club and the Eurasia Partnership Foundation to develop alternative media resources online.¹⁹ The project aims to strengthen the regional media, particularly through individuals who serve as content producers using high and low technology solutions including mobile phones and pocket video cameras.

Nevertheless, the success of new media development is contingent on the internet as a delivery system, notably its speed and cost to end-users. More significantly, however, is that interest in blogs from online users has

18 *Ahousekeeper, Serge Sargsyan Q&A*
<http://ahousekeeper.livejournal.com/189078.html>

19 USAID, *Alternative Resources in the Media*
<http://armenia.usaid.gov/en/node/269>

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decreased significantly in the aftermath of the emergency rule period in 2008. Reflecting an already polarized media environment divided between pro-government and pro-opposition voices, most blogs were duplicating news already available in the mainstream media. Even though Freedom House rates the media situation in Armenia as ‘Not Free,’²⁰ there is in fact a plurality of pro-government and opposition views represented online. From this perspective, the problem is not so much the volume of alternative information in Armenia, but rather the constricted access to it on the part of citizens.

Social media sites such as Facebook have also changed the dynamic of online media, rapidly taking over from blogs as the primary medium for sharing news, opinion and information online. Even so, there are concerns that that the phenomena of *slacktivism*²¹, i.e. demonstrating sup-

20 *Freedom House Calls on Armenia to Liberalize Its Broadcast Media*
<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=70&release=1293>

21 *NetEffect, The brave new world of slacktivism*
http://neteffect.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/05/19/the_brave_new_world_of_slacktivism

port for a cause simply by clicking a button does not necessarily translate into real world action; thus social media may have limited impact in organizing and coordinating pro-democracy actions on the ground. Attempts by the opposition in Armenia to stage post-MENA protests calling for fresh parliamentary and presidential elections illustrated this phenomenon all too clearly. Encouraged by protests in Tunisia and Egypt, the opposition also declared that it would stage a 'Facebook Revolution' in Armenia, but in the end, few signed up to the various Facebook pages set up to attract support.²²

Even so, the numbers taking to the streets were significantly higher than in Azerbaijan, where the use of Facebook by activists is arguably more evolved, reaching as many as 15,000 at times, demonstrating that traditional activism in Armenia remains the best way to engage the population, especially given that only 7.04 percent of its population are Facebook users. That figure is even smaller for micro-blogging sites such as Twitter, which is scarcely used at all.

Having said that, the Armenian Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community offers a compelling example of how community empowerment that can be achieved through new media tools.²³ A similar

²² *Global Voices, Armenia: Social Networks for Social Revolution?* <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2011/02/26/armenia-social-networks-for-revolution/>

²³ *Armenian Bloggers aim to diversify media, bolster civil society* <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2009/11/09YEREVAN790.html>

point was made in a U.S. Embassy cable recently released by Wikileaks, which noted the potential for national minorities and environmental activists to also use online tools for empowerment, particularly in terms of raising awareness of their causes.

LGBT bloggers, alongside gender activists working to combat the problem of domestic violence, are using these new tools to cover issues that are ignored, or inadequately or inaccurately portrayed by the traditional media.²⁴ This is perhaps the one area where blogs continue to play an important role, with social media and micro-blogging sites like Twitter serving as the primary channel for sharing this information with the greatest number of people. In a deeply patriarchal and homophobic society, it can be argued that online tools are the *main* medium for disseminating and discussing such issues, though this is not to say that the audience in question is particularly large.

The difficulty of audience size is true even for bigger media outlets now publishing online in an attempt to dissolve the near total monopoly of the broadcast media by the government or businessmen close to the regime. Few of these sites attract more than 10,000 visits per day, according to the Circle.am ranking site, and alternative views on matters of significant importance are still for the most part absent from their pages.

²⁴ *Global Voices, Armenia: LGBT Blogs* <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2008/07/08/armenia-lgbt-blogs/>

The difficulty of audience size is true even for bigger media outlets now publishing online in an attempt to dissolve the near total monopoly of the broadcast media by the government or businessmen close to the regime.

The absence of alternative coverage is particularly true in relation to the ongoing conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. Because the internet is used to spread partisan and sometimes nationalist propaganda, there is also a tendency to view the internet as an important tool in the information war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which shows no sign of abating.

Armenia-Turkey relations also tend to attract the attention of bloggers, as opposed to domestic or other international political events. Indeed, bloggers and hackers from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey regularly engage in a mutual denial-of-service attacks (DDoS) and the issue has become even more important given Georgia's experience during the 2008 August war with Russia, when internet and mobile services were deliberately overloaded to bring them down.²⁵ The Armenian government and pro-regime or nationalist bloggers, now often found holding press

conferences as 'information security analysts', are even more aware of the danger of an escalation in the Armenian-Azerbaijani cyber warfare.

That is not to say that new media has no role to play in the internal processes of Armenia, however. Indeed, as the events of March 2008

showed, there is significant potential. Facebook continues to be an invaluable platform for news and information sharing between users and for organizing albeit small grassroots protests, petitions and flashmobs, and if some Azerbaijani youth are using social networking sites to voice their discontent with their government, the same is true to a lesser extent in Armenia.

Of arguably greater importance, however, is the way in which Facebook has empowered the people in between the government and opposition camps. The most successful use of social media to date has been in non-politicized, non-opposition campaigns.

For example, mobile phone videos posted on YouTube depicting the bullying of pupils by teachers in State-run schools²⁶ resulted in changes in the education system, and throughout 2010, in highly publicized incidents, hazing in the Armenian military caused outrage among many citi-

²⁵ Wired, Estonia, Google Help 'Cyberlocked' Georgia (Updated)
<http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2008/08/civilge-the-geo/>

²⁶ Global Voices, Armenia: Abuse in Yerevan School
<http://globalvoicesonline.org/2010/10/11/armenia-abuse-in-yerevan-school/>

zens²⁷, with Facebook users being particularly vocal. An online campaign against the demolition of a Soviet-era open-air cinema to make room for the construction of a church²⁸, another to protest the introduction of foreign language schools²⁹ in Armenia, both attracted cross-party support to a much greater degree than any action staged by the parliamentary or extra-parliamentary opposition.

The new Mayor of Yerevan has also taken to Facebook, with serious discussions appearing on numerous aspects of municipal policy, such as the shooting of stray dogs on the streets of the Armenian capital.³⁰ It is this sphere that international consultants working on donor-funded projects appear now to be focusing on, with a number of projects underway, such as one based on the popular UK-based 'Fix My Street' launched to allow citizens to report problems of potholes and garbage directly to the local authorities. A website which aims to facilitate better communication and cooperation between citizens and local officials will be piloted in

27 *Global Voices, Armenia: Army forced to act after hazing video circulates online*
<http://globalvoicesonline.org/2010/09/24/armenia-army-forced-to-act-after-hazing-video-circulates-online/>

28 *Global Voices, Armenia: SOS Save Cinema Moscow's Open Hall*
<http://globalvoicesonline.org/2010/03/08/armenia-s-o-s-save-cinema-moscows-open-hall/>

29 *Ararat, The Debate Over Foreign-Language Schools in Armenia* <http://araratmagazine.org/2011/03/debate-over-foreign-language-schools-armenia/>

30 *Global Voices, Armenia: Animal Activists Demand End to Stray Dog Killings*
<http://globalvoicesonline.org/2011/06/28/armenia-animal-activists-demand-end-to-stray-dog-killings/>

three regional cities of Armenia, with GPS positioning from mobiles used to map the towns themselves.

The Yerevan office of the Open Society Institute (OSI) is already technically supporting NGOs in adopting online technologies and developing custom-designed sites to use in their advocacy and activism work. Transparency International, for example, is reportedly working on incorporating new and social media to draw attention to environmental problems in the country and to monitor and combat corruption. Even so, with new election cycles almost upon Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in 2012 and 2013, there is no doubt that social media is set to play a very important role in the political life of the country. Whether such projects will result in any immediate change remains to be seen, but the coming elections will surely offer the best opportunity to assess its actual impact.

In early 2010, local election violations in Georgia were mapped online in real-time³¹ and it seems likely that such a system could be implemented in the 2012 and 2013 elections in Armenia. Facebook, Google+, and Twitter will also prove invaluable tools for politicians and civil society activists alike to reach out to citizens. What remains to be seen, however, is whether given the post-2008 presidential election experience, the Ar-

31 *Global Voices, Georgia: Social Media deployed for local elections* <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2010/06/03/georgia-social-media-deployed-for-local-elections/>

menian government will seek to control news and information online, and how it might attempt to do so. But perhaps the main lesson to be learned from the past few years is simpler.

Despite low Internet penetration in Armenia, which will naturally improve over time, the issue is not whether such tools will be increasingly used in political life, but rather how and by whom.

Georgian Media & Georgian Facebook

Zviad
Koridze

Abstract

The article covers Georgia's media problems and the challenges it faces in the establishment of civil society. The author sets out the context of the 2003 Rose Revolution, when Georgian society rose in rebellion, refusing to forgive the ruling power for the errors made during the parliamentary elections. The author argues that while the current administration is ostentatious in displaying its recognition of basic democratic values: rule of law, free media, primacy of property rights, it is simultaneously utilizing all available means to establish control over the media. This begins with hidden censorship and crude meddling in editorial strategy, and runs to encouraging corrupt systems in media outlets. This is an effective way to destroy media credibility in the eyes of the nation. One of the central arguments of the article is that government-controlled capital has not yet reached media outlets of this type and newspapers in particular are in grave financial straits; the level of independence of their editorial policy is much higher.

* Zviad Koridze is a Georgian freelance journalist. Mr. Koridze worked at the weekly newspaper "7 Dghe" ("7 Days") as a journalist, member of an editorial board and editor-in-chief; he has also served as the director of news departments of various TV-stations (Rustavi-2, Channel 9, Imedi, Channel 1).

On November 22-23, 2003 a coup d'état best known as the Rose Revolution took place in Georgia. Society rose up in rebellion, refusing to forgive the errors the ruling party had made during the parliamentary elections: inaccurate voter lists, high levels of fraud, manipulation of election results, etc. and the uprising prevented the newly elected parliament from commencing operations. Citizens and leaders of the opposition, including Mikheil Saakashvili, burst into the Parliament Session Hall with roses in their hands, disrupting the first meeting of the legislative body so swiftly that it scarcely had a chance to establish its legitimacy. President Eduard Shevardnadze resigned from office, ending his eleven-year presidency (1992-2003).

Mikheil Saakashvili's first presidential term lasted four years instead of five, as written in the constitution. The political crisis of October-November 2007 forced him to call snap presidential elections. In the January 5th 2008 elections, Mikheil Saakash-

The year of 2012-2013 represents a crucial point in Georgia's social and political life.

vili won 53.47 percent of the votes, while Levan Gachechiladze, his opponent from the United Opposition party, received 25.69 percent.

These two political events have substantially contributed to the trajectory of Georgia's democratic devel-

opment over the course of the past eight years. The current administration proudly broadcasts its recognition of basic democratic values: rule of law, free media, the primacy of property rights. The legislative framework supports these claims. In reality, however, the actions of the government signal elements of authoritarian rule- peculiarities of the transitional period, according to the administration. Regardless, democratic institutions, including the objective media, are stuck in a developmental stasis.

The year of 2012-2013 represents a crucial point in Georgia's social and political life. The country will elect a new parliament and a new government, in addition to switching over to a new system of governance, that is, a parliamentary system, involving the election of a new president, and implementation of a new constitution. The people are wondering whether Saakashvili himself will remain in power, or whether he will be replaced by a prominent member of his team, or indeed whether there will be a total shift in the political power dynamic.

Over the course of the past seven years, the administration has showed that it not only can but is actually willing to coexist with criminal groups. It manages this coexistence through autocratic control and by monopolizing corrupt transactions. The administration is well aware that its main risk lies in a well-informed society; a society is well-informed only when there exists a robust, pluralistic and

According to the latest poll conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRCC), 85 percent of respondents said that television was their primary source of information.

unbiased media. Thus the administration is utilizing all available means to establish control over the media: starting with hidden censorship and crude meddling in editorial strategy and ending with encouraging corrupt systems in media. This is an effective way to strip media credibility in the eyes of society. The level of media freedom has substantially decline during this seven year period.

In order to ensure freedom of media in Georgia, it is necessary to:

- Protect independent editorial policy from not only government intervention but also interference by media-owners;
- Develop a transparent system for the dissemination of public information;
- Support the development of media outlets as independent businesses, which will eliminate the issue of political affiliations and restrict the flow of capital of unknown origin into media outlets.

These are mandatory conditions for the development of free media.

Media Environment

Citizens use all types of media to access information, though the frequen-

cy of their use varies. Television is very often utilized as a source of information. According to the latest poll conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRCC), 85 percent of respondents said that television was their primary source of information. Of course, citizens do use newspapers, radio and the internet, but their audience share is modest in comparison to that of television. The level of trust in information is high among internet users; however, the number of internet users is low. Internet users prefer fora and other social networks as their sources of information, and the vast majority of internet users seek out these virtual locations, which serves as further proof that society does often trust ‘word of mouth’ and unverified information. For example, from November 7th through to November 17th, when the government declared a state of emergency and all television channels were prohibited from broadcasting news bulletins, the internet served as the country’s main source of information. The same goes for the August 2008 war, although internet access more limited then.

Information currently disseminated by television is very much shaped by the author’s subjective position, commentary and opinion; this is less true for information disseminated by radio and news agencies. This type of information delivery indicates a low standard of professionalism. Additionally, it impedes the development

of independent public opinion and turns the media into a propaganda tool, which contributes to the polarization of the political environment. Instead of being left to exercise their own judgment in evaluating an event or issue, viewers are forced either to accept or reject an a priori judgment. Accordingly, instead of informing public opinion, media, especially electronic media, disseminate and propagate pre-formulated opinions.

Nationwide television channels are presently available in 92 percent of Georgian territory. The de facto territory does not include the autonomies of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which together make up 18 percent of the entire territory. Ninety-five percent of the population lives in the broadcast coverage area, and thus are able to receive a television signal free of charge (not to be confused with indirect expenses related to electrical power or the Public Broadcaster's share of GDP to the amount of 0.12 percent). The largest share in the broadcast market belongs to over-the-air broadcast television (70.7 percent), while cable television holds 19 percent, and 10.23 percent belongs to radio broadcasters.

Georgian legislation prohibits the state from owning media outlets. Nevertheless, owners of nearly all influential print media outlets are business partners of the state. Their business success depends directly on their relationship with the state. The administration has managed to grad-

ually establish control over the activity of these businessmen.

During the events of November 2003, the television company *Rustavi 2* was the most opposition-minded of the channels. Refusing to remain between neutral, it opted to ally itself with the political opposition. This decision seriously damaged its reputation, along with the functionality of media as a whole. *Rustavi 2* has changed ownership several times since, presently making up a single media-holding together with television company *Mze* and the entertainment channel *First Stereo*. The holding is jointly owned by the offshore company *Dixon Ltd*, registered on the Virgin Islands, and another offshore company, *Georgian Industrial Group*, previously (prior to its offshore registration) owned by Davit Bezhuashvili, a member of the Georgian Parliament. Bezhuashvili's main business interests include bituminous coal, metallurgy, cement, and natural gas. He comes from a political family; his brother, Gela Bezhuashvili, was Minister of Internal Affairs of Georgia between 2005 and 2008, and later became Head of the Intelligence Department. Gogi Gegeshidze is the General Director of the television channel; Irakli Chikovani, Chairman of the Georgian National Communications Commission, is his business partner.

Businessman Badri Patarkatsishvili was the founder of the television company *Imedi*. In 2001, he returned

from Russia to establish his own television and radio broadcasting service. During the events of November 2007, *Imedi*, like *Rustavi 2* had done four years earlier chose a political alliance. But this time, it was the owner of *Imedi* himself who had political aspirations, and he actually ran for president in the [2008] snap election. The administration turned out to be much more radical than its predecessor: on November 7th, Special Forces stormed the television station, destroying property, insulting staff, and taking the channel off air. After international pressure and public protests, the television regained its right to broadcast. Later on, however, it ceased broadcasting of its own accord. After the retirement of Badri Patarkatsishvili, *Imedi* was handed over to private citizen Joseph Kay, who before long entrusted 90 percent of the shares first of all to offshore company *Rakia Georgia* (registered in Dubai) and then to the Georgian Media Enterprise Group (registered on the Marshall Islands). The former Minister of Economy, Giorgi Arveladze, is the channel's managing director.

The "tele-government" values form over content, popularity over consistency, effect over reason. After all, the current government came to power riding the wave of the tele-revolution; it simply does not know any other form of governance. It is for this reason that President Saakashvili made great efforts at the dawn of his

presidency to replace the owners of television stations with businessmen who supported him. As for businessmen owners of television stations, they were not particularly interested in the success of their media enterprises beyond their profitability. State funded television stations, on the other hand, are valuable instruments of manipulation in the hands of the administration:

1. Journalists are permanently anxious about their job security, of the owner being unable to pay their wages, of the television station being shut down because it is not profitable. A frightened journalist is unable to talk back to the media owner or the administration;
2. The owner is eager to tighten control over editorial policy to prevent the journalist from accidentally saying something that the administration will not like, thus straining the relationship between the administration and the owner;
3. The administration continually reminds journalists that they may be sacked by the owner at any time; therefore, if they wish to keep their jobs, they should not anger the administration.

Transparent media owners were gradually replaced by obscure offshore companies, which created "black holes" in the broadcasting business. At the insistence of the public, Parliament required broadcast licenses to transfer all shares presently owned

by offshore companies to residents of Georgia, thus making ownership transparent (deadline: December 31, 2011). This process has not yet begun. Members of parliament rejected proposals for reforms to increase financial transparency.

State-owned 'Adjara Television' and the 'Public Broadcaster of Georgia' are both very government-friendly. It would be unthinkable for any type of anti-government sentiment to appear on either of these channels. Private television channels *Rustavi 2* and *Imedi* serve as government propaganda tools. The government is aware that its propaganda campaign will be more powerful if it is supported by influential channels with a long broadcasting history. Television companies *Kavkasia* and *Maestro* retain their critical attitude towards the government.

Criticism of the government and skepticism toward official sources of information are characteristic of newspapers and radio stations. Government-controlled cash has not yet infiltrated the non-television sector of the media. Although these media outlets, especially newspapers, are in dire straits financially, their editorial policies enjoy significantly greater independence.

The total daily circulation of newspapers is between 70,000 and 110,000. Organizations and institutions represent the bulk of subscribers. Single-copy sales account for the largest

portion of total circulation. An average of four individuals read one copy, which means that between 300,000 and 400,000 people have daily contacts with Georgian print media (10-12 percent of the population older than fifteen). The newspaper-reading audience has been in decline since the 1970s.

While licensing is mandatory for television and radio companies to function, registration with the Revenue Service is the only formal requirement for a newspaper publication. The system for registration is very simple. A total of 88 newspapers are published in Georgia, 31 of them in Tbilisi. Only four newspapers are daily: *Rezonansi* (the most "seasoned" among Georgian newspapers, a politically moderate publication), *Akhali Taoba*, *24 Saati* (the government's most loyal newspaper), and *Sakartvelos Respublika* (former governmental newspaper). Their combined circulation is approximately 10,000 – 12,000 copies. *Versia* and *Alia* are published three times a week, and their total circulation is 8,000 – 10,000 copies. All four sports newspapers are published daily.

Weekly publications have a larger circulation, fluctuating between 25,000 and 60,000., including both newspapers (*Kviris Palitra*, *Kronika*, *Asaval-Dasavali*) and magazines (*Sarke*, *Tbiliselebi*, *Reitingi*, *Gza*). Weekly publications are known for a more 'tabloid' style of journalism.

Criticism of the government and skepticism toward official sources of information are characteristic of newspapers and radio stations.

Publishers state that public demand and marketing considerations account for this.

The administration has almost never used methods of persecution against print media. This could be explained by the fact that the administration does not yet consider newspapers to have significant influence over public opinion. Newspaper circulation remains quite low, meaning that newspapers are low-profit businesses. The salaries of newspaper journalists are much lower than those of their television counterparts. President Saakashvili has said frequently that he does not read newspapers. The State Chancellery, ministries and local government bodies were strictly prohibited from subscribing to periodicals; this does constitute an indirect form of government persecution of print media. In July 2011, when tax compliance officers launched simultaneous inspections of six different enterprises owned by *Media Palitra* Holding, journalists and numerous individuals interpreted it as an act of reprisal and persecution. A single campaign initiated over the course of a single evening on Facebook alone, brought out 700 people to protest in the offices of *Media Palitra*. Although the tax inspection was not

terminated, it proceeded in accordance with legal standards and in a much more transparent manner than in which it had begun.

Internet Environment

The law presently makes no provision for restrictions on internet use. The Georgian National Communications Commission only regulates the rules of cable line services. There are several internet providers offering services that vary in quality, form and price. ADSL service fees are between 25 and 60 GEL (approximately 10 to 25 Euro). The level of accessibility of internet remains low in spite of the general trend of economic growth. The situation in the regions is especially lamentable in this regard: no modern telephone systems exist there and the standards of living are extremely low. There is also an issue surrounding age: the vast majority of the population aged over 45 are not familiar with computer technologies.

Trends are as follows: by the end of 2006, the total number of ADSL technology internet users had increased by almost 81 percent in comparison with 2005, reaching 27,700 users. Internet service is the second fastest growing segment in the communication service market today, beaten only by mobile service. In 2007, the number of ADSL technology internet users reached 75,000. ADSL technologies are used mainly by corporations, so the number of actual users can on average be quadrupled: 300,000 us-

ers (approximately 8.3 percent of the population aged over 15).

According to 2010 data, the number of registered internet users is 300 050. Technologies have also changed: besides DSL (55.8 percent), internet is also provided by means of fiber optic connection (28.7 percent). In its report, the Georgian National Communications Commission defines a “user” as a person who has received internet service in the last month of a given quarter. Even if several customers use one internet access device, they still count as a single user. Taking into account that one user in Georgia shares internet with several other people, the number of actual users should be much higher. According to ITU, the number of internet users reached 1,300,000 in 2010. In addition, 789 000 users began using mobile internet service in the last quarter of 2010.

Recorded revenues from internet service providers (ISPs) constituted 80 million GEL (approximately 35 million euro), while mobile internet service brought in 15 million GEL (approximately 6.4 million euro). According to www.netgazeti.ge, 90 percent of internet users live in big cities. Internet usage is picking up especially among youths under 15. All nationwide television channels have their own regularly updated websites (www.gpb.ge; www.1tv.ge; www.rustavi2.com; www.ime-dinews.ge). Several Georgian newspapers also have websites: *24 Saati-*

www.24saati.ge; *Asaval-Dasavali* – www.asavali.ge; *Rezonansi* – www.rezonancedaily.ge; *Alia* – www.alia.ge. There is also a website where electronic versions of various newspapers are uploaded: www.opentext.ge. These internet publications experience the same levels of government interference as their print publications.

News agencies also have websites. The most frequently visited website – www.ipn.ge – belongs to the agency *Interpresnews* (which, in turn, belongs to *Media Palitra* Holding). The same company owns a number of internet platforms, with www.ambebi.ge being particularly popular, with 17-18,000 unique daily visitors. The number of actual visitors is, of course, higher. These numbers are considered the highest in the Georgian internet market.

There are independent internet newspapers as well (www.netgazeti.ge; www.civil.ge), with average numbers of unique users between 2 500 and 4 000. Some internet publications that were popular three or four years ago are now losing ground (www.apsny.ge; www.iwpr.net; www.pankisi.info). There are also specialized websites (www.media.ge; www.humanrights.ge), the success of which is largely dependent on donor aid. Advertising is a rare exception in today’s internet publications.

Blogging has also become a more active domain. Unable to express

themselves through traditional media outlets, a great number of journalists have started blogging. The number of consistently active bloggers is several hundred; some of these bloggers have attracted five to eight thousand

According to a Freedom House assessment, Facebook is the most popular website in Georgia, providing liberally-oriented Georgian citizens with a platform for discussion and discourse.

visitors in total. Of course, these are low figures in comparison with the 615 980 statistic - the number of Facebook users in Georgia as of June 2011.

According to a Freedom House assessment, Facebook is the most popular website in Georgia, providing liberally-oriented Georgian citizens with a platform for discussion and discourse. According to the 2011 Freedom House Report, social networking sites are gaining increasing status as sources of information. Although no website is blocked in Georgia, Freedom House deems Georgia to have only partial freedom of internet access, mentioning the story of two students detained in 2009 after posting an “offensive” video about the Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia on YouTube. These youths were detained, and then released, though the confiscated hardware was never returned to them. Freedom House

also refers to amendments to the legislation ratified by the parliament in 2010; these amendments grant law enforcement agencies significant discretion in conducting surveillance. Depending on the requirements of

investigation, police can generally begin surveillance of personal correspondence, e-mail, and instant chat services without court approval.

The social media marketing and branding company <http://leavingstone.com> has developed an online resource to monitor statistical data on Georgian pages on Facebook. TBC Bank Smart Club Facebook page presently holds number one spot with 130 000 “likes”. The popularity of the page was determined by the competition and gifts the bank offered to new clients. Two Catholicos-Patriarch websites, websites of two deceased individuals: poet Niko Gomelauri and Georgian luger and Olympic contender Nodar Kumaritashvili, along with websites of singer Sofia Nizharadze and Charity Foundation *Iavnana* are among the top ten popular Georgian Facebook pages. It is interesting that the only media product among these top ten is Nanuka Zhorzholiani Show. There is broadcast on the television channel *Imedi*; the journalist herself actively engages with Facebook users, answering their questions and posting previews.

Information Environment

In January of this year, law enforcement officers broke up a protest – a hunger strike, started on Heroes' Square in Tbilisi, by veterans of wars for independence. This information was covered only by television companies *Maestro* and *Kavkasia*. Their audience consists mainly of Tbilisi residents. Later that evening, pictures were posted on Facebook, featuring a person in civilian clothing participating in the dispersal operation and physically assaulting a female protester. Discussion ensued; someone recognized the person in the picture and verified that it was Otar Gvenetadze, a police officer with the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA). The topic remained hot on social networks, but nationwide broadcasters ignored the story through January 3rd and 4th.

On January 5, I was in one of the high mountainous regions of Georgia, delivering training. I was watching the evening newscast together with the training participants. Residents of this region (like in most regions) can only watch Public Broadcaster newscasts. The *Moambe* anchor announced that by decree of the Minister of Internal Affairs, an MIA officer, Otar Gvenetadze, was being dismissed due to unethical behavior. This information was followed by a commentary from John Bass, Ambassador of the United States of America to Georgia, stating that freedom of expression is the holy of

One of the challenges contemporary Georgian journalism faces is professionalism. Hosts of political and social talk-shows do not even bother looking into topics discussed by viewers.

holies and that it was admirable that state services had reacted so swiftly to its violation. *Rustavi 2* and *Imedi* used the same format of information delivery. Viewers of the newscast were dumbfounded. They had no idea who Otar Gvenetadze was, what his crime was, why he had been fired, or why the minister's decree was on the news. These broadcasters never provided the viewer with relevant information on January 2nd in the first place, and failed again to provide the background in January 5th broadcasts.

On one hand, information seemed to have been provided, and the administration addressed an issue that had been raised on social networking sites. Nevertheless, the vast majority of the population of Georgia, that is, people who receive information from television, remained in ignorance.

The main problem for Georgian media is the superficial nature of coverage of decisions made by the administration. This fault is especially evident when journalists start arguing with government representatives, and, as usually happens, lose the dispute. The reason for their defeat is that evaluation government policy

requires specific knowledge and a level of understanding that journalists often lack. One of the challenges contemporary Georgian journalism faces is professionalism. Hosts of political and social talk-shows do not even bother looking into topics discussed by viewers. Thus discussion of Georgia's integration into NATO and a show on women's rights share the same lack of professionalism.

Polarized groups have been appearing in the virtual environment: "I vote for NATO membership" and "Georgia says NO to NATO". This is characteristic of post-Soviet society.

In 2007, the editorial meeting for broadcasting company *Rustavi 2* discussed the bombing of settlements in Zemo Abkhazia by unidentified aircraft. We decided to investigate the incident. One of the journalists asked me, "Yes, but would that serve the interests of the state?" Overzealous concern for "the interests of the state" has shackled the majority of journalists with the fetters of self-censorship. They have lost the ability to apply critical thinking towards any topic, even matters of national security.

Self-censorship illustrates how journalists and producers coordinate their work with various officials. In

many cases, there is no need to coordinate, as the position of these officials is known in advance, and shared between journalists. Searching for sources of information in various state and public institutions has been replaced by a single, static group of advisors and consultants who provide journalists with general trends and messages.

I have heard on many occasions that yes, we should deliver what the reader/viewer wants. But we risk forgetting the social responsibility of the media, to:

- Comply with professional standards and ethical norms in an unbiased manner;
- Introduce more liberal values;
- Abstain from introducing stereotypes. Dangerous stereotypes change public attitude, making the public easily manipulable, which serves the interests of the administration.

On March 13, 2010 the television company *Imedi* broadcast a drama of a fictional war, a documentary called "Props Chronicle". After the show, Giorgi Arveladze, the head of the channel, stated: "I do not want to refuse to defend the interests of the Georgian people, or the Georgian state, even if I am accused of being biased". He voiced a principle that journalists with a "state-oriented mentality" have been following for some time: *Journalists do not defend professional standards; they are defenders of the nation.*

These media-trends have also infiltrated social networks. Polarized groups have been appearing in the virtual environment: “I vote for NATO membership” and “Georgia says NO to NATO”; “I love my patriarch” and “I hate my patriarch”, and so forth. This is characteristic of post-Soviet society. Of course, certain individuals are able to achieve fulfillment through this process, but ongoing discussions prove unable to improve the level of public awareness. Thus of these active Facebook users: some remain faithful supporters of the postmodern worldview of the state; others are secret apologists for the ruling party; some hold on to pre-Christian beliefs- and everyone is happy with his role. Only then some intern at the Ministry of Internal Affairs who was denied a full-time job comes home angry and starts a new group: “New Revolution, Georgia, May, 2011”. He is aware of the Twitter revolutions in the Middle East, and yet he is unable to bring this awareness to bear on his own world. The very concept of these revolutions is: social networks should ensure awareness. Only then do they become a social medium and bring about changes in the social environment.

Georgian social networks have the opportunity to become social media before the 2012 parliamentary election. If they succeed, change awaits Georgian society.

Social Media in Turkey: Walking the line between opportunity and danger

**Ismail
Hakki
Polat**

Abstract

Turkey, the Western Gateway to the Caucasus, is currently deeply involved in discussions of social media issues. Older Turks anxiously follow the online activity of the average Turkish youth, who spends 7.8 hours per day online. While the older generation regards this as a 'waste of time', it has become a 'living space' for young people. Inside that virtual space, they develop their own lands and businesses. These innovative products and services have become weapons once integrated into the physical world – for example, the destruction of the music and film industries by online file sharing technologies. Likewise, social media was used as a political weapon during the Arab Spring and during the massive protests against Internet Censorship in Istanbul. Young Turks also benefit from social media as internet entrepreneurs. In addition, top Turkish brands are investing heavily in social media for the future, while the traditional media industry is experiencing serious problems due to their old-fashioned management. This New Medium will grow rapidly and become the center of activity as things develop. Therefore, New Media Literacy will be the keyword in preparing the Caucasus for the Information Age.

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A land where 46% of citizens live in metropolitan areas¹, a nation in which 60% of the population is under 35², and a society which has 35 million Internet users³, 61.7 million mobile subscribers⁴ and 30 million Facebook users:⁵ this is Turkey, a country of social networkers.

Social media is a trending topic in Turkey. Its social, cultural, economical, political and legal influences are discussed by all segments of society. It is the primary medium for communicate for almost 50% of Turks. In this new communication environment, known as *New Media*, they share their thoughts and emotions, they chat with friends all around the world, they do their shopping, they play games and they even argue about politics with people they've never met before. In this sense, social media has become a living space, particularly for young people trying to escape from the 'boring rules' of the physical world; it offers a virtual paradise in which they feel themselves free.

1 Turkish Statistical Institute Population Demographics web pages: (in Turkish) http://www.tuik.gov.tr/VeriBilgi.do?tb_id=60&ust_id=2 (Metropolitan Municipalities-2011)

2 Turkish Statistical Institute Population Demographics web pages: (in Turkish) http://www.tuik.gov.tr/VeriBilgi.do?tb_id=39&ust_id=11 (Age-2011)

3 Internet World Stats <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats4.htm>

4 Electronic Communications Market in Turkey, Quarterly Market Data Report, (pp.41) May2011, Information Technologies and Communication Authority Publications, Ankara, Turkey. <http://www.btk.gov.tr/eski/eng/pdf/2011/MarketDataReport2011-1.pdf>

5 <http://www.socialbakers.com/blog/207-turkey-is-facebook-world-country-no-4/>

According to global social media research by ComScore, Turkish 'netizens' spend an average of 7.8 hours online per day (5th highest in the world)⁶, mainly on social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, MSN, Twitter, Foursquare, Google+, etc. Turks ranked even higher for television watching, second internationally, behind the United States⁷. The higher youth unemployment rate (21.5%) could be an important factor fuelling this trend.⁸ But the tempting aspects of social media platforms such as socialization, interactivity, entertainment, matchmaking, anonymity, etc. also need to be considered independently. Of course, these dynamics are not easily understood by older generations. For this reason, the majority of parents, teachers, managers, high level professionals, high state officials, etc. anxiously follow the online activity of the youth. In the beginning, they all regarded this activity as 'a waste of time' or at least 'an activity for spare time. And though 'spare time' has already become 'prime time', they are still some distance from achieving a clear perspective on the matter due to the

6 Average Time Spent on Social Networking Sites Across Geographies, ComScore Media Matrix April 2011. <http://www.comscore.com/2011/06/average-time-spent-on-social-networking-sites-across-geographies/>

7 Average daily TV hours per country 2005 (OECD) <http://vorg.ca/2505-Average-daily-TV-hours-per-country> & Communications Outlook 2007 (The Economist) http://www.economist.com/node/9527126?subjectid=7933596&story_id=9527126

8 OECD Countries Youth Unemployment Rate 2003-2010 http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/youth-unemployment-rate-2011_unemp-yth-table-2011-1-en

“complexity” of this new medium. This is true around the world, even in Iran and China.

What the older generations don't understand is that this is not just a generational change, but also a transformative shift from the Industrial Age to the Information Age, and these ‘newbies’ were, are and will remain the primary drivers of this transformation. Called the digital immigrants and natives, they first conquered the ‘terra incognita’ just after the internet was released for public use in 1992.⁹ Between then and now, they have discovered new virtual lands, and cultivated and harvested them with their own innovative methods. The way they use these innovative products and services can be regarded as weapons, destroying the traditional systems. In the past, some of these weapons have been used as competitive business tools that can destroy the standards of an establishment; online music and film download technologies¹⁰, for example, which have violated the traditional copyright model of entertainment industry. Some of them were even worse: a destructive political weapon that can organize opposition groups against the regime, for instance.

⁹ *History of Internet @ Computer History Museum* http://www.computerhistory.org/internet_history/internet_history_90s.html

¹⁰ *How 'Internet file sharing' dramatically changed the whole entertainment industry?* <http://point-topic.com/content/bmm/profiles/BMMfilesharingq311.html>

As happened during the Arab Spring movements, the digital youth can interact, digitalize and mobilize not only on the net but also on the streets in all circumstances, since they have a native ability to create, design, develop, implement and use these new digital technologies. The way they use social media is amazing. They are able to create, develop and deliver their content over their own media sites. They are also capable of integrating all kinds of social platforms, thereby enabling users to send content instantaneously via many social media platforms and spread it to the public domain, thanks to the interconnected personal networks.

David D. Kirkpatrick, Cairo Bureau Chief of The New York Times during the Tahrir Square Protests, shared his observations and views on the uses of social media as a political tool.¹¹ Kirkpatrick introduced the April 6th Youth Movement, an online activism group which organized the Egyptian Young Activists during the Tahrir protests via his column @ NYTimes.com. Kirkpatrick emphasized the importance of benefiting from past social media experiences. In this case, Tunisian activists shared their experiences with their Egyptian counterparts - how to protect themselves from attacks by the

¹¹ *A Tunisian-Egyptian Link That Shook Arab History*, David D. Kirkpatrick, NYTimes.com <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/14/world/middleeast/14egypt-tunisia-protests.html?pagewanted=all>

security forces, when and where to pause and resume, etc.

However, there is another side to the coin. There is speculation that these activists were supported by external powers. In addition, there are questions to be asked and to be answered: 'If the internet is a global infrastructure, why are these massive protests all happening within the Arab World? Why aren't they happening in other countries?' One way or another, the role of social media in these types of public movements is limited by the time and space of independent organizations, at most as a catalyst to provoke people. In other words, the revolution will not be on Facebook but on the streets with Facebook. I believe that the general rule for all regimes will henceforth be "the more social media activity, the more freedom the population demands".

Despite the internet's increasing role in daily life, the older generations are remain intolerant of the freedom it entails, and want to change the demands of young people, as they are afraid of losing their control mechanisms. That is why they filter, censor and/or ban the Internet; it is typical authoritarian father-figure behavior! It does not matter whether he or she is a parent, a teacher, a high level professional, a manager or a boss.

On the other hand, freedom alone cannot solve the major problems

In addition, there are questions to be asked and to be answered: 'If the internet is a global infrastructure, why are these massive protests all happening within the Arab World?'

of social media such as content manipulation, fake profiles, privacy violations, child pornography, hate speech, hacking, online fraud, etc. For this reason, security is necessary to a peaceful online existence. It is better to listen to the experiences of the older generation at this point. There must be a healthy balance between security and freedom.

In comparison with Arab countries, Turkey has the advantage of having had a pluralistic democratic culture for almost a century, though the country still has a long way to go. Some would ask whether Turkey has been influenced by the Arab Spring. My answer would be both yes and no. Yes, because the Arab Spring broke down psychological barriers and proved that there is hope for the new generation. The things they have done so far have paved the way for countries all around the world. No, because the political dynamics of Turkey and the Arab World are very different, as are the characteristics of digital activism.

There are Turkish NGOs that are aggressively defending internet

freedom. Key examples include: <http://sansuresansur.org> (translates as ‘censor the censorship’), <http://netdas.org> (‘netizen’), Alternative Information Technologies Association, and the Turkish branch of Pirate Party International Network, which is the world’s most popular internet freedom political organization, on <http://korsanparti.org>. The majority do not have a physical existence and are active only on the internet. Some of the members never meet in person, but they have contact via

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social networking sites. They are all highly sensitive to internet freedom issues, and perceive any regulation on Internet as restrictions on their living space. At times when internet freedom is threatened, not only active members but also many social media netizens drop everything and come together under the umbrella of this digital NGO network, as happened last February. At that time, Turkish Telekom and Internet Authority (BTK) wanted to impose restrictions on internet activity due to security concerns and complaints about the protection of families and children. They issued a ‘Safe Internet use’ directive that imposed a default

mandatory filter, by collecting all internet subscribers under four filtered profiles: standard, family, children and national. The directive has an old-fashioned mindset and was prepared independently by the Internet Authority, without consulting the internet audience in Turkey. Upon release, it was heavily criticized by local internet communities. Right after, Turkish internet users organized a social media campaign against the measure, which was supported by more than 600.000 online users¹². 60.000 of them were out on the streets of 35 cities across Turkey and Europe on the day of the protest, May 15th 2011. The 50,000 strong protests in Istanbul were recorded as the biggest internet censorship protest in history.¹³ Just after the protest, a meeting between the BTK Officials and representatives of the Turkish internet society was organized. A few months later, BTK took a step back and revised the directive in line with some of the demands from internet users. Of course, there remain issues to be negotiated with regard to adjusting the balance between freedom and security, but this is a promising step, which demonstrated the importance of public participation in governmental decisions.

Besides censorship, there have also

¹² Facebook Campaign on Turkey Net Ban <http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=152334771499561>

¹³ Thousands March in Istanbul Against Turkish Internet Censorship <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-05-15/thousands-march-in-istanbul-against-turkish-internet-censorship.html>

In Turkey, most of the industries have already integrated their IT infrastructure with the internet. But social media is a step further, and is no easy task.

been significant developments in social media business. Turkey is very active online, and has been involved in the mobile communications business from the beginning. Today, the country's online market is mature, as demonstrated by statistics. The volume of e-commerce is expected to reach 10 billion USD by the end of 2011¹⁴, and e-banking and e-trading jointly reached a volume of 300 billion USD with a customer base of almost 17 million.¹⁵ In addition to these figures, there are young entrepreneurs who have explored the opportunities of the internet, and capitalized on them. Mynet.com is a website founded by young entrepreneur Emre Kurttepelı during the early days of the Internet. It has become one of Turkey's the most popular sites almost immediately, and remains so, currently serving 6.5 million registered subscribers and 38 million monthly unique visitors among the Top 1000 sites in the

¹⁴ The volume of e-commerce in Turkey and estimates for 2011 (in Turkish) <http://blog.sanalmimarlar.com/2011/08/turkiyede-e-ticaret-hacmi-haziran-2011-ve-2011-yilsonu-hede-fi/>

¹⁵ Milliyet Newspaper, '300 B USD transfer has shifted to the net. M-banking becomes the rising star' (In Turkish) <http://ekonomi.milliyet.com.tr/300-milyar-lik-transfer-net-e-kaydi-bankalarin-yildizi-m-bankacilik-oldu/ekonomi/ekonomidetay/18.09.2011/1440074/default.htm>

world. The secret of his success was 'catching the zeitgeist' that kept users involved. The site began as a web portal, and now it is a social platform where people can find whatever they need. Gittigidiyor.com, an e-shopping site with almost 7 million members, was acquired by E-bay for between 150 and 200 million USD. Fizy.com is a local online jukebox founded by three internet 'geeks' a year or two ago and was sold to Turkcell for a couple of million dollars, according to rumors. There are more such examples. Nowadays, the most difficult task in Istanbul is to employ an IT staff. There are many opportunities to be pursued, but beware of problems and errors. Aside from these internet-born entrepreneurs, there are also industries that have been trying to migrate from the Industrial Age to the Information Age. Integrating business models with the internet is one thing, but business integration with social media is quite another. In Turkey, most of the industries have already integrated their IT infrastructure with the internet. But social media is a step further, and is no easy task. It is not only just analysis but perceptions. It is not only news but also gossip, manipulation and falsifications. There are not only customers, but also the anonymous users and fakes. And finally it is not only professionalism but also friendship and sincerity. It has a complicated nature that requires great care; otherwise social media

users could destroy a popular brand in a very short time. That must be the reason that the major brands keep away. What many companies had been doing up until now was to use social media as a cheap advertising medium, and follow it to see the public interactions about their own brand by using an online monitoring program. But this year, many brands changed strategy, and started to play an active role in social media. Banking, finance and telecommunications are the pioneering industries so far. Their objectives are to keep in contact with their customers, to get to know them better and to get their feedback about the company. A few of them, such as Akbank and Garanti Bank, have gone further, and provided an online platform to interact with their customers. For instance, Akbank organized a competition based on a Facebook game application. The aim of the game is to build and manage an enterprise by using Akbank's existing banking and finance services. This allows customers to test and familiarize themselves with Akbank's product and service portfolio, and even give feedback, enabling the company to revise its products in line with customer responses.¹⁶ Thanks to all these activities and games, Akbank has gained more than 500 000 users in social media. Other brands active in social media are the mobile operators Avea, with 1.5 million users, and Turkcell, with

1 million users. Of course, there is a long way to go for all of them, but this is an inspiring start

In fact, social media is important for all industries, but remains vital for one of them: the media industry itself. For the time being, Turkey's traditional media industry is still bringing in huge revenues (not profit) from newspapers, magazines, radio and television. But there has been a dramatic shift towards new media. Right now, there is less threat to television, but the initial negative impacts have been seen on magazines, newspapers, and radio. With a few exceptions, all magazines and newspapers in Turkey are losing money. Potentially there is still room for print media, but in the case of a long and deep recession, their end will be expedited. There are rumors about Radikal newspaper to moving from print to digital. Are they ready for it? Absolutely not. In order to succeed in new media, it is necessary to appoint an editor in chief who is experienced in both traditional and new media, but has the ability to prioritize the new. The Guardian did this very well by appointing Alan Rusbridger as editor in chief, and announcing its new media concept as 'digital-first'.¹⁷ But neither the media bosses nor the traditional editors in chief have the necessary mindset to develop even a simple business model for the new

¹⁶ Akbank Social Media game <http://thefinancialbrand.com/19315/akbank-facebook-social-media-strategy/>

¹⁷ 'Guardian News & Media to be a digital-first organization' <http://www.guardian.co.uk/gnm-press-office/guardian-news-media-digital-first-organisation>

For the time being, Turkey's traditional media industry is still bringing in huge revenues (not profit) from newspapers, magazines, radio and television.

media industry. One way or the other, with or without them, traditional media will transform into new media. But can they compete with the user generated content and social media? Not at first, but later on - when they rationalize the new media concept, and users (mainly young people) rationalize the meaning of the truth. Further to the transformation of traditional media, there are exciting developments in the brand-new media. Facebook, Twitter, Google, YouTube and the other social media platforms are all attracting hundreds of millions of users, thanks to the introduction of numerous innovative services. Despite the financial crisis in the more traditional industries, these new players have been designing new virtual worlds in social media. I'm not sure they did a good job, but I'm sure they did their job well.

To sum up, there are plenty of opportunities in the new media business in terms of social media platforms. They have influences all around the world, including in the Caucasus. The transformation from the Industrial Age to the Information Age will be the next big thing. In

order to eliminate the serious impact of coming global crisis, there are two tasks. First of all, the older generation has to move on from its struggle with the new generation and empower them to develop this new living space. Secondly, we must immediately begin to educate people to work on new lines of businesses. For this reason, we founded a New Media Department in Kadir Has University-Istanbul two years ago. The demand from young people has been incredible. This year, two more New Media Departments have been opened in other universities. As well as the university department, last year we also launched a Social Media Certificate Program to meet the demand outside of university education. The program is already beyond maximum capacity, and we are still oversubscribed.

In conclusion, this is an opportunity that is not limited to Turkey, but is available all around the world and all around the Caucasus. Let's use this as a way out before the threatening clouds of global crisis arrive.

The Geopolitics of Social Media in Eurasia

**Eugene
Chausovsky**

Abstract

Social media and its effect on the global political scene has been the subject of much discussion since the widespread uprisings that are continuing to play out in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The interest in the political potential of social media has led everyone from the media to academics to ask whether the transformations that are underway in the MENA region will spread to the former Soviet Union?

While there are many similarities between the two regions, from long-serving authoritarian leaders to poor economic conditions, there are also numerous differences that will serve to limit the effect of social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter as driving forces for political change in the region. Indeed, the use and effectiveness of social media even in the Arab Spring countries is often misunderstood and overestimated. This is especially true in the former Soviet Union, where internet usage levels – and particularly social media users – are relatively low when compared to their Western counterparts. This is not to say, however, that the former Soviet Union has not or will not continue to see transformative changes – several states in the region are no strangers to revolution and/or widespread political upheaval. But these outcomes are brought about by much more deeply rooted geopolitical forces: political divisions, a geography that hampers high levels of economic development, for instance. Social media is one tool that has contributed to the evolution of national political systems, but it is not the cause of revolutionary change in and of itself.

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The transformative effect of social media on today's global political scene receives a great deal of attention. This spotlight has intensified many times over since the 'Arab Spring', in which autocratic leaders who had been in power for decades were driven from office, with Facebook-organized protests and Twitter feeds playing an important – though perhaps misunderstood – role.

With countries like Tunisia and Egypt as the first states to succumb to these uprisings, the 'Arab Spring' is continuing to play out and to destabilize the political status quo across the region, from Libya to Syria to Yemen. It has also caused many to ask whether the movement that is gripping the Middle East and North Africa might spread to other countries and regions that share certain social, political, or economic features, particularly regimes led by long-standing autocratic leaders. One such region that has received a significant amount of attention in this regard is the former Soviet Union.

The former Soviet Union is no stranger to autocratic states with long-serving leaders, some of whom have been in power since before the collapse of the Soviet Union roughly two decades ago. Many countries in the region face the same problems as Middle Eastern societies: high levels of social inequality, corruption, and youth unemployment, for example. And indeed, there are and have been social media-based movements in

these countries, some of which have already had significant political consequences.

However, the capacity of social media to significantly affect the wider geopolitics of the former Soviet Union has been, and remains, fairly limited. While it is very likely that social media will serve as an important tool in shaping political processes in the region, it is more likely to respond to other more powerful forces – rather than independently driving developments.

A diverse region

In order to understand the impact of social media on countries in the former Soviet Union, one must first understand the geopolitical dynamics and trends at play across the region.

First of all, this is a diverse region, ranging from countries like Estonia, a member of the EU, NATO, and Eurozone, to countries like Tajikistan, which has much more in common with Afghanistan than it does with its former Soviet counterpart, Estonia.

Broadly speaking, the former Soviet Union in its present form can be divided into five categories, which reflect geographic as well as political proximity: the Baltics, the Eastern European countries, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Russia proper.

Rather than evaluate the role and potential impact of social media on the region as a whole, it would perhaps be more productive to apply

In this context, decisive political changes in certain former Soviet states might serve Russian interests, while in others, Moscow would be in favor of maintaining the status quo. One example of this is Russia's support for the April 2010 revolution in Kyrgyzstan, which brought in a government more willing to cater to Moscow's interests

it to each of these sub-regions. Of course, even the countries within the identified sub-regions are significantly different from one another in terms of political outlook: for instance, Georgia's pro-western and European-oriented national strategy is more similar to the Baltic countries than its neighbors in the Caucasus. Nonetheless, considering the situation within sub-regional divisions is still more useful than looking at this vast region without drawing such distinctions.

That being said, one geopolitical trend that does apply to the entire former Soviet Union area is Russia's resurgence as a major regional power. While Russia spent the 90's and early 2000's in a state of political and economic chaos, and in geopolitical retreat, Moscow's power relative to the region has been on the increase since the middle of the past decade, a shift epitomized by Russia's war with Georgia in August 2008. However,

Moscow's resurgence has not only been felt in the security realm. The reversal of the Orange Revolution with the election of Viktor Yanukovich as president of Ukraine in 2010 and the formation of the Customs Union with Belarus and Kazakhstan - now set to become a Common Economic Space in 2012 - are examples of Russia's growing political and economic influence in the former Soviet periphery.

This is not to argue that Russia is in the process of re-creating the Soviet Union, but Moscow's influence in the region is clearly on the rise. The U.S's focus on the political theater in the Middle East and the ongoing financial and political troubles of the European Union have given Russia a window of opportunity to install political, economic, and security levers in many of the former Soviet states. Thus any analysis of the geopolitics of the former Soviet Union must take into account Russia's relationship with these states – and social media is no exception.

In this context, decisive political changes in certain former Soviet states might serve Russian interests, while in others, Moscow would be in favor of maintaining the status quo. One example of this is Russia's support for the April 2010 revolution in Kyrgyzstan, which brought in a government more willing to cater to Moscow's interests; on the other

hand, Russia condemned opposition protests in Belarus and was one of the few states to support the crackdown on protestors by Belarusian security services. The same principle can be seen in Russia's support of opposition protests against the Saakashvili regime in Georgia, but its hesitation to back demonstrations in countries like Armenia, a staunch Russian ally.

The broad theme reflected by these scenarios is that Russia is seeking to establish a sphere of influence in its former Soviet periphery, whereby governments are willing to cooperate with Moscow, and refrain from significant interaction with outside powers, particularly Western ones. Thus regime changes in pro-western countries like Georgia and the Baltics are in Russia's interests, while the governments of many of the other countries in the former Soviet Union pose less risk in their current forms. This does not mean that Russia controls the extent to which social media can affect the governments in the latter countries, simply that Moscow's views and presence must be taken into account by these countries.

Social media: the strengths and weaknesses

Having considered the geopolitics of the former Soviet Union, it is important to consider the effects of social media can have on geopolitics. There are a number of factors to consider when gauging the impact of

social media on the region.

The first and most obvious factor is internet access. After all, without internet, there is no access to social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube. The former Soviet Union is in general an area made up of low to middle income countries, and so as expected, internet usage levels are lower than in the West.

According to the Internet World Stats website,¹ the percentage of internet usage penetration in Germany – a benchmark of European and Western internet usage - was just under 80 percent. In the European countries of the former Soviet Union (excluding the Baltics), this number is much lower – 43 percent in Russia, 46 percent in Belarus, 34 percent in Ukraine, and 31 percent in Moldova. In the Caucasus sub-region, numbers are similar, with an average of 40 percent penetration, while Central Asia as a region averages around 22 percent.

An additional factor, one that stems from the first, is the number of social media users in these countries. This is influenced by the total national population, and so it is to be expected that Russia – with roughly 4.6 million registered Facebook users – is the leading country in terms of total social media users. However, this also corresponds to the level of internet usage in a country. For instance, Azerbaijan has a relatively

¹ <http://www.internetworldstats.com>

high proportion of internet users in comparison with the rest of the region (47 percent), and therefore boasts a greater number of Facebook users than most of the other FSU states – just over 450,000 users, according to APA news agency. Only Ukraine, Georgia, and of course Russia have more people on Facebook than Azerbaijan.

However, these numbers can be misleading in terms of determining which countries are prone to political turbulence and revolutionary activity. For instance, Russia has a relatively high Internet and Facebook usage, whereas Kyrgyzstan's usage is quite low. But Kyrgyzstan has experienced far more political volatility than Russia, so clearly there are other forces in play in stimulating political transformation across the former Soviet states.

This observation brings to bear the third factor, which is the ability to harness the usage of social media into physical (as opposed to virtual) social action. As the numbers demonstrate, internet-using citizens make up the minority of most national populations across the former Soviet Union. Furthermore, those who use social media make up only a fraction of the total internet users. Therefore, to generate serious transformation of a country's political system via social actions like protests and demonstrations, social media users must have the ability to expand their support base beyond social media

and, ultimately, beyond internet users.

There are two reasons for this. First, there is the practical reason – just as social media makes communication easier in a certain way, it also exposes this communication to surveillance by the host government. This allows the government to monitor communications, and respond to any plans being made by users more swiftly than if those plans were being discussed in private back-room discussions. Furthermore, governments have the power to shut down Internet services altogether.

Secondly, there is a more traditional reason – historically, virtually all successful revolutions have had to appeal to the broader masses. This means not only appealing to the young and tech-savvy (who tend to belong to the middle/upper classes), but bringing out the shopkeepers, retirees, and rural communities to support the movement. Ultimately, this was the difference between Iran's successful Islamic Revolution in 1979, and the failed Green Revolution in 2009. The former successfully appealed to the masses, and a broad cross-section of society, while the latter did not.

Social media in the former Soviet space

This is not to say that social media has no influence on the geopolitics of the former Soviet Union. However, rather than generating revolutionary changes in the political systems of the countries in the region, it has

contributed to the evolutionary changes that are already underway.

Russia

Russia is the country that has been on the receiving end of the most speculation about the capacity of social media to bring about Egypt-style unrest that could unseat the Moscow government. However, Russia is actually one of the least affected countries in terms of social media-related protests happening on the ground. For social media movements to have an impact on a country as vast as Russia and to overcome the security apparatus that has proven so effective in clamping down on unregistered protests, these movements would need to gain mass appeal, which, so far, they have not.

Baltics

The Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are unique to the region as they are the only ones who are members of key Western institutions such as the European Union and NATO. The Baltic states are all representative democracies with relatively free societies and open media. In this sense they are no more susceptible to revolution via social networking than other EU country- Germany or France, for instance. Therefore social media is unlikely to play any significant role in transforming the political processes in a revolutionary way.

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Belarus

Belarus is actually quite susceptible to political change via social media, at least theoretically speaking. The country has experienced some serious financial and economic problems, due in no small part to the political isolation from the West imposed by the government of Alexander Lukashenko. There were attempts by opposition groups and activists to organize “silent protests” via Facebook. However, after weeks of bringing relatively low numbers of people out onto the streets (typically in the low hundreds) and the detention of these activists by Belarusian authorities, the Facebook protests began to fizzle out, and eventually were cancelled until the opposition could organize a larger and more effective movement.

Ukraine

In geographical terms, Ukraine straddles Russia and the EU, and in a sense, its political system reflects this duality. While it by no means shares the representative democracy enjoyed by the Baltic states,

nor does Ukraine have the same centralized and autocratic system of its Belarusian and Russian neighbors. However, the administration of President Viktor Yanukovich has come under increased scrutiny over the politically motivated detentions of some of Yanukovich's rivals,

Moldova has been quite affected by social media, with the so-called 'Twitter Revolution' of 2009.

notably former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko. This incident sparked anti-Yanukovich protests, and indicated early signs of political isolation from the West, as in Lukashenko's Belarus, though to a far lesser extent. However, social networking has played only a limited role in organizing the opposition. Indeed, the Orange Revolution was more a product of grassroots political movements (with a certain amount of support from the West) rather than driven by social networking activity. Therefore it is likely that social media will continue to play a fairly marginal role in shaping the future of Ukraine's political system and orientation.

Moldova

Moldova has been quite affected by social media, with the so-called 'Twitter Revolution' of 2009. But the political and geopolitical realities have exposed the limits of what a

"revolution" of this type can really change in Moldova. While social networking did contribute to bringing tens of thousands of people onto the streets to protest – and eventually overturn – the Communist victory in parliamentary elections, this event ushered in a period of more than 2 years of political deadlock. Moldova is split between pro-European parties and the pro-Russian Communists, which retain a great deal of national support, despite being relegated to the opposition. This level of support has enabled the Communists to single-handedly block the appointment of a President in the country. It seems unlikely that social media activism will be able to unlock this stalemate.

Caucasus

Georgia is another country that has experienced a revolution – the 2003 'Rose Revolution'. But this pre-dated the widespread usage of social media tools like Facebook and Twitter, and provides further proof that transformative change was quite possible before the era of social media.

In Azerbaijan, opposition forces tried to utilize social media to organize protests against the government. Azerbaijan had an entire Facebook movement called "March 11", which was dedicated to organizing protests against the government. However, as in Belarus, this movement fell far

Armenia has one of the lowest Facebook usage rates in the former Soviet Union- and yet had one of the largest protest campaigns across the region this year

short of its organizers' expectations. The number of people who showed up on the streets was far smaller than the number of member of the Facebook group, supporting claims that many members of the groups were not actually Azerbaijani citizens living in the country. In the same way as Belarus, the members of the Facebook-organized movement did not represent the wider population, and therefore its capacity to seriously challenge the government and security services was limited.

On the other hand, another country in the Caucasus – Armenia – has had significant protests in the past year. At their height, these protests reached over 10,000 people and were occurring on a bi-monthly basis in the early part of 2011. However, these protests were not fueled by social media tools such as Facebook; rather they were the product of grassroots campaigning by the opposition group, the Armenian National Congress (ANC), led by former Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosyan. Indeed, Armenia has one of the lowest Facebook usage rates in the former Soviet Union-

and yet had one of the largest protest campaigns across the region this year (though these too failed to achieve their aim of forcing snap elections).

Central Asia

Kyrgyzstan is yet another country that has recently experienced a revolution – in fact, 2 in the past 6 years. But Kyrgyzstan, like the rest of Central Asia, has a low proportion of internet users, particularly among the rural areas and older people. Thus the revolutions were minimally influenced by social media; instead they were a product of deeper geopolitical issues, such as the divided and clan-based society and widespread disenchantment with the corruption and nepotism of the country's leadership.

Other countries in Central Asia are also unlikely to be seriously affected by social media. Tajikistan and Turkmenistan both have internet usage rates in the single digits in terms of population percentage.² Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan could see significant social and political disruption in the coming years, but this is due uncertainty about leadership transitions, as opposed to Facebook or Twitter.

² Turkmenistan 80,400 Internet users as of Jun/10, 1.6% penetration rate, per ITU; Tajikistan 700,000 Internet users as of Jun/10, 9.3% penetration rate, per ITU. Link: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/asia.htm>

Conclusion

While its effects have varied across the different sub-regions of the former Soviet Union, social media has not been a game-changing force in Eurasia. In the main, social media-organized protests in the region have had a limited effect in creating the political change they were seeking. Moreover, in the revolutions and political changes that have occurred in the former Soviet Union over the past few years, social media has not been as a primary force or feature.

If anything, the use of social media has been shaped by geopolitical circumstances, rather than the other way around. Countries like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, mountainous, poor, and geographically isolated; the low internet usage and marginal effect of social media on the political system serve to emphasize these geopolitical realities. Belarus - located in Europe and surrounded by EU members - has a relatively high rate of internet and social media usage. However, the government's tight control of opposition groups and the demographic profile of social network users (mostly young and urban) has limited their ability to influence the political system and to lead social movements.

Certainly social media can act - and has acted - as an enabler of significant political developments. But far from causing revolutions - and more importantly - ushering in regime

change following these revolutions, social media simply serves as one tool amongst many as a force for political change.

This is not to say that social media will not have an impact on the geopolitics of the former Soviet Union. However, rather than producing revolutionary changes to the political systems of the countries in the region, it will contribute to the evolutionary changes that are already underway.

Russia and the Unresolved
Conflicts in
Eurasia

**Svante E.
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Abstract

Relations between Russia and the West have normalized greatly since the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008. While the war initially led to questioning of Russia's credibility as a mediator in Eurasia's other conflicts, such criticism has taken a backseat to the improvements in relations that have followed. However, while Russia's policies toward the West have changed, this article suggests that Moscow continues to pursue the quest for a zone of privileged interests in Eurasia, and that a chief instrument in this respect is the manipulation of unresolved conflicts. While Russia continues to undermine Georgia by other means, its role in the conflicts over Transnistria and Nagorno-Karabakh have not changed. In Transnistria, Moscow has failed to respond constructively to German efforts to move toward a resolution, even though the German initiative has gone out of its way to accommodate Russian interests. In the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Moscow took the lead in revitalizing peace talks in November 2008, only weeks after the conclusion of the war in Georgia. This suggested that Moscow instrumentalized the peace talks in order to consolidate its position in the South Caucasus rather than seeking to function as an honest broker; this fact, along with continued arms sales to both parties, revealed a lack of credibility as a negotiator that ensured the talks would not succeed. Thus, Moscow's policies continue to form a leading obstacle to conflict resolution in the post-Soviet space.

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For two decades, Russia has played a leading role in the negotiations surrounding the unresolved conflicts of the post-Soviet space: Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia, the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the conflict in Moldova's region of Transnistria. Russia's mediation and peacekeeping has on the one hand been praised by Western powers for maintaining stability in these conflicts; on the other hand, numerous critics have detailed Russia's role in instigating these conflicts, as well as Russia's manipulation of the conflicts for its geopolitical purposes.¹

The perception of Russia as a mediator to Eurasian conflicts has fluctuated greatly over the past three years. In August 2008, Russia's image as a peacemaker was badly damaged by its invasion of Georgia. Following local skirmishes in South Ossetia in late July and early August, Russia launched a mass invasion of not only that region but Abkhazia as well, the nature and speed of which led many observers to conclude had been premeditated. Indeed, subsequent re-

1 See Thomas Goltz, *-Letter from Eurasia: The Hidden Russian Hand, Foreign Policy*, Fall 1993; Evgeni M. Kozhokin, *-Georgia-Abkhazia*, in Jeremy R. Azrael and Emil A. Payin, eds., *US and Russian Policymaking with Regard to the Use of Force*, Santa Monica: Rand Corp., 1996; Alexei Zverev, *-Ethnic Conflict in the Caucasus, 1988-94*, in Bruno Coppieters, ed., *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, Brussels: VUB Press, 1996; Fiona Hill, and Pamela Jewett, *"Back in the USSR": Russia's Intervention in the Internal Affairs of the Former Soviet Republics and the Implications for United States Policy Toward Russia*, Cambridge, MA: Strengthening Democratic Institutions Project, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, January 1994; Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*, 349-51.

search has showed convincingly that Russian leaders had long planned and sought the conflict with Georgia.²

Thus, the events of 2008 led Russia belatedly to lose the position as a mediator and peacekeeper in Georgia's conflicts that it had enjoyed, despite growing skepticism, in the eyes of the international community. Moscow has, in the aftermath of the war, tried to re-establish the notion that it is not party to the conflicts in Georgia, but these attempts have so far failed, Russia's military presence on Georgian territory making its role as a party to the conflict clear. Moreover, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev announced an overtly imperialist doctrine, declaring that "Russia, like other countries in the world, has regions where it has privileged interests," and that these include Russia's "border region, but not only."³ Nevertheless, the changes in perceptions of Russia's role in Georgia's conflicts did not automatically translate into a reassessment of Russia's role as a mediator in the Armenian-Azerbaijani and Transnistrian conflicts.

The Russian invasion of Georgia was understood in its immediate aftermath as a watershed event. However, only a few weeks after the invasion, in late September 2008, the U.S. fi-

2 Svante E. Cornell and S. Frederick Starr, *The Guns of August 2008: Russia's War in Georgia* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2009); See also Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World: Georgia: Russia and the Future of the West* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 2010).

3 Andrew E. Kramer, "Russia Claims Its Sphere of Influence in the World," *New York Times*, August 31, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/01/world/europe/01russia.html>.

nancial system stood on the verge of collapse, leading to the global financial crisis that still plagues the Euro-Atlantic area. As world leaders struggled to save the world economy, the crisis in Georgia appeared less important. Thus, Russia's stated ambition in November 2008 to take the lead in a new round of negotiations between Baku and Yerevan was generally taken at face value by the international community. In the months and years that have followed, relations between Russia and the West have improved; a consensus has emerged that the economic crisis led to changed Russian attitudes in the international arena. Indeed, Russian policies toward the West have appeared to take on a new and more conciliatory tone. Russia moved to resolve a decades-old dispute with Norway on maritime boundaries, to patch up its longstanding differences with Poland, and in 2010 worked with NATO towards a compromise on the issue of missile defense. It likewise has appeared to reciprocate the Obama administration's "reset" diplomacy, cooperating with the U.S. on sanctions against Iran and logistics in Afghanistan.

The implication of these developments has been to minimize criticism of Russia's role in the unresolved conflicts of Eurasia. Indeed, Western powers lent support to President Dmitry Medvedev's efforts to bring about progress in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, involving a failed summit in Kazan in 2011, and German

leaders have raised the possibility of closer cooperation with Russia on resolving the conflict in Transnistria.

This article strives to assess whether the thaw in Russia's relations with the West has led to any substantial changes in Russia's policy toward the unresolved conflicts of Eurasia. The article will argue that contrary to appearances, these policies have remained essentially the same, and that Moscow's policy continues to be to maintain the status quo in these conflicts until and unless a resolution can be achieved that would cement Russia's geopolitical influence in the countries involved, preferably through a long-term military presence.

Georgia: the Conflict Continues

The ongoing situation concerning Georgia and its secessionist regions—Abkhazia and South Ossetia—remains the main area of discord between Russia and the West. Little has changed in Moscow's policies toward Georgia, and indeed, the war of August 2008 should not be seen as an isolated event, but as the most violent and acute phase of a Russian-Georgian conflict that dates back to the late Soviet period.

Thus, long before the 2008 war, Georgia stood out as the post-Soviet country where Russia had most aggressively asserted itself. In the early 1990s, its military had taken an active role in the secessionist wars. In the mid-1990s, considerable evidence

suggests elements in Moscow were involved in an attempt to assassinate then-Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze. And on several occasions before current President Mikheil Saakashvili's rise to power, Moscow bombed Georgian territory—making it the only country where Russia had used outright military power.⁴ This indicates that while the war between Russia and Georgia may be over, the conflict between Moscow and Tbilisi continues at other levels.

The threat of a new Russian invasion cannot be dismissed out of hand. In the early summer of 2009, a considerable number of analysts deemed a renewed Russian military attack on Georgia—one designed to finish the job of ousting the Saakashvili regime—to be likely. While it is nearly impossible to know if such a war was indeed being planned, the diplomatic and military preparations were certainly observable.⁵ For reasons that are not known, but which may involve messages sent during President

4 Svante E. Cornell, *Georgia after the Rose Revolution: Geopolitical Predicament and Implications for U.S. Policy* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, March 2007), <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/publications/2007/0703USAWC.pdf>.

5 Paul Goble, "Russian Experts Divided on Probability of New War with Georgia," *Window on Eurasia*, 1 July 2009, <http://windowoneurasia.blogspot.com/2009/07/window-on-eurasia-russian-experts.html>; "Russia to Plot a Second War Against Georgia?" *Panarmenian.net*, June 29, 2009, <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/world/news/33516/>; Gregory Feifer, "Friction Feeds Fear of New Russia-Georgia Conflict," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, June 29, 2009, http://www.rferl.org/content/Fears_Grow_Of_New_RussiaGeorgia_Conflict/1765258.html; Yulia Latynina, "New War With Georgia Could Lead to 'Collapse of Russia,'" *Yezhednevnyy Zhurnal (Moscow)*, August 3, 2009.

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Barack Obama's July 2009 visit to Moscow, these plans were not implemented.⁶

Russia continues to violate the 2008 cease-fire agreement negotiated by the European Union, and to overtly seek regime change in Georgia. Russia likewise has rapidly expanded its military presence in the territories that it effectively occupies. On the basis of agreements with the de facto governments in Sukhumi and Tskhinvali, Moscow has built permanent military bases in both territories.⁷ Moreover, these include sophisticated hardware, some of which appears directed at threatening the Georgian capital. In late 2010 and early 2011, it was reported that Russia had deployed Smerch (Tornado) multiple-launch rocket systems and Tochka-U (SS-21 Scarab B) short-range tactical ballistic missile systems in South Os-

6 Brian Whitmore, "Is a Russia-Georgia War Off the Table?" *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, July 14, 2009, http://www.rferl.org/content/Is_War_Off_The_Table_In_Georgia/1776909.html.

7 Philip P. Pan, "Putin Visits Breakaway Georgian Region, Unveils Plan for Military Base," *Washington Post*, August 13, 2009.

setia, less than 60 miles from Tbilisi.⁸ Moreover, Russia continues to block the unarmed EU Monitoring Mission from accessing either Abkhazia or South Ossetia, as well as preventing the return to their homes of a quarter million ethnic Georgians displaced by the conflicts.

In addition to the military build-up, Russia's wholesale economic embargo on Georgia is still in place, and Russian activities to undermine the Georgian government have not ceased. First, Moscow funds and supports the most radical elements of the Georgian opposition. For example, the Georgian Interior Ministry released a recording in which the leader of the Democratic Movement-United Georgia Party Nino Burjanadze and her son are overheard while planning the May 2011 attempted coup d'état, openly discussing the possibility of assistance from Russian commandos.⁹ (Burjanadze has failed to deny the authenticity of the recording.) Secondly, Moscow continues to publicly accuse Georgia of assisting Islamist terrorism in the North Caucasus, in spite of the total absence of evidence to that effect. Conversely, however, Russia's hand is visible behind a string of a dozen bombings that has rocked Georgia in the past year. These were all conducted with

RDX explosives, targeting opposition party offices, railway bridges, supermarkets, as well as the NATO liaison office in Tbilisi and perhaps most alarmingly, a bomb that went off outside the wall of the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi. Thanks to investigative reporting by the Washington Times, it is now known that the U.S. intelligence community has endorsed the conclusions of the Georgian government's investigation, which identifies an Abkhazia-based Russian Military Intelligence officer as the mastermind of the bombing spree, including the one targeting the U.S. Embassy.¹⁰

These events all suggest that in its long-standing conflict with Georgia, Moscow currently emphasizes subversive and covert strategies rather than overt military action. But there should be little doubt that Russia continues to actively undermine the development and security of Georgia.

On the diplomatic front, Moscow has engaged in two key efforts toward Georgia. First, while building up its own military capabilities on Georgian territory, it has successfully forced the equivalent of an international arms embargo on the country. The method has been to falsely accuse the U.S. and other Western states of supplying large quantities of weapons to Georgia, thus obtaining assurances that such deliveries have not been made—and an implicit acceptance

8 "Tbilisi Condemns Russia's Smerch Rocket Systems in S. Ossetia," *Civil Georgia*, December 7, 2010, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22932>; "Reports: Russia Deploys Tochka-U Rockets in S. Ossetia," *Civil Georgia*, January 24, 2011, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=23077>.

9 Recording available with English translation at [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJDd8wL8AaE>].

10 Eli Lake, "Classified Report: Russia Tied to Blast at the U.S. Embassy – Supports Local Findings", *Washington Times*, 27 July 2011. [<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/jul/26/us-report-russia-tied-to-embassy-blast/>]

Before the 2008 war, Moscow interfered increasingly directly in the affairs of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, for example through the illegal distribution of Russian passports, economic investments, and through the direct appointment of Russian state employees to the unrecognized governments of the two entities.

that they should not in the future. As analyst Vladimir Socor has observed, “[t]he claim about those arms deliveries is intended for a U.S. and NATO audience. The Russian government must know that this audience knows that their claim is false. The purpose of such statements is simply to draw, or reinforce, Moscow’s red lines regarding Western policies”.¹¹ This effectively serves to sustain Georgia’s acute vulnerability, leaving Tbilisi defenseless to a renewed Russian invasion at some point in the future, and enabling Moscow to intimidate the present and future governments there.

Secondly, Moscow is seeking to distort the reality in the conflict zones. Before the 2008 war, Moscow interfered increasingly directly in the affairs of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, for example through the illegal distribution of Russian passports, economic investments, and through the direct

¹¹ Vladimir Socor, “Russia Calls for Arms Embargo on Georgia after War’s Second Anniversary,” *Jamestown Foundation Eurasia Daily Monitor* 7 no. 157, August 13, 2010.

appointment of Russian state employees to the unrecognized governments of the two entities. At the same time, it sought to portray itself as an honest broker, mediator and peacekeeper in the conflict—and obtained Western confirmation of this status, as well as regular praise in UN resolutions.

Moscow maintains that it is not a party to the conflict—that the conflicts are between Georgia on the one hand and the “independent states” of South Ossetia and Abkhazia on the other.¹² This strategy became most obvious in December 2010, after Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili made a unilateral pledge in the European Parliament not to use force to recover the secessionist territories. In response, Moscow refused to follow suit and make a pledge not to use force against Georgia, arguing that it is not a party to the conflict.¹³ This diplomatic initiative has not met with success, and indeed, Georgia has remained the main thorn in Russia’s relationship with the West and in its international image. Contrary to the case before August 2008, the world firmly views Russia as a party to the conflict.

¹² *Ibid.*; “We Don’t See Conflict Between Russia and Georgia—Lavrov,” *News.az*, December 3, 2010, <http://news.az/articles/georgia/27708>; “Russia Warns of ‘Confrontational’ UN Document on Refugees,” *Russia Today*, August 26, 2009, <http://rt.com/politics/russia-warns-confrontational-document/>.

¹³ “Moscow Responds to Saakashvili’s Non-Use of Force Pledge,” *Civil Georgia*, November 24, 2010, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22891>.

Armenia and Azerbaijan

During 2009 and 2010, the unresolved conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan has been slowly escalating, with the war of words between the two countries mounting and skirmishes along the cease-fire line increasing.¹⁴ Unfortunately, this evolution is partly a result of Western neglect of the conflict, and the collapse of the U.S.-sponsored Turkish-Armenian reconciliation process. Moscow's policies have been two-fold: asserting its role as the primary mediator between the parties, and stepping up its provision of military hardware to both of them.

Although Armenia sits on the land occupied since 1992-94, its population has shrunk considerably since independence due to emigration. By contrast, oil and gas riches have made Azerbaijan the fastest-growing economy of the world in the past five years.

Two decades in the making, the conflict is often considered the quintessential “frozen” conflict, eliciting comparisons to the Cyprus conflict. However, the conflict is far from frozen, and unlike in Cyprus, the risk of renewed hostilities is very much present. In fact, the status quo is un-

¹⁴ Nina Caspersen, “Mounting Tensions over Nagorno-Karabakh”, *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst* 7, no. 13, July 7, 2010, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5363>; Armenia and Azerbaijan: Preventing War, International Crisis Group Europe Briefing no. 60, February 8, 2011.

tenable for one simple reason: the balance of power between the two protagonists is changing rapidly. Although Armenia sits on the land occupied since 1992-94, its population has shrunk considerably since independence due to emigration. By contrast, oil and gas riches have made Azerbaijan the fastest-growing economy of the world in the past five years. Its economy is now almost five times larger than Armenia's; its defense budget alone far surpasses Armenia's entire state budget.

Making matters worse are several facts: first, there are no peacekeeping forces separating the Armenian and Azerbaijani armies, which are eyeball to eyeball across the cease-fire line. Second, leaders on both sides have adopted increasingly fierce nationalistic rhetoric as the conflict has gone unresolved, and given the passage of time, most Armenians and Azerbaijani under the age of 40 have never met a person from the enemy nation. Finally, strong forces on both sides believe time is on their side. In Azerbaijan, the thinking is that the discrepancy of power will only increase to Baku's advantage, decreasing incentives to agree to a deal today when the possibility exists of imposing a better one tomorrow. In Armenia, by contrast, the feeling is that the world is increasingly receptive to the principle of self-determination that the Armenians of Karabakh champion, given the independence of East Timor,

Montenegro, and especially Kosovo. After all, if there are two Albanian states in the Balkans, why can't there be two Armenian ones in the Caucasus? Of course, especially since the ethnic cleansing disproportionately targeted Azerbaijanis, the prospect of the international community ever recognizing the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh is in reality very unlikely.

Western diplomats have generally considered the conflict sufficiently frozen to concentrate, instead, on more urgent matters elsewhere. As such, attention to mediation efforts has been sporadic and erratic. The Bush administration did host a summit in Key West in 2001; French president Jacques Chirac hosted another at Rambouillet in 2006, and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev organized a third in Kazan in 2011. But in between such bursts of energy, little has been done to work toward an agreement. No top-notch mediator has been deployed by Paris, Washington or Moscow to continuously work on the conflict; instead, mid-level ambassadors have chaired the talks, a strategy that has failed to produce results.

The events of 2008-2009 illustrate this neglect. If anything, the war in Georgia should have served as a stern reminder that conflicts of the South Caucasus are far from "frozen". Having failed to prevent the escalation to war in Georgia, it would have been logical for Western powers to redou-

ble their efforts to resolve the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. Instead, as absurd as it seems, Western leaders did not blink when Russia, fresh from its invasion of Georgia, announced it would take the lead to seek a negotiated solution.

Thus, shortly after the war in Georgia, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev took a leading role in the negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. This served two purposes: first, to improve Russia's tarnished international reputation; and second, to reinforce Russia's role as the predominant force in the South Caucasus. While both the Azerbaijani and Armenian presidents played along, not least in a high-profile summit in Moscow in November 2008, the negotiations went nowhere because of the volatile post-war regional atmosphere. In spite of this fact, Medvedev in October 2010 continued to express optimism that a deal would be reached by that December. Needless to say, there was no progress in that direction.¹⁵ Similarly, Medvedev organized a high-level meeting in Kazan in June 2011, which attracted substantial levels of international attention, involving hopes of a breakthrough in negotiations. Again, such progress failed to materialize.

The reason for the failure is simple: Russia lacks credibility as a mediator. Indeed, while playing the part of a mediator, Moscow has simultane-

¹⁵ "Medvedev Seeks Karabakh Deal by December," *Moscow Times*, October 28, 2010.

ously been acting as an arms merchant in the South Caucasus. Russia has sold Armenia arms at low prices, while offering them to Azerbaijan at high cost.

Following the successful extension of Russia's basing rights at Sevastopol on Ukraine's Crimea peninsula, Moscow applied the same blueprint in Armenia. August 2010 saw the amendment of the 1995 Russian-Armenian bilateral defense treaty, extending the lease of Russia's military base at Gyumri until 2044. At the same time, the wording of the agreement itself was altered; whereas the origi-

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nal treaty included a commitment by Russia to come to Armenia's defense if the country was attacked "by a state outside the CIS," (a reference at the time mainly referring to Turkey) the amended treaty included no such clause. Thus, Yerevan in practice received stronger commitments from Moscow for defense against a possible Azerbaijani attack to reclaim its lost territories. To make good on these obligations, Russia also transferred a large volume of armaments to Armenia.¹⁶

¹⁶ Fariz Ismailzade, "Russian Arms to Armenia Could

But Moscow is playing both sides of the fence. While its main focus has continued to be Armenia, Russia is reported to have sold S-300 advanced anti-aircraft to Azerbaijan, and to have provided Baku with considerable amounts of tanks and other armaments.¹⁷

Thus, Moscow's policy in the Armenian-Azerbaijani dispute seems to be to seek a negotiated solution on its own terms, one that would certainly involve Russian troops on Azerbaijani territory in some form of peace-keeping role. Barring that, it strives to sustain a controlled level of instability in the South Caucasus, one that ensures Armenia's continued dependence on Moscow while attaching cost to Azerbaijan's independent policies.

No Resolution in Transnistria

Moldova, with its unresolved conflict in Transnistria, has long been Europe's poorest, and perhaps most forgotten country. Ever since a short conflict in 1992, Russian military forces have been deployed in the eastern Transnistria region, where a secessionist pro-Russian, neo-communist regime remains in control. Russia's military presence in Moldova exists against the will of the Moldovan government and in contraven-

Change Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy Orientation, Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst 11, no. 2, January 28, 2009, <http://cacianalyst.org/files/090128Analyst.pdf>.

¹⁷ Shahin Abbasov, "Azerbaijan: Baku Embarks on Military Spending Surge, Seeking Karabakh Peace," *eurasianet.org*, October 22, 2010, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/62223>.

tion of its constitution, and has been one of the chief stumbling blocks for the entering into force of the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe.

In 2010, the German government launched an initiative to explore closer security cooperation between Europe and Russia. At a summit in Meseberg, near Berlin, in June 2010, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Russian President Medvedev signed a memorandum to “explore the establishment of an EU-Russia Political and Security Committee,” which would be a considerable step toward changing the architecture of European security.¹⁸ The move had taken place without consultations with Washington, and the intended body would surpass the institutional forms of coordination between the EU and NATO, or between the EU and the U.S.

However, Merkel explicitly raised resolution of the conflict in Transnistria as a test case of EU-Russia security cooperation, and the memorandum promised joint efforts in that direction.¹⁹ Berlin also followed up on this memorandum: soon after the Meseberg summit, German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle visited Moldova, the first to do so.²⁰ German

leaders then raised the issue with French and Polish leaders in the consultations known as the Weimar triangle, and Chancellor Merkel further coordinated with Romanian leaders during a state visit in October 2010. Yet almost a year later, Moscow had failed to reciprocate, in spite of German proposals that went a considerable distance in meeting Moscow’s policy goals – involving pressuring Moldova to accept a solution based on a federalized state in which the separatist regime in Tiraspol would have significant influence, which in turn would undermine Moldova’s European integration. Although German diplomacy sidelined the EU and U.S., who unlike Germany are official parties in the 5+2 format of the negotiations on Transnistria, and moved closer to Moscow’s position, Russian intransigence continued.²¹

Thus, Germany’s initiative has failed to bear fruit in spite of the great benefits and prestige a developed security relationship with the EU would offer Moscow. Observers with first-hand information about the negotiations suggest that Russian negotiators are more polite, but have yielded nothing on substance. Indeed, Moscow has not backtracked from its stance on the conflict—which continues to back the Smirnov regime in Transnistria, while demanding a resolution

18 Vladimir Socor, “Meseberg Process: Germany Testing EU-Russia Security Cooperation Potential,” *Jamestown Foundation Eurasia Daily Monitor* 7, no. 191, October 22, 2010; George Friedman, “Germany and Russia Moving Closer Together”, *Stratfor*, June 22, 2010.

19 See, for example, Judy Dempsey, “Challenging Russia to Fix a Frozen Feud,” *New York Times*, October 28, 2010.

20 “The First Visit by a German Foreign Minister to Moldova,” *Eastweek*, June 30, 2010, <http://www.osw.waw>.

pl/en/publikacje/eastweek/2010-06-30/first-visit-a-german-foreign-minister-to-moldova.

21 Vladimir Socor, “Moscow Meeting Fails to Re-Launch 5+2 Negotiations On Transnistria Conflict”, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 22 June 2011.

and a “reliably guaranteed” special status for Transnistria as well as Moldova’s “constitutional neutrality” before any military withdrawal.

Conclusions

While the atmospherics in Russia’s relations with the West have changed, it is clear that little has changed in Russia’s policies on the unresolved conflicts in Eurasia. Indeed, Russian aspirations to a sphere of influence covering the former Soviet space are still very much alive. Russia makes use of a range of mechanisms to reward positive behavior or punish undesirable actions on the part of neighboring states. The main problem for Moscow is that its means of influence in the former Soviet space is mainly negative: it has little to offer the states of Eurasia, but great potential to undermine their security by diplomatic, economic, subversive, or military measures. Thus, Moscow has few carrots, necessitating a heavy use of sticks. Russian rewards extend to privileged export deals for military and other hardware, as well as subsidized energy prices. But potential punishments are many, including economic sanctions and embargos, manipulation of the price and supply of energy, intervention in domestic politics and unresolved conflicts, subversive activities, military provocations, and ultimately, as in Georgia, the use of full-scale military force. More than anything, Moscow uses manipulation of unresolved conflicts to maintain its position in the countries affected.

It is well-known that Russia’s main desire in establishing the “reset” diplomacy with the United States – and similar efforts with European states – has been to obtain acceptance in the West of its claim to a sphere of influence in Eurasia. Western states have publicly and repeatedly rejected such a sphere of influence. Nevertheless, Western engagement in the region since 2008 has decreased dramatically. This is in all likelihood greatly a result of the financial crisis. Yet several policies suggest that a desire not to antagonize Moscow is part and parcel of the lack of Western engagement. Most egregiously, America’s refusal to normalize military relations with Georgia and to resume the sale of military equipment to Georgia to the pre-2008 levels seem to uphold the favored Russian policy of a de facto arms embargo on Georgia. Similarly, Western efforts to develop the southern energy corridor through the Black Sea and Caspian basin have been much reduced. Thus, the inescapable conclusion is that while Western leaders reject the Russian notion of a sphere of influence, they have reduced their level of engagement to a level that allows Moscow to conclude that its demands for a sphere of influence are not being actively challenged.

Even though Western policies have been markedly less principled and active in Eurasia, Moscow has been unable to make much headway in consolidating its position. The gov-

ernment of Mikheil Saakashvili in Georgia survives, having weathered serious internal storms while maintaining substantial public legitimacy and continuing its reform agenda, though perhaps at a slower pace than before. Moscow's war against Georgia caused enormous damage to that country, but also made inconceivable the arrival to power of a pro-Russian politician of the Yanukovich mold. Indeed, if not before, 2008 was the year that Russia lost Georgia. Similarly, Russia's renewal of its basing agreement with Armenia, and the attendant arms supplies, led to the abrupt end of any Russian-Azerbaijani honeymoon period, preventing Moscow from capitalizing on Baku's frustration with the West. While the Azerbaijani government is cautious in its relations with Moscow and cooperates in areas of its own interests—such as gas sales and arms procurement—nothing has changed in Azerbaijan's independent foreign policy. Even in Armenia, Moscow's position is based on Armenia's dependency, a fact not lost on Armenia's leaders. In Moldova, Russian encroachments failed to measure up to the gravitational pull of the European Union. In November 2010, the fractured coalition government, aptly named the "Alliance for European Integration," won renewed confidence in an election, and was reconstituted, dashing Moscow's hopes of returning the Communist party to power.²² In Belarus, the government

of Aleksandr Lukashenko remains as alienated from Moscow as it was several years ago. In Central Asia, Moscow's policies have accelerated the efforts of Turkmen and Uzbek leaders to broaden their international contacts and their energy export routes; even in Ukraine, where Moscow had initial successes following the coming to power of Viktor Yanukovich, bilateral ties have worsened as Ukrainian leaders have refused Russian efforts to gain control over Ukraine's gas infrastructure.

In sum, Moscow's aggressive tactics have largely failed to bear fruit—but have contributed to deepening the instability of the entire post-Soviet sphere, and to complicating efforts at conflict resolution and development in the region.

²² Vladimir Socor, "Moldova's Alliance for European Integration: a Team of Rival Parties," *Jamestown Foundation*

Eurasia Daily Monitor 8, no. 5, January 7, 2011.

Georgia's Precarious Security

Stephen
Blank

Abstract

This article examines Georgia's current security environment. Georgia and Russia are at an impasse over the outcome of the 2008 Russo-Georgian war, and Russia's subsequent encroachments on Georgian sovereignty, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia suggest to Georgia that it is the threat of a new war or crisis remains. Meanwhile Moscow refuses to make any concessions to Georgia, and vice versa. The result is a stalemate, and a dangerous impasse in the negotiations to end the war and in their overall relations. This crisis has broader implications for the rest of the CIS and Europe due to Russia's continuing neo-imperialist policies. Indeed, Russia's formal policy and even military legislation give it the right to intervene across the CIS to defend its compatriots if it believes their honor and dignity have been harmed by a foreign state. The threat implicit in such legislation is obvious. Nonetheless, the West is not responding particularly strongly to Russia's activities, and Georgia is waiting for the West to help it make new gains in security and in recovering its territory.

Accordingly the article concludes with recommendations for Georgia as to what it must do to strengthen its national security and achieve its vital goals of inclusion in the EU and NATO

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Three years after the Russo-Georgian war of 2008, Georgia's security remains precarious and additionally burdened by a permanent sense of being under threat from Russia.¹ Moscow has sustained a cold war of provocations and counter-provocations against Georgia since 2004, interrupted only by the brief hot war in 2008, which resulted directly from those provocations.² Georgian elites believe that while a Russian-initiated war is not imminent, Moscow believes it has not conclusively settled its scores with Georgia and therefore keeps open the option of a further attack. Russia continues its campaign of subversion against Georgia, which is comprised of attempts to generate or co-opt domestic opposition to the Saakashvili regime, unceasing espionage, and even bombings near the American Embassy in Tbilisi.³ While this bombing may or may not also have targeted the US; it certainly aims to destabilize Georgia and influence US perceptions of its stability and reliability.⁴ This constant pres-

sure seems to be Moscow's general modus operandi in the former Soviet Union. Thus observers in Latvia concluded that:

We see several, interrelated short-term [Russian] strategies focusing on exercising ever-increasing influence in the politics of the target states. What we do not see is a policy of military conquest but, rather, a gradual but unswerving drive to eventually regain dominance over the social, economic, and political affairs of what are to become entirely dependent client states.⁵

Such activities show how much credence Russia puts in the Obama Administration's resolve and accompanying reset policy.

Meanwhile the Georgian government perceives Russia as 'enemy number one' and with good reason refuses to accept the legality of Moscow's assault on Georgian sovereignty: in 2008, Russia official recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. What this means for Georgia is that there is no legal basis for a peace settlement unless Russia repudiates that policy. Therefore Georgia's government has not even discussed how it might win back those rebellious provinces. Tbilisi's refusal to negotiate on Moscow's terms is

1 *International Crisis Group, Georgia-Russia: Learn to Live Like Neighbors, Europe Briefing No. 65, August 8, 2011*; Ghia Nodia, "Another Year Passes Without a New Russia-Georgian War, But Nothing Can Be Ruled Out," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, August 10, 2011; Moscow, "Tbilisi Suspects Russia of Preparing for War Against Georgia," *Interfax, in English*, August 9, 2011, *Open Source Center, Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Central Eurasia, (Henceforth FBIS SOV)*, August 9, 2011

2 Dmitri Trenin, *Post-Imperium: A Eurasian Story*, Washington, D.C.: *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2011, pp. 29-34, pp. 93-99; Eli Lake, "Russia Waged Covert War on Georgia Starting in '04," *Washington Times*, December 3, 2010, www.washingtontimes.com

3 *Georgia-Russia: Learn to Live Like Neighbours*

4 Michael Cecire, "U.S. Embassy Bombing a Plausible Escalation for Russia in Georgia," *World Politics Review*, August 7, 2011

5 Gundar J. King and David E. McNabb, "Crossroads Dynamics in Foreign Policy: The Case of Latvia," *Problems of Post-Communism*, LVI, NO. 3, May-June, 2009, p. 39

one reason for the deadlocked negotiations in Geneva. But that deadlock reinforces Georgia's unwillingness to present a credible strategy for addressing the Abkhaz and South Ossetian grievances that originally triggered the conflict. Consequently there is stalemate: Georgian domestic politics are paralyzed, as are relations between Georgia and Russia, and high levels of tension continue. The absence of any Russo-Georgian dialogue forces Georgia to rely on the West to influence Moscow, and reinforces its reluctance to open a dialogue with Moscow or its former provinces. This disinclination, however, leaves it vulnerable to criticism over what is perceived as passivity in terms of policy development.⁶

Russia, meanwhile, insists that the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia is irreversible, along with the rejection of Georgian entry into NATO. It is also pushing for the recognition that Moscow has a special sphere of influence in the CIS where it can use force with impunity to protect its interests.⁷ Russian political analyst Boris Sokolov recently commented that Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's remarks about Russia's potential incorporation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia - should those territo-

ries wish to be made part of Russia - suggest that the annexation of South Ossetia has not been excluded from Russia's agenda, that Moscow will not withdraw its troops from Georgia's provinces, and that neither the US nor the EU are making any real demands on Russia or putting pressure it to withdraw those forces and return to the status quo ante.⁸ Indeed, some Russian political figures like Duma member Konstantin Zatulin, who is also Director of the Institute for CIS Countries, believe that Putin's remarks signal Moscow's willingness "to respect the choice of the Ossetian people."⁹

Russia is also insisting that Georgia formally and publicly renounce violence as a means of regaining the breakaway provinces, without even considering that it too should renounce force for those purposes. At least since 2007, Moscow's true objective has been Georgian "neutrality", i.e. Georgia's renunciation of its pro-Western orientation, and thus further curtailment of its sovereignty.¹⁰ Indeed, this demand that Georgia surrender some of its freedom in national security policy may well be Moscow's core objective here. It is therefore disheartening that Russian analysts unanimously perceive the US' reset policy as an act of recogni-

6 "Interview with Mamuka Areshidze, "Tbilisi, Sakartvelos Respublika, in Georgian, August 10, 2011, FBIS SOV, August 17, 2011

7 Interview given by Dmitry Medvedev to Television Channels Channel One, Russia, NTV, "August 31, 2008, http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/08/31/1850_type82916_206003.shtml (henceforth Medvedev, Interview)

8 "Interview With Russian Political Analyst, Boris Sokolov," Tbilisi, Sakartvelos Respublika, in Georgian, August 6, 2011, FBIS SOV, August 9, 2011

9 Moscow, Interfax-AVN Online, in English, August 3, 2011, FBIS SOV, August 3, 2011

10 Moscow, Vesti TV, in Russian, February 6, 2007

tion by the US and the West of Moscow's predominance in its chosen sphere of influence, and believe that these parties are therefore unwilling to challenge Russia's constant efforts to restrict the independence and sovereignty of other members of the CIS - not just Georgia.¹¹ Moscow's Georgian policy seems to be under the control of the political elite (Silovye Struktury) who are motivated both by their desire for power and wealth in southern Russia, and the belief that the US is itching to invade Russia over the Georgian issue or to intervene there. As a result, Moscow has strengthened its position in Abkhazia and South Ossetia by creating numerous military bases, installing FSB (Federal Security Service / Federativnaya Sluzhba Bezopasnost) puppets into power there, and preparing for the possible incorporation of these provinces into Russia.¹² These actions violate both the 1975 Helsinki accords and also the truce or armistice agreed with the EU in 2008 during the conflict. Yet Russia has paid no price for these violations, and actually denies committing such breaches.¹³

11 Sergei Stokan and Dmitry Sidorov, "In the World: and Now the Rest," Moscow, Kommersant Online, in Russian, July 27, 2009, FBIS SOV, July 27, 2009; Event Transcript: The Carnegie Russia-Europe Forum - "The Next Decade: What Kind of Partner Can Russia Be," Carnegie Europe: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 26, 2010, p. 28; Bryan Whitmore, "Power Vertical: Moscow, Washington, and the Near Abroad," Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, May 20, 2010, www.rferl.org;

12 Trenin, pp. 29-34, 93-99 plus press

13 Interview by Dmitry Medvedev." <http://eng.kremlin.ru/transcripts/2680>. August 5, 2011 (Henceforth Medvedev Interview-2)

Seeing that it can act with impunity, Russia is aggressively extending its influence in the South Caucasus. Prime Minister Putin recently suggested that Moscow could incorporate these provinces 'Soviet style', i.e. through arranged and manipulated plebiscites.¹⁴ While President Medvedev criticized this approach, on the grounds that the legal requirements for incorporation are not in place; this might have been more than just a criticism of Putin. It also could mean that Moscow is planning to implement those "requirements."¹⁵ Potentially, over 150,000 people in these two provinces could participate in the December 2011 Russian Duma elections; Russia's Central Elections Commission is establishing polling stations around Russian military bases in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia.¹⁶ While Putin's and Medvedev's recent statements about Georgia might be attributed to electioneering in Russia, these statements also stimulate popular demand (particularly among the Silovye Struktury) for further action against Georgia.¹⁷ Statements calling Georgia's President Saakashvili 'pathological' and insisting that the war's outcomes are

14 "Prime Minister Vladimir Putin Speaks With Participants of the Seliger-2011 Youth Educational Forum," <http://premier.gov.ru/eng/events/news/16080/>, August 1, 2011

15 Medvedev Interview-2

16 Nikolaus Von Twickel, "Georgian Provinces to Vote for the Duma," Moscow Times, August 3, 2011, www.themoscowtimes.com

17 Stephen Blank, "Medvedev's Remarks on Georgian War Anniversary: Politics, Lies, and Electioneering," Eurasia Daily Monitor, August 10, 2011; Medvedev Interview-2; "Prime Minister Vladimir Putin Speaks With Participants of the Seliger-2011 Youth Educational Forum."

irreversible only guarantee the continuing deadlock in the Geneva negotiations, and sustain Russia's cold war against Georgia.

Threats to European and Eurasian Security

The features of Georgia's security climate lead us to define this situation as a cold war environment, and emphasize the precariousness of its internal and external security. But the consequences of the 2008 war go beyond Georgia. In many respects they go to the heart of European security and reaffirm that European, Eurasian, and Transcaucasian security is ultimately indivisible. Russian sources now concede that the decision to cut off Abkhazia and South Ossetia from Georgia was to provide a legal structure (albeit a disingenuous one) that would allow Moscow to permanently station troops there, allegedly to deter the US from intervening, or to threaten Georgia.¹⁸

While contemporary reports suggested that the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs opposed the idea because it created a precedent that could and has since been invoked against Moscow in the North Caucasus; the decision to invade Georgia demonstrates at the least the supremacy of military-inspired and even paranoid threat perceptions in Moscow, if not the possibility that the armed forces have the potential to override the civilian authorities in Moscow, creat-

ing a dangerous precedent.¹⁹

Indeed, since 2009, Russian law has enshrined the right of its armed forces to intervene on behalf of Russian citizens in foreign lands where their honor and dignity is at risk, a justification for extra-territorial intervention from the Baltic to Central Asia. This legislation also confirms the well-known fact that many Russian political figures openly question the sovereignty of post-Soviet states.²⁰ This should not come as a surprise. Immediately after the Russo-Georgian war, Medvedev announced that henceforth he would build his foreign policy around five principles, one of which supports Russian intervention in states where the "interests and dignity" of the Russian minority are deemed to be at risk. Medvedev also asserted that Russia has privileged interests in countries that he refused to specify, demonstrating that Russia is seeking more than just influence in Eurasia; it also wants to revise borders or intervene in other states.²¹

On December 16th, 2009 the Federation Council, the upper house of Russia's Parliament, quietly gave President Medvedev sole and complete

19 This is not just a question of the military making a coup which is highly unlikely, rather it is the regime's willingness to accept as fact the fabricated and panicked threat assessments of the armed forces and intelligence services to justify continuing militarization and a quasi-cold war posture abroad.

*20 Stephen Blank, "The Values Gap Between Moscow and the West: the Sovereignty Issue," *Acque et Terre*, No. 6, 2007, pp. 9-14 (Italian), 90-95 (English)*

21 "Interview given by Dmitry Medvedev to Television Channels Channel One, Russia, NTV, "August 31, 2008, http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/08/31/1850_type82916_206003.shtml

18 Trenin, pp. 29-34, 93-99

authority to decide if, how, and when Russia's forces could be deployed beyond its national borders.²² This law foreshadows many potentially dangerous consequences for all of Eurasia – in addition to those listed above. In many respects, the wording of this law contravenes international law and the UN's language pertaining to relevant situations. Beyond that,

Due to its vague and ambiguous wording, the new Russian legislation has radically expanded the range of circumstances under which Moscow considers it legitimate to deploy troops abroad, as well as the list of states in which Russia may station armed forces in accordance with the law.²³

Second,

The clause concerning the protection of Russian citizens in foreign states grants Moscow the right of unilateral military intrusion into any country in which Russian citizens reside on a permanent or temporary basis under a wide set of arbitrarily construed circumstances. It does not specify precisely what 'an armed attack' constitutes, how many Russian citizens

need to be under attack to justify Russian intervention, whether such an attack would be carried out by armed forces or law-enforcement agencies of a foreign state or by non-state armed groups, and whether the Russian government has to obtain an official sanction to act in a foreign territory from the UN Security Council or from the authorities of the particular state where Russian citizens are under attack.²⁴

Third, this law radically alters the security situation in the CIS and the Baltic by giving Russia a legal platform for the justification of unilateral intervention into any territory belonging to these states that is not provided for in the founding documents of existing treaty organizations in the CIS, and thus undermines the validity of both the state sovereignty and the treaties, and with it, the protection of the sovereignty and integrity of those states. As Yuri Fedorov writes,

Russia's self-proclaimed right to defend its troops against armed attacks affects Moscow's relations with Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, all of which are parties to the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and, with the exception of Belarus, the Shanghai Coop-

²² Moscow, *ITAR-TASS*, in English, December 16, 2009, , *FBIS SOV*, December 16, 2009

²³ Yuri E. Fedorov, *Medvedev's Amendments to the Law on Defence: The Consequences For Europe* Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Briefing Paper No. 47, November 2009, p. 5

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6

eration Organization (SCO), and which also have bilateral arrangements on military assistance with Russia. Russian troops and military facilities are deployed in all of these states, with the exception of Uzbekistan. Neither the Collective Security Treaty, nor any bilateral arrangements imply Russia's right to make unilateral decisions about the form, scope and very fact of employing its forces in the aforementioned states. All of these issues were to be decided either by all parties to the CSTO collectively, or by parties to the corresponding bilateral treaty. Decisions on counter-terrorist activities in the framework of the SCO are made by consensus. The new Russian legislation did not cancel out the multilateral or bilateral decision-making procedures yet it devalued those procedures in a sense. If Russian troops deployed in some of these countries are involved in international or internal conflicts, which is quite possible, Moscow will have a pretext for using them and duly deploying additional units in a unilateral manner. The right to defend Russian troops on foreign soil is of particular importance for Russia's relations with Ukraine and Moldova. The

Ukrainian government has demanded the withdrawal of the Russian naval base after 2017, while Moldova insists on the immediate departure of Russian troops from Transnistria. In turn, Moscow has set its sights on stationing its troops there indefinitely. In such a context, skirmishes of any degree of gravity involving Russian servicemen in these countries may furnish Moscow with a pretext for military intervention.²⁵

Fourth, as Fedorov notes, this law directly contradicts the language of the draft treaty on European security submitted by Medvedev to European governments on November 29th, 2009.²⁶ While that draft treaty pledges multilateralism, the new law shows that, "Moscow favors a unilateral approach towards security issues and wants a free hand if and when conflict situations arise."²⁷ Fifth, this law has released Medvedev from any obligation to consult with legislative bodies. As there are no existing checks or balances that could prohibit such military deployments, Medvedev is free to do as he pleases with those forces. Thus a Russian President may send troops abroad on the vaguest of pretexts, without any accountability whatsoever. Medve-

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ "European Security Treaty," November 29, 2009, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/text/docs/2009/11/223072.shtml>

²⁷ Fedorov, p. 6

dev's own term, legal nihilism, only begins to address the implications of this situation.²⁸

Finally, as Fedorov notes, this law may also shed some light on Moscow's future external ambitions; it does suggest that the war with Georgia and the subsequent political-military developments in that neighborhood may come to signal a precedent rather than a one-off incident. Specifically:

In particular, the Russian intelligence services may plan to ignite disturbances and ethnic clashes in Sevastopol, resulting in attacks against the Black Sea Fleet servicemen or facilities by criminal groups or an unruly mob. This would give Russia the legal grounds to intervene militarily in the Crimean peninsula, occupy Sevastopol or the whole peninsula and retain its naval base for an indefinite period of time. Another scenario presupposes the engineering of ethnic clashes in Estonia and/or Latvia, which may be exploited by Moscow as a pretext for military intervention, or at least for the threat of such intervention. Widespread rioting and looting in Tallinn in April 2007, provoked by the

decision to relocate the Soviet Army monument, yet fuelled and orchestrated by Russian agents, confirmed that Moscow has enough instruments at its disposal to destabilize the situation in large cities in Latvia and Estonia with a substantial proportion of ethnic Russians.²⁹

This law, and the overall defense policy of which it is part, has built upon precedents set by earlier Russian policies and other potential pretexts for action ranging from the Baltic to Central Asia. In 2003, speaking on Russia's recently released white paper on military policy, Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov observed that Moscow could use preventive force in cases where a threat is growing and is "visible, clear, and unavoidable." While to some degree that has been standard practice (e.g. Israel in 1967), the message was unsettling, particularly as Ivanov added that military force could be used in cases where "there is an attempt to limit Russia's access to regions that are essential to its survival, or those that form an important [area], from an economic or financial point of view."³⁰ So while the threats to Georgia's security from Russia are obviously much more acute than threats posed by Russia to other former Soviet republics, they differ

²⁹ Fedorov, p. 7

²⁸ "Medvedev's Push for Control of Russian Military Unsettles Caucasus" *Deutsche Welle*, <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,5004308,00.html?maca=en-rss-en-all-1573-rdf>. December 11, 2009

³⁰ Sophie Lambroschini, "Russia: Moscow Struggles To Clarify Stance On Pre-emptive Force," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, October 14, 2003, www.rferl.org/ncafeatures/2003/10/14102203171155.asp

only in magnitude or intensity; Moscow does not consider any of these countries to be truly sovereign states whose integrity, independence, and sovereignty deserve Russian respect. In this sense, Russia's legislation and attitude implicitly threaten the sovereignty of all of these states.

Helsinki final Act and EU

Clearly the threats to Georgia are not entirely personal; rather they target the entire post-Cold War European settlement. Moscow does not deny that it is seeking to revise that settlement in order to undermine NATO and block European integration - as demonstrated by its draft European Security Treaty of 2009.³¹ On this basis, whether or not Georgia fired the first shot in 2008 is ultimately irrelevant, though it was clearly a victim of provocation. Moscow's overt aim all along has been to deny Georgia and other CIS states the right to freely exercise their independence. This is what is at stake in the entire CIS sphere.

Likewise, Turkey was seriously affected by this war. Having let a US humanitarian ship through the Black Sea Straits, Turkey found itself economically targeted by Moscow, and realized that it was too dependent on Russia - its largest trading partner - for energy and trade, i.e. its dependence on Russian trade was asymmetrical to an excessive degree.

³¹ "The Draft of the European Security Treaty," <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/275>, November 29, 2009

Turkish policy immediately pivoted, shifting its emphasis away from Russian dependency. While avoiding angering Russia, Turkey promoted a stability pact for the Caucasus, which included both Russia and itself, as a means of stabilizing and thus limiting Russian influence. Furthermore, Turkey galvanized its campaign to normalize relations with Armenia, to gain better access to it, and Azerbaijan; the government signed an agreement with Tehran to develop and ship gas from Iran; and intensified its quest to diversify its energy supply and facilitate an Azerbaijan-Turkmenistan rapprochement to increase possibilities for alternative gas supplies from Central Asia and for the EU's Nabucco pipeline to reduce dependence on Russia.³² Although not all of these initiatives have borne fruit, their timing surely reflects Ankara's recognition of significant regional and international changes that were jeopardizing a number of its key economic interests.

³² Alexander Murinson, "Russia Accuses Turkey of Violating Montreux Convention," *Central Asia Caucasus Analyst*, October 15, 2008; Gila Benmayor, "As Our Energy Dependence on Russia Increases," *Istanbul, Hurriyet Daily News.com*, in English, January 3, 2009, *FBIS SOV*, January 3, 2009; Dogu Ergil, "Opening Doors and hearts," *Istanbul, Today's Zaman*, in English, September 10, 2008, *FBIS SOV*, September 10, 2008; Robert M. Cutler, "Turkey Has a Rough road ahead," *Asia Times Online*, www.atimes.com, August 27, 2008; Alman Mir Ismail, "Responding to Georgia Crisis, Turkey Seeks New Security Initiative in the Caucasus," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, August 22, 2008; "Russia, Turkey: a Reduction in Tensions," www.strafor.com, September 19, 2008; "Iran, Turkey Sign Gas Accord," *Agence France Presse*, November 17, 2008; Thomas Grove and Orhan Coskun, "Turkey Moves to Diversify Gas Supply After Russia Row," *The Guardian*, September 8, 2008, www.theguardian.co.uk; Igor Torbakov, *the Georgia Crisis and Russia-Turkey Relations*, Jamestown Foundation,

Yet Europe and the Obama Administration have refused to see these consequences for what they are. First of all, this war and its aftermath constitute a major blow to the naïve idealism of the EU's overall political-economic strategy, as it "underlined the enduring utility of force in inter-state relations."³³

Similarly Colin Gray wrote then that,

What is so dangerous about U.S.-Russian relations is that they have an explicitly continental military focus along, indeed across, a strategic frontier between NATO and Russia that is very much in live contention. Russia's spat with Georgia in September (actually August-author) 2008 needs to be regarded as a reliable sign of severe dangers to come.³⁴

Taken in their totality, the consequences of this war hold immense geopolitical (and geo-economic) significance. A German study of the war's consequences concludes:

The escalation of the local conflict in South Ossetia into a European crisis has shown that the existing structures – NATO, EU, OSCE and CIS

– are plainly unable to prevent conflict between hostile countries. Russia's elites, wanting to see their country regain its former role as a great power, ignore the normative framework the OSCE tries to establish, and disregard the CIS. Plainly neither organization is strong enough to structure a region extending from Europe through to Central Asia. NATO and the EU, on the other hand, are perceived as a threat by the Russian leadership, which makes them in their present form unsuited for integrating an expanded Europe. So the crisis has thrown up the medium-term task of redesigning the European order -- to include Russia.³⁵

Sokolov also underscored the dangers to the European status quo, caused by permitting Russia to use force with impunity.

In August 2008, Russia demonstrated to everyone that it is able to use armed force in the post-Soviet area. It emerged that the reaction of both Europe and the United States to the type of action by Russia was mild. Precisely after the August 2008 war, the Krem-

33 Dov Lynch, "ESDP and the OSCE," Giovanni Grevi, Damien Helly, Daniel Keohane, eds., *ESDP: the First Ten years (1999-2009)*, Paris: Institute for Security Studies of the European Union, 2009, p. 143, www.iss-eu.org

34 Colin Gray, *National Security Dilemmas: Challenges & Opportunities*, Foreword by General Paul Van Riper (USMC) Ret. Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc. Washington, D.C., 2009, p. 6

35 "Problems and Recommendations," Hans-Henning Schroeder Ed., *The Caucasus Crisis: International Perceptions and Policy Implications for Germany and Europe*, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, German Institute of International and Security Affairs, 2008, www.swp-berlin.org, 2008, p. 5

lin increased its pressure on Ukraine. That pressure made the change of government in Ukraine possible. Incidentally, after the change of government in Ukraine, Russia noticeably increased its pressure on the Baltic countries too. And all this indicates that, after the August war, Russia's influence in the post-Soviet area has become increasingly noticeable. True, this might not be what the Kremlin is dreaming about regarding the post-Soviet area, but this is certainly what happened.³⁶

Thus Europe's lukewarm response to the situation directly undermines Georgia's security, even if it does so unintentionally. Even if one argues that the EU has increased its visibility in local conflict resolution processes, the results are minimal, due to Russian obstruction, Georgia's own unsettled domestic political conditions after the war, and the EU's long-term reluctance to commit serious resources to the post-Soviet area, a reluctance that predates the 2008 war by many years.³⁷ Nor do the threats unleashed by this war end here. As Sergey Markedonov observes, the repercussions of the war in Georgia for Moscow have come the form of intensified war in the North Caucasus.

³⁶ FBIS SOV, August 9, 2011

³⁷ Mehmet Bardakci, "EU ENGAGEMENT IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN GEORGIA: TOWARDS A MORE PROACTIVE ROLE," CAUCASIAN REVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, IV, NO.3, SUMMER, 2010, pp. 214-236

Now those two areas are linked in the sense that security and peace north of the Caucasus Mountains crucially depends on the peace and stability south of the range.³⁸ Similarly, as Markedonov observed that Russia, now party to internationally managed negotiations in Geneva, wants to obtain a ratification of the new status quo that it created by force; he warns that

At the same time, it is still hard to grasp that the two conflicts in question are not simply a matter of rivalry of ambitions and interests, but also an objective process. It is a question of the formation of nation-states after the destruction of imperial formations and the victory of the nationalist discourse. The breakup of the Soviet Union was not the end point in this process - it was a beginning. Such processes, by definition, are not completed quickly. A conflict of "imagined geographies," different mentalities, is in progress. And not only the conflict but the actual formation of political and even ethnic identities is not yet finished.³⁹

Certainly we see the potential for this

³⁸ Sergey Markedonov, "The Big Caucasus: Consequences of the "Five Day War": Threats and Political Prospects," Xenophon Papers, No. 7, 2009, pp. 51-52, www.icbss.org

³⁹ Sergei Markedonov, "Geneva Talks: From Ideological Confrontation to Diplomatic Routine," Moscow, politikom.ru, in Russian, December 19, 2008, FBIS SOV, December 27, 2008

in the insurgency in Russia's North Caucasus, if not elsewhere. Other observers like Lawrence Sheets, the Caucasus Program Director for the International Crisis Group, warn that the so-called frozen conflicts along the former Soviet peripheries are now thawing, and could generate further ethno-political conflicts there or elsewhere.⁴⁰

Moreover, Russia has failed to translate its military conquests into a legitimate new order. Thus its alleged victory in a limited war remains incomplete. In turn, that state of incompleteness serves as a constant temptation for one or both sides to undertake policies that could reignite the process. Indeed, one of the specific defects of Russia's highly problematic civilian control over its multiple militaries is that the regime, both at home and abroad, is constantly subjected to the temptation of using military measures to settle political problems, through the mentality and rhetoric of constant threats and war that it has created. Russia could have simply ejected the Georgian army from South Ossetia in 2008, demonstratively reinstalled the status quo ante, and won a resounding victory, establishing its red lines - but achieved with international legitimacy. Instead it chose to create a permanent irredentist situation in the region, a situation resembling Alsace-Lorraine after the Franco-Prus-

sian war in 1870. Consequently it violated a cardinal precept of its own strategy of limited war. If a state uses a limited war to revise international order and makes demands it cannot enforce, it not only destabilizes the international order that protected it in the first place, but it also creates a situation whereby there may not exist a viable organizational principle for the new system to operate from or to legitimize the security demands of the belligerent nation. Russia has singularly failed to transform its military achievement into legitimate authority and social order. Consequently the entire North and South Caucasus is in a much more dangerous position - destabilized beyond anyone's ability to bring about legitimate and stable order - than it was in 2008.

Nor does anyone seem to be interested in trying to reconstruct even the basis for such order. Although rhetorically, the US is strongly backing Georgia, it will not sell it the weapons it wants for self-defense, lest they anger Russia and jeopardize the reset policy. This makes the US complicit in extending Russia's embargo on arms sales to Georgia.⁴¹ Though Secretary of State Clinton rightly denounced Russia's occupation of Georgia and Abkhazia, we have already seen that in practice no pressure is being brought upon Russia for reneging

40 Brian Whitmore, "2008 In Review: War, Peace, and Football Diplomacy in the South Caucasus," *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty*, December 26, 2008

41 Joshua Kucera, "Gates on NDN, Gabala, Arms Sales to Georgia," *Eurasia insight*, September 15, 2010, www.eurasianet.org/node/61935; http://wikileaks.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/12/07/wikileaks_us_ambassador_to_russia_went_arm_georgia/dueto/the_reset

on its international responsibilities under the Helsinki Final Act, or the 2008 armistice accord. Privately, officials say that such statements are only for the public record, and that in reality, the US Administration will not go beyond providing economic assistance and training the Georgians for Afghanistan-like operations, as opposed to what is needed to defend their country. Indeed, high-ranking officials in the US have made it clear that they do not want to be bothered with these issues lest they derail or sidetrack the reset policy.⁴² So while we may see US sympathy for Georgia, Tbilisi is mistaken in assuming that Georgia represents a key interest of the Obama administration.⁴³

We can also see the EU's inability to function strategically or grasp what is at stake here in its trade negotiations with Georgia. The EU and Georgia are currently negotiating a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA). Since NATO membership is closed to Georgia, and Georgia identifies strongly with European values in general (though less with what EU liberals consider to be European values), the DCFTA is an eminently logical step for both parties in terms of boosting economic strength, and in enhancing the EU's presence in the South Caucasus and Georgia's internal - if not external - security. While the Centre for Euro-

pean Policy Studies⁴⁴ criticized the EU's proposal, EU officials have strongly defended it and criticized the Centre's findings. However, objective observers like Thomas De Waal have argued that the EU has failed to tell Georgia exactly what it wants of Georgia, or to clarify its readiness to take the current negotiations to a successful conclusion.⁴⁵ The EU's visible ambivalence shows that in many respects it, like NATO, is unwilling to assume the lead in truly projecting a Europe that is whole and free. Meanwhile the current crisis of the Euro and of the EU project shows that no serious vision for the future can be envisioned or expected anytime soon, let alone one built along the lines of further expansion or EU integration of Georgia or other post-Soviet states. In light of this, claims by the Georgian government that the country will join NATO long before it joins the EU are hollow and insubstantial, based on wishful thinking rather than sober analysis.⁴⁶

Georgia's Path Forward

Georgia's only strong card, besides the fact that Russia has nothing to gain from reopening the conflict, is

⁴⁴ www.ceps.be

⁴⁵ Patrick Messerlin, Michael Emerson, Gia Janidieri, Alexandre Le Vernoy, *An Appraisal of the EU's Trade Policy Towards Its Eastern Neighbors: The Case of Georgia*, Paris and Brussels: Group D 'Economie Mondiale, Sciences Po and Centre for European Policy Studies, 2011, www.ceps.be; Thomas De Waal, *Georgia's Choices: Crafting a Future in Uncertain Times*, Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2011, pp. 35-38, www.ceip.org

⁴⁶ "Interview with Georgian Foreign Minister Grigol Vashadze," Vienna, Kurier, in German, August 22, 2011, *FBIS SOV*, August 22, 2011

⁴² *Conversations With US Analysts and Officials, 2010-11*

⁴³ James Wertsch, "U.S. Interest or Sympathy in Georgia,?" Tbilisi, *The Georgian Times Online*, in English, August 19, 2011, *FBIS SOV*, August 19, 2011

its capability as a World Trade Organization member to veto Russia's entry into the WTO. Russia has sought entry on and off for the past 17 years, and can only gain entry if members approve unanimously. Georgia uses this card to obstruct Moscow's efforts to integrate Abkhazia and South Ossetia into its economy by preventing the unchecked flow of goods in and out of the two provinces. Thus Georgia's formal position is that its main problem with Russia's WTO accession is the illegal trade and customs administration in those provinces, a claim that goes back to Georgia's contention that these are not sovereign states and that therefore Georgia has economic and trade rights.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, Medvedev says Russia will not change its policy or make deals with Georgia to gain entry into the WTO, so here too there may well be another deadlock that derives from the larger ongoing one in Geneva.⁴⁸ Given the immense benefits that WTO membership would give to Russia, a Georgian veto, which is entirely possible, would underscore that Moscow has probably lost more than it has gained by annexing these provinces. But given the neo-imperial mentality that dominates Russian policymaking towards Georgia, that potential loss will probably not push Russian leaders to rethink their position. Thus stalemate and continuing

47 Moscow, *Interfax*, in English, August 9, 2011, FBIS SOV, August 9, 2011

48 "Interview by Dmitry Medvedev," <http://kremlin.ru/transcripts/12204>, August 5, 2011

Cold War like pressures are likely to endure for some time, and with them, the likelihood of another violent crisis in the Caucasus.

Under the circumstances, Georgia, like other small states, must vigorously defend its own security.⁴⁹ This means not waiting passively for Washington or Brussels. Rather it means consistently strengthening Georgian democracy, economic competitiveness, and conformity to the EU's standards, and refraining from provocative actions regarding the North Caucasus, such as recognizing the Circassian massacres of 1863 as a genocide (which merely provokes Russian anger to no real gain).⁵⁰ But most of all it means making a realistic proposal for Abkhaz and South Ossetian independence. It should be clear to any unbiased observer that no Georgian state since 1990 has answered Abkhazian and South Ossetian demands for self-rule with any credible action or plan. This ongoing failure merely provides Moscow with a pretext for remaining in these territories. By promising independence or at least a UN sponsored plebiscite on withdrawal of all foreign troops and their replacement by UN forces with a robust mandate, Georgia not only un-

49 As the former Supreme Commander of Swedish Armed Forces, General Ole Wiktorin, observed, in reference to Bosnia's wars, "As a result of Bosnia and other armed conflicts we have come to accept war on European territory. The message is, in particular for a small nation, that if you do not take care of your security no one else may care." "The Jane's Interview," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, October 15, 1994, p. 56.

50 Thomas DE Waal, *Georgia's Choices: Charting a Future in Uncertain Times*, Washington, D.C. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2011

burdens itself of a political albatross, it eliminates the security problems that block its entry into NATO and the EU, and forces Russia to defend itself against charges of imperialism. Though Georgian politicians claim no Georgian leader can accept the departure of these states from Georgian sovereignty, they must recognize what Willy Brandt told Germany in 1972, namely that those territories were gambled away a long time ago.⁵¹

This may be an unpopular recommendation in Tbilisi, but the alternative of doing nothing, waiting for Washington and Brussels who will not do more than they are already doing, and occasionally provoking Russia for purely psychological gratification is the political equivalent of “waiting for Godot”.⁵²

Indeed, Georgia has no bayonets upon which to sit, even if that were possible. While Georgia faces serious risks, it possesses the resources to strengthen its position and cut the losses that it must incur for its previous political missteps. But if it fails to independently take the necessary domestic and foreign policy actions, it will remain at the mercy of allies whose resources and attention span are not only limited, but also who historically have always preferred Russia over its neighbors.

Under the circumstances, that is not a way forward for Georgia, nor for anyone else.

⁵¹ *Based on conversations with Georgian analysts and officials from 2008-2011*

⁵² *Samuel Beckett, Waiting for Godot, first performed in Paris, 1953*

The Åland Precedent

**Gulshan
Pashayeva**

Abstract

2011 marks the 90th anniversary of the famous resolution on what is now known as the Åland Islands Question. The League of Nations mediated between Finland and Sweden (1917-1921), eventually reaching a compromise establishing Åland's autonomy with its unique Swedish character, demilitarization and neutralization. Statistics shows that it is the oldest and one of the best-functioning autonomies in the world, and is widely used as an inspiration in international conflict resolution.

This paper will explore the historical background and special characteristics of Åland autonomy, considered by many experts as an example of a successful and enduring solution to ethno-territorial conflict. Certain features of this autonomy might be applicable to the future status of the Nagorno-Karabakh region within the framework of the resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, which makes this research especially significant.

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Located in the Baltic Sea between Finland and Sweden, the Åland Islands consist of more than 6,700 islands and skerries, of which 65 are currently inhabited. Mariehamn, the capital and only town in the Åland Islands, is situated in the 'Åland mainland' - the largest island of Åland, which makes up 70 percent of the island's total land area. This is where 90 percent of the population live.¹ But there are also thousands of small islands scattered across the eastern area, known as 'the archipelago'. The total population of Åland is around 28,007.²

Today, Åland is an autonomous, demilitarized and unilingual Swedish-speaking province of Finland. Although more than 90 years ago Ålanders demanded unification with their Swedish motherland, today many Ålanders agree that the autonomous rule provides a well-functioning and successful model of peaceful coexistence.

It is not surprising that since the mid-nineties, Åland's autonomy has been a source of great inspiration for politicians and experts with an interest in the unresolved conflicts of the South Caucasus region, including the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.³ The Nago-

rno-Karabakh issue has divided the neighboring countries of Azerbaijan and Armenia, and has created serious barriers to security and regional development, which resonate at national, regional and international levels.

“You can't hold autonomy very hard; it dies when struggled against. If you open it up, it flies. It should be kept very carefully.” *

According to information provided by the Åland Islands Peace Institute, whose work focuses on forms of autonomy, minority-related issues, demilitarization and conflict management, different delegations from the South Caucasus countries visited Åland approximately eleven times between 1993 and 2010 within the framework of various peace-building initiatives. The delegations were comprised of government officials, experts, mass media and civil society representatives of Azerbaijan and Armenia, as well as employees of the

Armenia in 1988, before the dissolution of the USSR, but both Azerbaijan and the Soviet leadership rejected these territorial claims. However, after Azerbaijan and Armenia gained independence in 1991, Nagorno-Karabakh changed its policy, demanding secession from Azerbaijan. As a result of a full-scale war from 1992 to 1994, Armenian military forces seized almost one-fifth of Azerbaijan's internationally recognized territory, including the Nagorno-Karabakh region and seven adjacent Azeri-populated districts. Nearly one million people were displaced from these occupied territories, along with the ethnic Azerbaijanis expelled from Armenia in 1988-1989 due to inter-ethnic tensions. Despite a ceasefire achieved by Russian efforts in May 1994 and mediation efforts of OSCE Minsk Group and its triple Co-Chairmanship since 1997 (including Russia, France and the U.S.), no tangible results have yet been achieved in the official negotiation process.

** This phrase belongs to Mr. Roger Nordlund, currently serving as Speaker of the Åland Parliament.*

1 Åland in Brief. Published by the Åland Parliament and the Åland Government, 2008.

2 ASUB. Statistics and Research Åland. <http://www.asub.ax/start.con?iLan=2>

3 Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh, who made up the majority of the population of the Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous region, originally sought to be unified with

different international organizations. The author's first visit to the Åland Islands in August 1997 was also within a delegation of experts from the South Caucasus countries.

Brief historical background

The location of Åland Islands in the Baltic Sea was always considered highly strategic from a historical perspective. Although the Åland islands and the territory of modern Finland were originally part of the Kingdom of Sweden, under the Treaty of Fredrikshamn following the 1808-1809 war between Sweden and Russia, both territories became part of the Russian Empire until its disintegration in 1917. During the same year, the *Åland Movement* emerged with the leadership of Julius Sundblom, and several attempts were made to broach the issue of re-unification with the King and Government of Sweden.

In December 1917, Finland declared its independence and insisted that it did not support the Ålanders' desire to be reunited with Sweden; instead, they proposed the Autonomy Act, which was adopted by the Finnish Parliament on May 6, 1920. Sweden, in its turn, proposed that the Ålanders should decide which country they would like to belong to by holding a regional plebiscite. Under these circumstances, the status of the Åland Islands developed into a dispute between Stockholm and Helsinki, and upon a British initiative, the matter

was brought to the League of Nations, a newly established intergovernmental organization based in Geneva.

The decision the Council of League of Nations presented on June 24, 1921 was a compromise that offered something to each of the three parties to the conflict. Finland was granted sovereignty over Åland. However, it was internationally obliged to safeguard the preservation of the Swedish language, culture, traditions and the system of self-government that was offered to Åland in 1920. The Ålanders in their turn received autonomy of the Swedish character and additional guarantees that were enshrined in the 1920 Autonomy Act. In November 1921, there followed another ruling by the League of Nations relating to the preparation of the Convention on Åland's demilitarization and neutralization, which was signed by ten European states (Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Great Britain, Italy, Latvia, Poland and Sweden), under which Sweden also received guarantees that Åland would not pose a military threat to Sweden. The 1921 Convention also confirmed the validity of the 1856 Åland Servitude according to which Åland Islands was demilitarized for the first time after the Crimean War in 1856.

Representatives of Finland and Sweden met at the request of the Council three days after the above decision was announced, and came to the so-called Åland Agreement, in which the two countries agreed on a num-

ber of issues relating to the preservation of the Swedish language in the Åland schools, the maintenance of the landed property in the hands of the Ålanders, reasonable restriction of the right to vote by newcomers and the appointment of a Governor supported by the population. According to the Åland Agreement, which was unanimously approved by the Council of the League of Nations on June 27th 1921, the League of Nations pledged to ensure the implementation of these guarantees.⁴

“The text of the Åland Agreement was included, almost word by word, in the so-called Guarantee Act of 1922, which supplemented the 1920 Autonomy Act. After the adoption of the Guarantee Act the Åland Islanders agreed, although reluctantly, to apply the Autonomy Act”.⁵

On June 9th, 1922, the Åland Parliament, *landsting* (county assembly), as it was known at the time, convened its first session and Julius Sundblom, the strong and highly influential leader of Åland movement, was elected as its first Speaker. Since then, June 9th has been known as “Autonomy Day”, and it is celebrated in com-

memoration of Åland’s autonomy.

However, “the first Autonomy Act had been drawn up without Åland’s involvement, and it didn’t help that autonomy was implemented against silent opposition and with no real enthusiasm. The central character of the *Åland Movement*, Julius Sundblom, was so committed to the idea of reunification that he never managed to abandon it entirely. As late as 1945, the last year of his political career, he presented a proposal in the Legislative Assembly that Finnish Government renew the issue of reunification with Sweden at the World War Two peace talks”.⁶ Although this proposal was rejected by both Sweden and Finland, “it prompted the Finnish Government to undertake a review of the Autonomy Act which eventually led to the passing a new and more modern Autonomy Act in 1951”.⁷

According to some scholars, though the Ålanders fought for reunification with Sweden during the 1920s, after the second Autonomy Act of 1951, a certain shift in attitude between generations has occurred and the idea of reunification faded. Now there are no strong claims to a union with Sweden, and the people are content with the functional Swedish character of Åland autonomy as a means of maintaining the language and the culture.

4 Kristian Myntti. *The Åland Model – Its Background and Special Characteristics. In: The second Åland Islands question. Autonomy or independence? Ed: Harry Jansson and Johannes Salminen. Published by the Julius Sundblom Memorial Foundation, Mariehamn, 2002, pp.110-111.*

5 Kristian Myntti. *The Åland Model – Its Background and Special Characteristics. In: The second Åland Islands question. Autonomy or independence? Ed: Harry Jansson and Johannes Salminen. Published by the Julius Sundblom Memorial Foundation, Mariehamn, 2002, pp.111-112.*

6 Barbro Sundback. *A Success Story. In: Susanne Eriksson, Lars Ingmar Johansson, Barbro Sundback, Islands of Peace. Åland’s autonomy, demilitarization and neutralization. The Åland Islands Peace Institute, 2006, p.84-85*

7 *Ibid*, p.86

Over the following years, the development of Åland's autonomy continued: two new Autonomy Acts were passed by the Parliament of Finland in the constitutional order and with the assent of the Åland Parliament in 1951 and 1991.

When summarizing this historical background, one can argue that Åland's autonomy serves as an exemplar perhaps due to its evolutionary nature, because "conflict-solving through autonomy is one thing, developing autonomy is another".⁸

An inspirational autonomy

According to Lapidoth, "autonomy is a means for diffusion of power in order to preserve the unity of a state and while respecting the diversity of its population; it has been successful in some cases and failed in others".⁹ In this respect, there is no doubt that Åland can be considered a successful case, with its minority protection, demilitarization and neutralization.

"Some of the most interesting characteristics of this case concern the existence of the efficient organ of cooperation with a well-balanced membership, the increasing obligation of consultation, the clear though lim-

ited power of supervision, the strict rules intended to preserve the special

When summarizing this historical background, one can argue that Åland's autonomy serves as an exemplar perhaps due to its evolutionary nature, because "conflict-solving through autonomy is one thing, developing autonomy is another".

character of the islands, the unique arrangements concerning residual powers, the flexibility (some powers may be transferred later) and last, but not least, the supporting attitude of the culturally related foreign state".¹⁰

Legislative and administrative powers in Åland autonomy are divided between Åland and the Finnish State. Under the Autonomy Act, "the Åland Parliament shall represent the people of the Åland Islands in matters relating to its autonomy. The Administration of Åland is vested in the Government of Åland and the officials subordinate to it" (section 3).¹¹

In accordance with the new Autonomy Act, the Åland Parliament, *lagting* (legislative assembly) consists of thirty members elected by secret ballot from the political representatives of Åland under the proportional system, and remain in office for four years. As a constituency of

⁸ Kjell-Åke Nordquist. *Åland in a comparative international perspective. In: The second Åland Islands question. Autonomy or independence? Ed: Harry Jansson and Johannes Salminen. Published by the Julius Sundblom Memorial Foundation, Mariehamn, 2002, p.103.*

⁹ Ruth Lapidoth, *Autonomy – Flexible Solutions to Ethnic Conflicts. Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1997, p.3*

¹⁰ *Ibid, p.77*

¹¹ *Act on the Autonomy of Åland. The Åland Parliament. The Government of Åland, Marietamn, 2005, p.1*

Finland, Åland also has its own representative in the Finnish Parliament.

The most important duties of the Åland Parliament are to pass laws and to exercise budgetary powers within the limits outlined by the Autonomy Act. The regional Åland Parliament is entitled to pass legislation in some areas, including education, culture, health and medical care, the environment, internal communications, municipal administration and taxation, social welfare, tenancy and rent regulation, policing, promotion of industry, postal service and radio and television broadcasting). The State oversees foreign affairs and the border guard service, the majority of civil and criminal law, the judicial system, customs, and state taxation).

Åland Parliament also distributes the budget of Åland. Åland's net income and its economic basis are made up of a combination of its own revenues and a lump sum received from the Finnish government, which constitutes a form of repayment of a part of the taxes Åland pays to Finland (0.45 per cent of the Finnish government's total income, excluding Government loans).

The laws adopted by the Åland Parliament are referred to the President of Finland, who has the supervisory power in Åland's system of self-government. Under the Autonomy Act, he or she has the right of veto in two cases. "The first case is when the Åland Parliament has exceeded its

legislative powers, which normally occurs once or twice a year due to difficulties in interpreting the provisions of the Autonomy Act [...] The second case is when there is a threat to Finland's internal and external security".¹²

In this respect, the role of the Åland Delegation, a specific expert body within the Åland autonomy is extremely important. As a rule, "the President bases his or her decisions on the stated opinions of the Åland Delegation, a group of legal and economic experts elected in equal numbers by the Finnish Government and Åland Parliament, and sometimes also on the opinions of the Supreme Court of Finland".¹³

The Åland Delegation examines all laws passed by the Åland Parliament, to ascertain that the parliament has not exceeded its legislative competence. In addition, this body decides the yearly amount of money that the Finnish state has to pay to the autonomous bodies, as compensation for the taxes and fees that have been paid by Ålanders and Åland companies to the State. It also contributes legal counsel on the interpretation of the Autonomy Act to the Council of State, the ministries, the Åland Government and the courts.

¹² Lars Ingmar Johansson. *Åland's Autonomy – Its Background and Current Status*. In: Susanne Eriksson, Lars Ingmar Johansson, Barbro Sundback, *Islands of Peace. Åland's autonomy, demilitarization and neutralization*. The Åland Islands Peace Institute, 2006, p.54-55

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.55

In line with the Autonomy Act the duties of the Chairman of the Åland Delegation is performed by Governor or another person, whom the President of Finland has appointed in agreement on the matter with the Speaker of the Åland Parliament (section 55).¹⁴

The Governor is the most senior representative of the Finnish Government in Åland and plays an essential role in the Åland autonomy. When the League of Nations made its decision in June 1921 about additional guarantees for the Ålanders, the appointment of Governor was one of them. Only a person who is accepted by the Ålanders themselves can take the role, and following consultations with the Speaker of the Åland Parliament, the President of Finland appoints the suitable candidate. At the same time, if a consensus is not reached by the parties, the President will appoint the Governor from among five candidates nominated by the Åland Parliament (section 52).¹⁵

Thus, the Governor's main task is to promote positive relations between the political leaders and civil servants of the Åland autonomy and the State, and in a broader context, between both populations. The Governor is also responsible for regional state administration on Åland, as well as holding a seat in the Åland Parliament, and opening and closing par-

liamentary sessions on behalf of the President.

The administrative power is implemented by the Åland Government, which may have up to eight members. Its composition is heavily influenced by the Åland Parliament. The head of Government is appointed by the Åland Parliament on the proposal of the Speaker of the Parliament. The Administration is comprised of regional civil service and six departments (the chancellery department (a type of interior ministry), the finance department, the department for social issues and the environment (which also includes healthcare), the department of education and culture, the department of trade and industry (which includes agriculture, forestry, and fishing), and the department of transport). These bodies assist the Government in its daily work.¹⁶

Local councils elected every four years by public ballot implement decision-making power at the municipalities' level. There are 16 municipalities in Åland, the largest of which is Mariehamn. Founded in 1861, it celebrated its 150th anniversary this year. The smallest municipality is Sottunga, located in the archipelago.

Without the right of domicile in Åland, one cannot vote or be a candidate in municipal or Parliamentary elections, nor own property or busi-

¹⁴ Act on the Autonomy of Åland. The Åland Parliament. The Government of Åland, Marietamm, 2005, p.20

¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 1, 20

¹⁶ Lars Ingmar Johansson. *Åland's Autonomy – Its Background and Current Status*. In: Susanne Eriksson, Lars Ingmar Johansson, Barbro Sundback, *Islands of Peace. Åland's autonomy, demilitarization and neutralization. The Åland Islands Peace Institute*, 2006, p.61-62

nesses in Åland.

In this respect, the provisions in the Autonomy Act concerning the right of domicile and language are very important and specific characteristics of Åland autonomy. These issues were also among the additional guarantees accorded to the Ålanders as a part of the solution to the Åland Islands Question in June 1921.

“The right of domicile is granted to children whose father or mother has the right of domicile. Finnish citizens who move to the Åland Islands may apply for right of domicile after living in Åland for five years and demonstrating an adequate knowledge of Swedish. People who have previously had right of domicile or have a close family connection to Åland may be granted right of domicile in less than five years. Those who move away from Åland lose their right of domicile after five years”.¹⁷

This limitation of the right to own or be in possession of real estate property was introduced in order to ensure that the land would remain in the hands of local population.

At the same time the local population is exempt from military service, which is also linked to the right of domicile and does not apply to those who move to Åland after the age of twelve. At the same time “it is not directly linked to Åland’s demilitarization, but was introduced primarily as

a means of safeguarding the Swedish language”.¹⁸

The role of Swedish language and protection of its status was always a very significant issue for Ålanders, and according to the Åland Agreement, Finland is obliged to safeguard the Swedish language, culture and local customs of the Åland Islands.

Since then, Swedish has been Åland’s only official language, used by the State, Åland and municipal authorities, and in letters and other documents exchanged between Åland and State officials. It is also the language of instruction in publicly funded schools.

According to Barbro Sundback “the latest first language survey data suggests that the relationship between the Swedish- and Finnish-speakers in Åland has remained surprisingly stable. Some 93 per cent of respondents state Swedish as their mother tongue. About five per cent are native Finnish-speakers, with other languages accounting for the rest. This is a relevant measure of the effectiveness of self-government in preserving the Swedish language in Åland since 1921, when the League of Nations resolved that Åland should be granted a wide measure of autonomy while remaining a part of Finland in order to safeguard the status of the

¹⁸ Susanne Eriksson. *Åland – a Demilitarised and Neutralised Territory*. In: Susanne Eriksson, Lars Ingmar Johansson, Barbro Sundback, *Islands of Peace. Åland’s autonomy, demilitarization and neutralization. The Åland Islands Peace Institute, 2006, p.21*

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.64

Åland joined the EU along with Finland in 1995, and its relation to the European Union's legal system is regulated by a special protocol known as the Åland Protocol. This protocol provides certain exemptions from treaties that are fundamental to the EU.

Swedish language in the Islands”.¹⁹

In terms of economic development, Åland's situation changed dramatically after the 1960s, when ferry transportation and shipping became the dominant industry, contributing significantly to the Ålands' current wealth. During the 1920s the Åland Islands were comparatively very poor. Another important factor is that having autonomy within Finland gives Åland a more privileged status than it would have as an ordinary province within Sweden. For example, Åland is significantly more advanced than the Swedish Götland Islands, a holiday destination in the Stockholm region that has little prospect of achieving Åland's economic success.

Since 1954 Åland has had its own flag and has been a member of the Nordic Council for more than forty years. Along with representatives of other Nordic autonomies, such as the

¹⁹ Barbro Sundback. *A Success Story*. In: Susanne Eriksson, Lars Ingmar Johansson, Barbro Sundback, *Islands of Peace. Åland's autonomy, demilitarization and neutralization*. The Åland Islands Peace Institute, 2006, p.79

Faeroe Islands and Greenland, the Åland Government actively participates in the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers. At the same time, the passports of Ålanders with the right of domicile specify their Åland identification (section 30(2)).

Another interesting development has been Åland's accession to the EU. Åland joined the EU along with Finland in 1995, and its relation to the European Union's legal system is regulated by a special protocol known as the Åland Protocol. This protocol provides certain exemptions from treaties that are fundamental to the EU. For example, persons or juridical persons who do not enjoy the right of domicile cannot acquire real property or set up business enterprises without permission from the Åland authorities. Åland's special status in international law has been confirmed by the Government of Finland in a unilateral declaration. Because the EU only recognizes independent states as full members, politically Åland and Finland should become more integrated and Finland should take Åland's political positions into account.

The special characteristics of Åland autonomy outlined above, together with its continuing development make Åland Islands one of the best-functioning autonomies in the world. “The political, cultural and economic standards achieved in Åland are im-

pressive and show that autonomy has served not only as an effective safeguard for the preservation of Åland Swedish language, culture and local customs, but also as a foundation for a vibrant and economically healthy society that has an active exchange with the wider world”.²⁰

Conclusion

2011 marks the 90th anniversary of the famous resolution on what is now known as the Åland Islands Question. Already its success can be measured, based on its political, social, and economic stability and satisfaction of all involved parties.

Its political durability and continuing development during these years is a fascinating phenomenon, proving once more that successful autonomy arrangements should be flexible and constantly evolving. Therefore both sides – the central Government on behalf of Finland and the autonomy on behalf of Åland - have been instrumental in the successful development of the Åland autonomy.

Sweden has also played a special role in this evolutionary process, as a country with which Ålanders feel an affinity of origin, language, and culture. The majority of Ålanders say that Sweden supported the Åland people; although according to some, Sweden was not insistent on this issue; the government was wary of

jeopardizing its peaceful relations with Finland for the sake of Åland. Åland was not at that time a foreign policy issue; it was under the aegis of the maritime minister rather than the prime minister. At the same time there was confidence in the Finnish government, and Sweden did not have any hidden agenda. “The Ålanders were quite simply forced to accept their fate and would never have received support for any renegotiation, as a result of Sweden’s lack of interest. No, even though the Ålanders have been unable to count upon any more tangible support from Sweden at difficult times and in conflicts, that does not mean that this is the answer to the question why the solution has been regarded as successful. Even though there are some who maintain that Sweden’s attitude in this respect has helped “to make the regime a success”.²¹

The role of international community was an additional essential factor in the resolution of this conflict. “The newly formed League of Nations, with a mandate to promote international peace, was summoned as mediator in the dispute between Sweden and Finland as to the future of Åland. It was still the time when views of people frequently counted for less than that of states, and the resistance of the people of Åland to autonomy

20 Barbro Sundback. *A Success Story*. In: Susanne Eriksson, Lars Ingmar Johansson, Barbro Sundback, *Islands of Peace. Åland’s autonomy, demilitarization and neutralization*. The Åland Islands Peace Institute, 2006, p.79

21 Elisabeth Naucler. *The Autonomy of Åland – a Model to Be Copied or a Source of Inspiration?* In: *The second Åland Islands question. Autonomy or independence?* Ed: Harry Jansson and Johannes Salminen. Published by the Julius Sundblom Memorial Foundation, Mariehamn, 2002, p.151

and preference for merger with Sweden was disregarded once the two states agreed on autonomy”.²² At the same time “a number of European states had an interest in the settlement of the Åland dispute, given the strategic location of the islands” and therefore “this convergence of the interests of international or regional community or big powers shows also how the interests of a minority may be subordinated to these wider interests. In the end, it has to be recognized, that Ålanders had no real choice once Finland and Sweden made a deal, largely for their own diplomatic reasons”.²³

2011 marks the 20th anniversary of the independence of the three South Caucasus countries. Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia, all members of the Council of Europe, are currently working in close collaboration with different Euro-Atlantic structures. If Armenia and Azerbaijan, together with the OSCE Minsk Group mediators, are genuinely interested in developing a formula that might provide the basis for future settlement of the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, then perhaps different European power-sharing arrangements incorporating specific characteristics of the Åland autonomy can be successfully applied in this context.

²² Yash Ghai. *Global Prospects of Autonomies. The Autonomy of Åland – a Model to Be Copied or a Source of Inspiration? In: The second Åland Islands question. Autonomy or independence? Ed: Harry Jansson and Johannes Salminen. Published by the Julius Sundblom Memorial Foundation, Mariehamn, 2002, p.45*

²³ *Ibid.*, p.46

The Customs Union:

*A Resurgence of Soviet Unity
or Just Another Failed
Regional Initiative?*

**Erica
Marat**

Abstract

Formed in 2007, the Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan Customs Union has gained traction since 2010. Although it is too early to say whether the Union is doomed to fail like other similar regional agreements or whether it represents a Soviet-style resurrection of inter-state economic links, for Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, the grouping's architect, the customs union has already become an instrument of both regional and international politics. Union membership is regarded as an indicator of political alignment with and support of Russian leadership in the post-Soviet space. Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan are pressured to join the club. The Union implemented several key trade agreements and is expanding further into the post-Soviet space, but its members remain divided on a number of policies. With that, the Customs Union also poses serious challenges to Russia and Kazakhstan's bid for the WTO membership. Furthermore, the Union forces Russia to relax some of the retaliatory trade bans Moscow imposed in 2006 on Georgian products. Since the Customs Union is designed to erase trade barriers among its members, Georgian products banned in Russia will inevitably make their way to the Russian market once they pass through intermediary countries that have not imposed similar trade bans.

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Four years after the Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan Customs Union officially entered into force, it remains unclear whether Moscow's trade initiative is doomed to fail like other similar regional agreements or whether it represents a Soviet-style resurrection of inter-state economic links. The union's mission statement declares that the countries have banded together to lift customs levies and establish uniform trade regulations across the territory of its member-states. But already the three members are split on a number of policies, and Moscow appears to be using the Customs Union mostly for its own political purposes. Either of these trends could undermine the new regional formation in the long-term.

Formed in 2007, the Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan Customs Union has gained traction since 2010. The Union has implemented several key trade agreements and is expanding further into the post-Soviet space. Trade among the union's members has grown by 8.4 percent since 2007. When representatives of the Customs Union members met in Astana for a summit in July 2010, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev announced that the former Soviet states are integrating on economic issues at a pace faster than the development of the European Union. "We are moving with a greater speed," he said, reminding that it took over 30 years for Europe to do what it took Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan to do in

only three.¹ Indeed, today the Union works on behalf of the 170 million people living in the three members, its website boasts.²

Russia has more to lose with the current Customs Union. The Union de facto entrusts Belarus and Kazakhstan – and potentially Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan – to guard its international borders with Eastern Europe, China, and Afghanistan.

Moscow easily convinced Belarus and Kazakhstan to support the idea of a common market. Belarus's isolated economy is deeply dependent on Russian credits, and President Aleksandr Lukashenka's domestic political support is contingent on his relations with the much larger neighbor. Kazakhstan, on the other hand, has a diversified economy that would only benefit from solid political ties with Moscow. Unlike Belarus, Kazakhstan's biggest trade partner continues to be the European Union, and the country is also expanding its economic cooperation with China and the United States. Furthermore, Kyrgyzstan, which depends on Russian gas deliveries, has agreed to join the union in January 2012, while Ukraine's current, pro-Moscow leadership has proposed collaboration with the Customs Union in a special "3+1" format.

¹ Vitaly Kamyshchev, "Tamozhenny soyuz v ozhidanii Kyrgyzstan i Tadzhikistana", *Svobodanews.ru*, July 5, 2011.

² As stated on Custom's Union's official website <<http://www.tsouz.ru>>, last accessed on August 25, 2011.

Russia's financial losses as a result of Customs Union regulations further speak to the Union's political purpose. For the year prior to the Customs Union enactment, Russia listed 18.5 billion roubles (633.8 million USD) in customs duties.

For Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, the grouping's architect, the customs union has become an instrument of both regional and international politics. In the post-Soviet space, membership in the Union is perceived as an indicator of political alignment with Russia and support for its leadership. Similar economic and political unions in the region that did not include Russia quickly folded. In 2005 Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev proposed creating a Central Asian Union that would ease customs levies and boost regional economic cooperation.³ This initiative, although informally supported by Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, was snubbed by Uzbekistan and quickly abandoned. Another regional union – GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova) – formed in 1997 as a counterbalance to Russia's influence within the Commonwealth of Independent States but never yielded substantive results either.

Russia has more to lose with the cur-

rent Customs Union. The Union de facto entrusts Belarus and Kazakhstan – and potentially Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan – to guard its international borders with Eastern Europe, China, and Afghanistan. But once trucks loaded with goods cross the Kyrgyz-Kazakh border, they are free to go to any destination in Russia or Belarus. This makes it easy to trade goods and lifts the financial burden on importers, but it also allows smugglers to spread their activities in a more liberal environment than pre-Union conditions allowed. According to recent studies, corruption at the Kazakh-China border has created a huge black market; and, for the right price, border guards will turn a blind eye toward illegal activities. For example, in 2008 Kazakhstan's customs bureau recorded 3,000 trucks passing through the Khorgos checkpoint. However, China counted 36,000 trucks crossing the border. It must take a considerable bribe to make border guards miss that many large vehicles.⁴ Moscow is apprehensively cautious because nearly 80% of Russian imports come from China and relaxed border control might cause an influx of cheap and illegal goods.

Russia's financial losses as a result of Customs Union regulations further speak to the Union's political purpose. For the year prior to the Customs Union enactment, Russia listed

³ "Nazarbaev Keeps Plan for Central Asian Unity Alive", *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, April 18, 2007.

⁴ Richard Orange, "Kazakhstan: Russia Worries that Customs Union Outpost is Smugglers' Paradise", *Eurasia Net*, February 11, 2011.

18.5 billion roubles (633.8 million USD) in customs duties.⁵ According to the Russian leadership, however, although the country might suffer from lost taxes in the short-term, in the long run the Union should help diversify the Russian economy and allow it to move away from dependence on exports of energy resources. Some Russian companies and banks were interested in the Customs Union as a way to access state-owned properties in Belarus that are slated to be privatized soon.⁶ The Union's durability will be in question until some of these predicted gains are realized.

Eurasian Customs Union vs. WTO

When the Customs Union came into force in 2010, there were concerns that Russia's bid for WTO membership would be compromised. By then Moscow had been trying to join WTO for 16 years, and the limited support it had accumulated collapsed after the Russian war with Georgia in August 2008. As president and now as prime minister, Putin has often accused the West of using possible WTO accession to manipulate his country.⁷ Instead, after Georgia vetoed Russia's bid for membership in 2009, Putin announced that Russia would join the WTO indirectly, as part of this cus-

toms union.⁸

Since the WTO rarely accepts regional customs unions as members, there was little reason to believe that Putin's initiative would succeed. Yet two years later, when Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan considered joining the Union, the Russian leader's latest plan to resurrect former Soviet ties seemed even more possible.

It remains to be seen whether Putin will continue to promote the Union's value as a regional political institution in the future. Indeed, if Putin is elected president again in 2012, he will likely shift his focus to constructing an anti-Western political alliance among the former Soviet republics. This political union will not prevent Kazakhstan from pursuing a balanced foreign policy, but it will certainly remain a powerful instrument for Moscow to influence the policy decisions of smaller countries like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

As it stands now, Russia has better chances of becoming a WTO member largely because of U.S. support for an invitation. Georgia has now indicated that it will not veto Russia's bid for membership.⁹ Russia's chances of joining the organization grew in 2011 as a result of the "reset" policy between Washington and Moscow. If Russia and Kazakhstan join the WTO, they will likely do so as indi-

5 "Customs Union costs Russia", *The Moscow News*, August 22, 2011.

6 Andrew Kramer, "Russia and 2 Neighbors Form Economic Union", *The New York Times*, July 5, 2011.

7 Prime minister is quoted in this video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U4AsUz7z0AU>, last accessed on August 29, 2011.

8 Jonathan Lynn, "WTO in Confusion after Russia's Custom Union Plan", *Reuters*, June 18, 2009.

9 "Ministr ekonomiki Gruzii: 'Vstuplenie Rossii v WTO nam vygodno'", *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, August 29, 2011.

vidual countries and not as a union. The WTO will offer much greater trade opportunities for both countries than the Customs Union could possibly do. Potential WTO membership would make the union economically unattractive for both Russia and Kazakhstan.

Georgia and Ukraine

Ironically, the Customs Union forces Russia to relax some of the retaliatory trade bans Moscow imposed in 2006 on Georgian products such as “Borjomi” mineral water and wine. Since the Customs Union is designed to erase trade barriers among its members, Georgian products banned in Russia will inevitably make their way to the Russian market once they pass through intermediary countries that have not imposed similar trade bans. Although Belarus has imposed sanctions on Georgian products, Kazakhstan freely sells Georgian wines and mineral water.¹⁰

According to Customs Union regulations, if one member-state imposes a ban on certain imports, other members must follow suit. This provision could become a major impediment to the Customs Union’s internal cohesion. Unlike Russia, Kazakhstan has sought to boost economic exchange with Tbilisi, creating a joint \$300 million investment fund in 2006.¹¹

10 “Onischenko obespokoen: granitsy Tamozhennogo soyuza otkryty dlya gruzinskogo vina i mineral’noy vody”, *Newsru.com*, May 5, 2011.

11 David Gelashvili, “Georgia Interested in Economic Stability of Kazakhstan”, <<http://www.newcaucasus.com>>.

Before the Customs Union came into force, Putin called on member states to refrain from exporting goods into countries where they are banned. The Russian leader specifically mentioned Georgian beverages.¹² However, a year later, the Russian government admitted that Georgian exports are likely to penetrate the Russian market via the Union. The Customs Union thus undermines the potential efficiency of Kremlin policy instruments deployed against regional adversaries. Thanks to the CU, Georgia is gradually regaining its market share in Russia.

Ukraine, a WTO member increasingly following a pro-Russian foreign policy, has been careful to maintain good relations with the Customs Union members. President Viktor Yanukovich has said that Ukraine is interested in collaborating with the Union but a full membership would undermine the country’s current benefits derived from serving as a transit state for Russian gas.¹³ The Ukrainian president suggested collaborating with the Customs Union in a “3+1” format. It is yet unclear what exactly Ukraine means with this formula, but Russian President Medvedev rejected the idea outright. According to Medvedev, Russia will only accept Ukraine as a full member.

March 26, 2011.

12 “Putin zakroet Tamozhenny soyuz dlya ‘problemnyh’ tovarov”, *Lenta.ru*, January 27, 2011.

13 “Yanukovich: Neobhodimo iskat ‘kompromissy v sotrudnichestve Ukrainy s TS”, <<http://www.rbc.ua>>, August 26, 2011.

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan

If the Customs Union really were about economic integration, then why would Russia and Kazakhstan, two large countries that share a 7,000 mile-border, have interests in Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan? For Kazakhstan, the Customs Union is more a symbol of good neighborly relations with Russia rather than of economic integration. The main reason that Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have shown interest in joining the Customs Union is that Russia is the main destination for their countries' labor migrants. An estimated one million migrants from each of the two countries currently live in Russia as labor migrants. Their collective remittances comprise almost half of those countries' annual GDPs. Furthermore, both countries depend on Russian gas exports to run their factories and heat their homes. The Russian energy giant Gazprom enjoys a near monopoly in these countries, supplying up to 90% of their fuel.

In early 2010 Kyrgyzstan Prime Minister Almazbek Atambayev announced that Kyrgyzstan would join the Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan Customs Union. This odd decision appears to have been based on political, not economic, priorities, and it came shortly after his deputy Omurbek Babanov returned from a trip to Moscow.¹⁴ As the only Central Asian country with WTO membership, Kyrgyzstan already has greater ac-

cess to global trade than the Customs Union can offer. Later this year, Atambayev and Babanov hope to secure the posts of president and prime minister respectively and they need Russia's political support. By joining the Customs Union, Kyrgyzstan would voluntarily submit to Russia's political will.

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As a WTO member for over a decade, Kyrgyzstan already has much lower import and export tariffs than the Customs Union discounts. The WTO facilitated Kyrgyzstan's emergence as a transit zone for Chinese goods and an exporter of locally manufactured clothing. Furthermore, the WTO helped Kyrgyzstan to diversify its imports, significantly decreasing its dependence on Russia and Kazakhstan. These two factors aided the rise of a local class of small- and medium-sized entrepreneurs who import goods from China, Turkey, and India and resell them to traders from other Central Asian states. According to estimates by the Kyrgyz research institute "Poekt budushego," more than 800,000 traders in Kyrgyzstan benefit from such re-exports, a sig-

¹⁴ www.akipress.kg, April 11, 2011.

nificant level for a population of 5.5 million. Russia and Kazakhstan are the primary markets for roughly 90 percent of those traders.¹⁵

However, according to Minister of Economic Regulations Uchkun Tashbayev, Kyrgyzstan has no choice other but to join the Russian-led Customs Union. Tashbayev believes that both Moscow and Astana have been increasing customs tariffs for non-members, making it harder for Kyrgyz entrepreneurs to re-export Chinese goods to Kyrgyzstan's neighbors.¹⁶

By joining the Customs Union, Kyrgyzstan would, in effect, agree to play by Russia's customs rules and regulations. Russia's average tariffs amount to roughly 10 percent, whereas Kyrgyzstan's are half that due to its WTO membership. Bishkek is thus trapped, unable to raise its tariffs for Russia without violating its WTO obligations. Russia, meanwhile, keeps its import tariffs high and export tariffs low to shield local manufacturers from external competition. For non-Customs Union countries like Kyrgyzstan, this means price increases for most goods imported from Russia and Kazakhstan. Union members will also increase prices for commodities imported from Europe and the Middle East, including cars and consumer technologies.

“Joining the Customs Union is

¹⁵ www.ictsd.org, May 2010

¹⁶ www.akipress.kg, April 11, 2011.

needed first of all for Kyrgyzstan... Membership in the organization will strengthen the [Kyrgyz] republic's external borders and improve the working and living conditions for the nearly 500,000 [Kyrgyz] citizens working in Russia and Kazakhstan”, Atambayev said.¹⁷ However, it is unclear exactly how membership in the Customs Union would affect Kyrgyzstan's labor migrants.

In 2009, then-President Kurmanbek Bakiyev also promised to join the Customs Union. Bakiyev confidently declared that settling the more than 10,000 contradictions between the WTO regulations and those of the union would take only a short time. Bakiyev made his pledge to enter the Customs Union at a time when Moscow was very critical of his policies. In particular, Bakiyev had declared that he wanted to expel U.S. forces from the Manas airbase in Bishkek, only to quickly change his mind after conveniently securing a \$2 billion credit from Moscow and an increase in lease payments for the base from the United States. Meanwhile, the WTO provides an opportunity for fair economic competition between China and Western powers in Kyrgyzstan. Although China has largely ignored WTO statutes, experts claim that the organization can potentially serve as a platform for collaboration, as Beijing is also a member.¹⁸

¹⁷ www.tsouz.ru, April 11, 2011.

¹⁸ “Strengthening Fragile Partnership: An Agenda for the Future of the U.S.-Central Asia Relationship”, Institute 2049, February 2011.

Moscow can manipulate energy deliveries to ensure Kyrgyzstan's political compliance. In spring 2010, Russia swiftly increased tariffs for fuel exports, adding additional strain on President Bakiyev's already struggling regime. Moscow explained its decision to raise levies by saying that contrary to their agreement which stated that Kyrgyzstan would use Russian fuel for domestic purposes, the Kyrgyz side supplied Russian fuel to the US Transit Center at Manas airport in Bishkek. However, fuel levies were accompanied with other types of pressures against Bakiyev's regime, including a smear campaign by the pro-Kremlin media.

Weeks after the Customs Union went into force, gas prices increased sharply in Kyrgyzstan, and gas stations limited purchases to only 10 liters of fuel per vehicle. Gas prices reached almost 1 USD per liter (up from 85 cents), a considerable cost for the locals. Some Bishkek residents began traveling to the Kyrgyz-Kazakh border to fill their fuel tanks.

The Customs Union could have an indirect influence on Kyrgyzstan's energy market. The energy market might have received a boost from the Union, and Kazakhstan's trade with Russia takes precedence over exports to non-member states. For Atambayev, one of Russia's biggest proponents in Kyrgyzstan, a new energy deal with Moscow is vital for his political future. Enjoying some support for northern Kyrgyzstan in his bid

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to become president, he faces strong competition from southern candidates, especially from the leader of the Ata-Jurt Party, Kamchybek Tashiyev. Over 80 candidates have registered to run for the presidency on October 30th. Although most of them are unknown to the wider public, they will likely reduce Atambayev's support throughout the country.

Seeking to ensure steady gas supplies from Russia, Tajikistan also considered applying to the Customs Union in 2010. A year later, however, Dushanbe hesitated to join for a number of reasons.

First, until Kyrgyzstan joins the Customs Union in 2012, Tajikistan does not share common borders with any of the Union's members. The country imports most goods from Russia through Uzbekistan, which shows no interest in joining the Russia-led group.

Second, by becoming a Customs Union member, Tajikistan would lose up to 46 percent of the revenue it currently receives from customs levies.¹⁹

¹⁹ "Zhiteli Tadjikistana hoyat voiti v Tamozhenny soyuz", *Regnum.ru*, July 4, 2011.

Finally, Tajikistan would be forced to increase fees on goods coming from China and Turkey, the country's two leading trade partners.²⁰ Instead, Tajikistan's Foreign Minister Khamrokhon Zarifi said his country is more interested in joining WTO because two of its neighbors – China and Kyrgyzstan – are members.

If Tajikistan joins the Customs Union, Russia will have the right and responsibility to station its border guards at the Tajik-Afghan border to control all cargo passing through to the union's border. According to Moscow Tajikistan's military lack enough capacity to prevent transit of drugs through the border.

Russian guards are already posted at the Kyrgyz-Kazakh border to check trucks crossing that border. Since withdrawing from the Tajik-Afghan border in 2004, Russia has been trying to reestablish its military presence in the country.

Indeed, in August 2010 the speaker of the lower house of Russia's parliament, Boris Gryzlov, argued that Russia must reinstall its troops in Tajikistan to control drug trafficking throughout the region. The Russian politician proposed introducing visas for Tajik migrants to Russia, should Dushanbe refuse to welcome Russian border guards. According to Tajik officials, Russia plans to station up to 3,000 troops in Tajikistan.²¹

²⁰ "Tadzhikistan ne toropitsya vstupit' v Tamozhenny soyuz, predpochitaya VTO", *Newsru.com*, July 18, 2011.

²¹ Alexander Sodiqov, "Moscow Blackmails Dushanbe to

Conclusions

While Russian leadership in former Soviet states is increasing, the Customs Union can only have a limited effect. Other Russian-led initiatives have been similarly supported by regional players, only to fizzle out later. For example, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, which includes Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, was unable to persuade its members to follow Moscow's lead and recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia's independence.

A range of political motives are hidden behind the Customs Union's economic facade. Belarus, whose economy is largely dependent on Russian subsidies, had to join Moscow's latest grouping in order to preserve these subsidies. The Customs Union should further boost trade relations between Russia and Kazakhstan. From Moscow's perspective, Kyrgyzstan's chaotic and unpredictable political landscape would be easier to control by placing the country inside the union framework.

Finally, Moscow is hoping to entice Tajikistan into joining the union in order to provide legitimacy for re-deploying Russian troops to the Tajik-Afghan border.

The Union might crumble due to internal strain between Russia and Belarus. Both countries have seen

Return to the Afghan Border", Jamestown Foundation, August 16, 2011.

dramatic worsening of their bilateral relations. President Lukashenko has made it clear that he does not support the Customs Union's political initiatives. Rather, he agreed to join Moscow's new arrangement because it is economically beneficial for his country.

Post | **Licínia Simão** *Lisbon EU- South Caucasus relations*

Abstract

When the Lisbon Treaty entered into force, there was a qualitative shift in the relations between the European Union (EU) and the countries covered by the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). Several of the institutional changes brought about by the new Treaty have already promoted positive developments to the ENP, namely through the close cooperation between the new High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Commissioner for Enlargement and the ENP. This paper looks at some of the key institutional changes within the CFSP, and assesses their interaction with the realities of the South Caucasus on two specific principles: differentiation and regional cooperation. The paper argues that although the Treaty per se did not make major changes to how the two principles are perceived by the EU, other steps such as the creation of the Eastern Partnership and the revision of the ENP offer valuable insights into how the EU addresses the conflicting nature of these two principles in its relations with the South Caucasus. Thus the paper seeks to illuminate the ways in which EU policy interacts with the realities of the South Caucasus states, both in terms of their bilateral relations with the EU and in their regional dynamics.

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Relations between the European Union (EU) and the South Caucasus have been gradually evolving into a broader partnership, as envisaged by the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and its Eastern “spin-off”, the Eastern Partnership (EaP). The early ENP documents emphasized “jointly agreed Action Plans” and the development of a “privileged relationship with neighbors [based] on mutual commitment to common values”¹, whereas the Prague Summit declaration confirmed the establishment of “a more ambitious partnership between the European Union and the partner countries”, by deepening political association and economic integration.² Following the 2008 war in Georgia, and the Arab Spring of 2011, the EU has further reinforced its commitment to the neighborhood policy and the stabilization of the regions in its borders.

With the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, the EU fully integrated the ENP into its institutional framework. Article 8 Treaty of the European Union (TEU) of the Lisbon Treaty establishes that

“The Union shall develop a special relationship with neighboring countries, aiming to establish an area of prosper-

ity and good neighborliness, founded on the values of the Union and characterized by close and peaceful relations based on cooperation.”

The decision to fully institutionalize the ENP into the EU’s legislative framework, as opposed to keeping it as an ad-hoc policy framework, has important implications for the development of the ENP. Beyond the symbolic importance of acknowledging the ENP’s centrality to EU external relations, this action also opens the way for its integration into the EU’s institutional foreign policy structures, which have been considerably changed under the Lisbon Treaty. One area in which this complete integration could yield important improvements in terms of efficiency and horizontal coherence (among EU policies) is conflict resolution and crisis management. This, of course, is highly pertinent to the South Caucasus region. Although political and security issues are strictly speaking beyond the scope of the ENP and, in accordance with the pillar structure within which the ENP was conceptualized, should be dealt with by EU member states and Common Security and Foreign Policy (CFSP) institutions, the Lisbon Treaty provisions change this in a number of ways. Although the community and intergovernmental methods remain distinct with regard to CFSP issues³, the dou-

¹ European Commission (2004) *European Neighbourhood Policy Strategy Paper, COM(2004) 373 final*, Brussels, 12 May, p. 3.

² Council of the European Union (2009) *Joint declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit. Adopted in Prague, 7 May 2011. 8435/09 (Press 78)*, Brussels, 7 May.

³ Wessels, Wolfgang and Bopp, Franziska (2008) *The institutional architecture of the CFSP after the Lisbon Treaty – Constitutional breakthrough or challenges ahead?*,

ble hating of the High Representative for the CFSP, acting simultaneously as Vice-president of the Commission (HR/VP) and the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS), bringing together Commission, Council and EU member states' officials, have provided the opportunity to overcome the contradictions resulting from different working methods and autonomous decision-making and resource allocation.

Finally, the revision of the ENP (ongoing since 2010) has repositioned the EU *vis-à-vis* its neighbors, and provides a useful illustration of the new institutional arrangements of the Lisbon Treaty in action. The “new” Commissioner for Enlargement and the Neighborhood Policy, Stefan Füle, has been closely collaborating with the HR/VP to streamline EU policies and goals, namely by linking improvements in governance and the protracted conflicts in the region.⁴ Reinforcing the centrality of shared values and principles, the joint communication from the European Commission and the HR/VP clearly states that “increased EU support to its neighbors is conditional. It will depend on progress in building and consolidating democracy and respect for the rule of law”.⁵

CHALLENGE Research paper, 10, June.

⁴ European Commission (2010) *Taking stock of the European Neighbourhood Policy. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. COM(2010) 207, Brussels, 12 May.*

⁵ European Commission & High Representative (2011) *A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood. Joint Communication*

All of these steps demand a reassessment of the institutional possibilities for the development of this closer partnership. The Lisbon Treaty does not account for all the changes in the EU's relations with its neighbors, given that many of its provisions have not yet been implemented. There is a complex dynamic at play, with the establishment of the EaP, the strategic revision of the ENP, and the fast changing contexts of the Eastern and Southern neighborhoods in addition to the Lisbon Treaty, with many elements that demand analysis.

This paper addresses a particular dynamic within the ENP framework, namely the attempt to strike a balance between the ENP principles of differentiation and regional cooperation in the post-Lisbon context. This dynamic is crucial to EU relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. On one hand, relations have developed through a regional approach, focusing on competitive democratization and confidence-building activities, highlighting the security concerns of the EU and its preference for structural approaches. On the other hand, the EU has recognized the clear need for differentiation, as the foreign policies of these three states continue to diverge. Considering these various factors, this paper will examine how these institutional changes address the conflicting goals of regional cooperation and increased

to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. COM(2011) 303, Brussels, 25 May.

differentiation, and how this has affected the relationship between the EU and its regional partners. In this way, the paper will contribute to better understand the EU's complex foreign policy tools and its approaches towards the neighborhood, as well as its ability to act as a security actor in the South Caucasus.

Differentiation and regional cooperation in official EU documents

The Prague summit and the final Declaration it produced represent an important stage in EU relations with its Eastern neighbors, and contributed decisively to balance the bilateral and the multilateral (regional) dimensions of the ENP. The Summit was the first high-level multilateral meeting of the EU and the Eastern neighborhood countries, and responded to two long-time requests on the part of the Eastern partners: firstly for greater differentiation within the ENP (*vis-à-vis* the Southern neighbors), and secondly for official acknowledgement of their European aspirations. It also upgraded and personalized political relations, bringing together Heads of State and Government from the EU and the Eastern neighbors. This deepening of political relationships had been long resisted by most EU member states, due to the political instability and the undemocratic nature of the majority of the regimes in question, in addition to the political costs of raising the EU's regional profile. As Ariella Huff demonstrates, the Commission-sponsored non-political

approach, which sought to avoid objections to the EU's reform agendas, was the preferred policy.⁶

Both the Prague Declaration and the Joint Communication from the Commission and the High Representative (2011) seek to upgrade and give substance to the partnership between the EU and the neighbors, in a number of directions. Firstly, there is the advancement of concrete proposals, especially in the East, which include political association, market access, visa facilitation and energy security. As emphasized by the European Commission “[t]he partners do not have identical objectives for their relationship with the EU, but they all share a common wish to deepen relations”.⁷ This can be seen as a display of willingness by the EU to tackle traditional resistance to providing tangible incentives for reforms among some member states. By advancing these concrete commitments, the Commission is reinforcing and giving substance to the principle of joint ownership.

The EaP constitutes the EU's most marked attempt to balance differentiation and deeper bilateral relations with multilateral relations and regional cooperation. Deeper bilateral relations will be pursued through the negotiation and celebration of As-

6 Huff, Ariella (2011) “The role of EU defence policy in the Eastern neighbourhood”, *Occasional Paper*, 91, 11 May, pp. 11-16.

7 European Commission (2008) *Eastern Partnership. Communication to the European Parliament and the Council. COM(2008) 823 final, Brussels, 3 December, p. 4*

Both the Prague Declaration and the Joint Communication from the Commission and the High Representative (2011) seek to upgrade and give substance to the partnership between the EU and the neighbors, in a number of directions.

sociation Agreements (AA), through which political association will be developed. This dimension will reflect the differentiation and conditionality principles more clearly, “taking into account the specific situation and ambition of each partner country”.⁸ Other provisions include Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs), visa facilitation and energy security, historically key demands of the Eastern neighbors. By finally creating the political consensus to act on these dimensions, the EU is laying the ground for positive conditionality and greater legitimacy.

Furthermore, the 2008 Commission Communication on the EaP⁹ as well as the 2011 Joint Communication with the HR/VP on the revision of the ENP¹⁰ include a clear commitment to use conditionality as a reward for partners who demonstrate commitment to the shared values of Human Rights, Democracy and the

⁸ Council of the European Union (2009) “Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit, Prague, 7 May 2009”, 8435/09 (Press 78), Brussels, 7 May. p. 7

⁹ European Commission (2008) *op cit*, p. 3.

¹⁰ European Commission & High Representative (2011) *op cit*, pp. 2-3

Rule of Law. This move towards a stronger rhetoric on these values, the fundamental principles of the EU’s normative foreign policy, is a response to the Arab Spring and to claims that EU actors often neglected these values in pursuit of short-term interests, thereby compromising the normative image the EU has of itself in international affairs.¹¹

Of course, it remains to be seen how this strong language will be translated into action, but for now the legitimacy of the EU to use value-based conditionality towards the neighbors has been enhanced, both by the more attractive offers on display and the popular protests against authoritarian leaders throughout the neighboring countries.

The Prague declaration also returns to the issue of regional cooperation, seeking to develop a realistic trajectory for multilateral development and to foster regional cooperation. Regional cooperation has been repeatedly emphasized as a necessary and positive component of regional stability, mainly regarding confidence-building and conflict resolution, but also in terms of economic development and trade relations. The effectiveness of this strategy has been severely limited by the recent nature of national independence in this region after years of Soviet rule; state sovereignty is highly prized and care-

¹¹ Manners, Jan (2002) “Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?”, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40(2), 235-58.

fully protected, which gives rise to resistance to integration processes. Mistrust of neighboring states has also hampered inter-governmental regional cooperation initiatives, especially in cases where the regimes are undermined by separatist conflicts. The South Caucasus is particularly vulnerable to these dynamics, as will be discussed further below. The nature of the current regimes and the very different paths that each country has followed (for example, Belarus has become a dictatorship, Moldova and Ukraine are caught between pro-western and pro-Russian orientation) further restricts regional cooperation.

The EaP's response to this diversity of political identification has been to foster links among Eastern partners *through the EU*. The EU's proposal is that this multilateral dimension focuses on information sharing among partner countries on their reform efforts. This is a very "light" form of regional cooperation, with limited impact on hard security issues, but it opens the way for important steps towards new frameworks of interaction in a different context. Another obvious advantage is the reinforcement of competitive democratization, or as the Commission puts it, "structured approximation process".¹² Information sharing on EU standards and legislation are the main issues covered by this approach. The multilateral track will also aim to harness the positive potential of contributions from

different stakeholders in the societies in the region, through the active engagement of national parliaments in the partner countries in the Euro-NEST Parliamentary Assembly and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the Civil Society Forum.

There are four thematic platforms being developed, through which all of these new contributions will be streamlined and discussed in a multilateral setting: democracy, good governance and stability; economic integration and convergence with EU sectoral policies; energy security; and contacts. All of them hold great potential with regard to improving regional stability, confidence-building and conflict resolution, in line with a long-term, structural approach. However, this broader engagement and new instruments need to be supplemented by a clear strategy and strong political will; engagement in high-level political dialogue for conflict resolution is crucial, enacted within the framework of existing international organizations and relationships with other regional actors, including Russia, Turkey, Iran and the US.

Differentiation and regional cooperation in the South Caucasus

Among the South Caucasus countries Georgia has been actively pushing for high-profile political relations with the EU. Following Ukraine's demands for deeper political engagement by the EU in post-Soviet affairs, Tbilisi's calculations went be-

¹² *European Commission (2008) op cit, p. 10*

yond a “bandwagon” foreign policy strategy to completely shift its foreign policy towards the West. European and Euro-Atlantic integration remain the country’s main foreign policy goals, and under the current leadership of President Saakashvili, these objectives have become synonymous with the preservation of the state: Georgia depends on European partners for financial, economic, and political security – or indeed, survival. From an external perspective, Georgia has been the driving force in terms of the EU’s regional presence, actively demanding the deepening of the EU’s political engagement in the South Caucasus.

Besides the need to support Georgia, especially after the August War in 2008, the EU has its own strategic interests in the South Caucasus. Internally, the crucial factors of energy security and Caspian energy resources have been fundamental drivers of the EU’s relationship with Azerbaijan. The EU signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Azerbaijan in 2006, followed by an important Joint Declaration on the South Corridor in 2011. Both documents seek to uphold the ongoing commitment of the Azerbaijani and European governments to the energy projects linking the European and the Caspian markets. As Shirinov emphasizes, the Azerbaijani government has demonstrated its preference to commit to projects with visible political backing from

Internally, the crucial factors of energy security and Caspian energy resources have been fundamental drivers of the EU’s relationship with Azerbaijan.

European governments, as opposed to proposals from private companies, such as the Nabuco pipeline,¹³ thus raising the political profile of relations with the EU.

Armenian views on the upgrading of relations with the EU, as envisioned in the Eastern Partnership initiative, yield further differences. Armenian foreign policy has traditionally been guided by the interests of the large Armenian diaspora, particularly those living in Russia, the United States, France and the Middle East. Relations with the EU represent an important change in this regard, since they focus primarily on administrative changes and long-term transformation. Since the geopolitical implications of this approach are less visible, the Armenian government has now the opportunity to conduct its foreign policy based on the interests of the Armenian state, rather than the needs of its diaspora. This is particularly evident in three main areas: the consolidation of a political partnership that will reinforce Armenia’s “complementarity” foreign policy, with important implications for

13 Shirinov, Rashad (2011) “A Pragmatic Area for Cooperation: Azerbaijan and the EU”, *Journal for International Relations and Global Trends*, issue 3, July, pp. 74-81.

regional balance and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; assurance of EU financial assistance; and the expan-

Integration without accession has been the logic behind the ENP from the very beginning, and is now clearly reinforced by the EaP. A crucial part of these reforms is the normalization of regional relations.

sion of Armenia's economic perspectives through the establishment of a DCFTA.¹⁴

Considering these different and occasionally irreconcilable interests, differentiation remains a fundamental aspect in EU relations in the region. In this regard, the ongoing negotiations for DCFTAs and visa facilitation demonstrate not only an important bilateral dimension, seeking to reward those who reform faster and better, and increasing the legitimacy of the EU's conditionality, but it also reinforces a regional competitive approach, whereby neighbors assess the pace of their own integration processes against their neighbors'. An Armenian diplomat commented, "Armenia had to struggle to get visa facilitation, despite the good work it is doing, while Georgia got it sooner, by speaking louder".¹⁵ Moreover,

¹⁴ Navasardian, Boris (2011) "Armenia: Imagining the Integration of the Southern Caucasus with the EU", *Journal for International Relations and Global Trends*, issue 3, July, pp. 62-73.

¹⁵ Interview with Armenian diplomat, Brussels, 17 January, 2011.

despite the EU's emphasis on joint ownership and partnership, there remains a clear element of asymmetry in the EU relations with its neighbors, since the EU often determines what reforms the neighbors should pursue. Even if this is a natural outcome of the relative power differences, the fact remains that it undermines the EU's desire to be seen as normative power in its neighborhood, and reinforces a hierarchical approach to its external relations, which is incoherent with the desire to build a partnership with the neighbors.

Integration without accession has been the logic behind the ENP from the very beginning, and is now clearly reinforced by the EaP. A crucial part of these reforms is the normalization of regional relations. The EU is fostering a regional cooperative approach, though the opening of closed borders, which are clearly impeding economic cooperation, in addition to the development of regional projects, such as the rehabilitation of the railroad linking Baku, Gyumri, and Tbilisi, as set out in the TRACECA program. Additional focus has been directed towards the importance of analyzing the regional dimension of domestic security concerns (for example, the fight against transnational crime, including drug trafficking), which could be addressed via the promotion of Integrated Border Management initiatives. In the past, the EU has advanced several regional

frameworks through which the three South Caucasus states could address areas of interdependence. Either under the South Caucasus regional label, or under the wider Black Sea dimension, or even within the EaP, two fundamental obstacles remain in the way of thriving regional relations: the formats are deemed either too restrictive (i.e. the South Caucasus label), or too broad (i.e. including Russia and Turkey).

This demonstrates that each of the South Caucasus states has developed privileged regional structures through which they are happy to cooperate, deepening the fault lines across the region. Although it is rhetorically committed to strategic partnerships with both Armenia and Azerbaijan, Georgia has repeatedly disregarded the potential for greater cooperation with its neighbors, preferring instead to cooperate via frameworks that place it symbolically closer to the EU, namely the Wider Black Sea area. Georgian leaders perceive their country as part of the European family, but find themselves unable “to escape their South Caucasus neighborhood”.¹⁶ Azerbaijan has clear strategic interests in developing regional cooperation around the Caspian Sea, avoiding frameworks where Armenia is also involved. On the other hand, Armenia continues to push for a South Caucasus regional approach, where it has a central position.

The main obstacle to the development

¹⁶ Interview with Georgian official, Tbilisi, 10 May, 2011.

of regional relations in the South Caucasus remains the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which has long prevented Armenia and Azerbaijan from sitting around the same table on any other issue, contributing to the hypercharged character of the conflict.¹⁷ However, this is a rather limited view of the level of interdependence of the region.¹⁸ As illustrated by the war in Georgia in 2008, Azerbaijan’s energy security is not independent of regional events. The dynamics of the Nagorno-Karabakh peace-negotiations are also affected by the progress (or lack thereof) in Georgia’s conflicts. Finally, Georgia is extremely vulnerable in relation to the Nagorno-Karabakh developments, as well as on Armenian-Turkish relations. It stands to lose a great deal if conflict escalates (a “nightmare scenario” according to Georgian officials¹⁹) and also if Armenian-Turkish relations normalize without Georgia playing a key role in the process.²⁰

The EaP’s multilateral tracks are conceptualized to circumvent the absence of bilateral and regional interaction, anchoring regional dialogue within the broader EaP family, through the EU. This process has two clear dimensions: on one hand it deepens these countries’ commit-

¹⁷ Interview with senior EU diplomat, Yerevan, 12 May, 2011.

¹⁸ Simão, Licinia and Freire, Maria Raquel (2008) “The EU’S Neighborhood Policy and the South Caucasus: Unfolding New Patterns of Cooperation”, *Caucasus Review of International Affairs*, 2(4) Autumn, pp. 225-239.

¹⁹ Interview with Georgian officials, Tbilisi, 10-11 May, 2011.

²⁰ Interview with senior EU diplomat, Yerevan, 12 May, 2011.

ment to shared values, thus bringing the whole region closer to the EU; on the other hand it fosters a new identity for these states, gradually building on shared practices and interactions at different sectoral levels, such as trade facilitation, education, energy, foreign policy, etc.. These practices depend to a large extent on the ability of these structures to address the obstacles to regional cooperation, without being co-opted. The Euro-NEST Parliamentary Assembly, for instance, has been divided on whether or not the protracted conflicts should be on the agenda. The GUAM countries have pushed for this, while the other partners have been reluctant to do so, fearing that the whole process will be hijacked.²¹ There is still a long way before these EU-based formats for regional cooperation can lead to a new shared identity among the Eastern neighbors, including in the South Caucasus. The EaP seems to focus more on the establishment of a shared community of practices,²² from which a common understanding of regional realities can develop. By widening the participation in these formats to members of parliament, civil society and businesses, the EU can make a fundamental contribution to the democratization of these societies, through the empowerment of other actors – beyond the political elite.

²¹ Navassardian, Boris (2011) presentation at the international seminar "The EU's Role in the South Caucasus. From Cooperation to Partnership through Reforms: Challenges and Opportunities", Yerevan, 12 May.

²² Adler, Emanuel and Pouliot, Vincent (2011) "International Practices" *International Theory*, 3(1), pp. 1-36.

Conclusion

With the Lisbon Treaty, the EU has taken an important step to redesign the institutional framework of its external relations. Although we might argue that there has been no fundamental shift towards a supranational approach to EU foreign policy, member states have nonetheless accepted important challenges to their sovereignty. This has gradually reinforced relations between the EU relations and its Eastern neighbors. Following the war in Georgia in 2008, some of the new member states pushed for a stronger EU engagement with the Eastern neighbors, in part as a response to Russian assertiveness in the "near abroad". This commitment has remained in place. With the entering into force of the Lisbon Treaty, on December 1st, 2009 and the appointment of the HR/VP along with the transference of the neighborhood dossier to the Enlargement Commissioner, the EU seems to be confirming the idea that in addition to its political commitment to its Eastern neighbors' peace and security, it may be looking to fully incorporate them in its institutional structures and reinforce the Commission's portfolio in close cooperation with conflict resolution and crisis management issues, managed by the HR/VP.

Expectations are certainly high in the South Caucasus. The EU is taking on a central role as regional security actor, especially in Georgia, and with the appointment of a new

The main obstacle to the development of regional relations in the South Caucasus remains the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which has long prevented Armenia and Azerbaijan from sitting around the same table on any other issue, contributing to the hyper-charged character of the conflict.

Special Representative for the South Caucasus²³ it reconfirms its full commitment to a regional approach to security. Regional cooperation is also more balanced in the multilateral platforms of the EaP, with other actors actively profiting and contributing to the establishment of shared practices, norms and values, among the neighbors and with the EU. Different stakeholders have now the opportunity to push for more inclusive forms of dialogue, although their interests often mirror those of the political elites to which they are linked. Differentiation is addressed at the bilateral level, where inter-state relations are dealt with. This is where the greatest benefits of European integration are being played out, including trade, visa policies and closer political relations with the EU. Although

the EU will most likely resist the connection between advances at the multilateral stage to advances at the bilateral level, there should be room for joint assessments of the overall performance of the neighbors. These assessments can serve as learning experiences, to be translated into commitment towards the consolidation of a shared area of responsibility and cooperation. Moreover, because conflict resolution encompasses both high-level political contacts as well as continuous work at the grass-roots level, along with clear regional dimension cross-cutting EU relations with the South Caucasus, these links must be consolidated, and guided by an overarching strategy for the region. This certainly has not been seen so far, but there is a great deal of expectation that the new post-Lisbon institutional structures, including the EEAS and the HR/VP, will gradually push all EU actors in a single direction.

23 European Union (2011) "Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton on the appointment of Philippe Lefort as EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia", A328/11, Brussels, 26 August.

*Regionalism in the South Caucasus
from a theoretical perspective: is the*

SouthCaucasus *a region?*

**Kavus
Abushov**

Abstract

This article will attempt to shed light on the question of whether the South Caucasus is a region, and whether the nature of this regionalism is sufficiently established to serve as the starting point of broader processes such as regional cooperation and integration. These questions will be answered with reference to the existing literature on regionalism. Notwithstanding the fact that the literature on regionalism is to some extent inconsistent and excessively abstract, the minimal and maximal criteria established are adequate to measure the regional dynamic of the South Caucasus. On their own, the minimal criteria are not sufficient to deepen regionalism to the extent of integration. Based on the application of existing theories on regionalism, the article concludes that the South Caucasus as a sub-region of the broader Caucasus has weak regional characteristics, which cannot provide the basis of any further integration. The components required for integration or a deeper level of regionalism are apparently absent in this region.

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There has been much speculation about the regional character of the South Caucasus. The notion of the South Caucasus as a single “unit” with a strong level of regionalism has been a recurring matter in the international relations of the states in question: Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia. At various stages during their independence, these three states have had to consider the issue of integration of the South Caucasus as a sub-regional confederation or a larger union to include the whole of the Caucasus. The issue of regionalism, and the regional cooperation and integration it would entail, has recently been advocated as a security mechanism, or a tool for conflict resolution and economic prosperity in the region, in the light of the success of the European model of integration functioning as a security concept in a hostile environment.¹ The successfully implemented oil and gas projects between Georgia and Azerbaijan have been a further source of speculation on integration in the region.²

*1 This paper does not treat regionalism as a response to globalisation, and employs a narrow definition of regionalism in compliance with Andrew Hurrell's definition, which emphasises regional inter-state cooperation. See Andrew Hurrell, 'Regionalism in theoretical perspective', in Fawcett and Hurrell eds., *Regionalism in world politics: regional organisation and international order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).*

*2 The issue of regionalism in the South Caucasus has been dominantly been addressed in a normative approach by now. This is due to two factors: on the one hand there is a tendency for most studies on regionalism to be normative, on the other hand this is caused by the political concerns and interests of certain states and institutions. This former point is well caught by Fawcett and Hurrell, who argue that studies of regionalism tend to shift from description to prescription, prescribing how the international relations of certain regions should be organised. See Fawcett and Hurrell, *ibid.**

Moreover, at various stages in the peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan, particularly during periods of stalemate, regional integration has been suggested as an abstract solution.

Before defining the regional character of the South Caucasus, it would be useful to refer to existing literature on regionalism and to explore what exactly a region is. There is no universal agreement among scholars about the definition of a region; thus a number of attributes are used to test what constitutes a region. A minimum definition was set forth by Nye as ‘a limited number of states linked together by a geographical relationship and by a degree of mutual interdependence’.³ Based on these factors, it has been widely accepted that the primary criteria for identifying a region are geographic proximity and regularity of interaction, complemented by attributes such as ethnic and cultural similarity, secondary criteria being the level of economic development, political systems, the degree of interdependence, and a degree of autonomy in relation to the global system. Some of these variables can be correlated, e.g. geographic proximity producing security and economic interdependence. Geographic proximity and cultural/ethnic similarities (intertwined with identity) are fairly unchanging properties factors and create a regional identity,

*3 Joseph Nye, *Pan-Africanism and the East African integration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), p. vii.*

whereas the political and economic indicators are more flexible variables.

A further conceptualization of regionalism focuses on regional subsystems. Regional subsystems reflect groups of states coexisting in geographical proximity as interrelated units that sustain significant security, economic and political relations, and above all autonomy from the international system. The literature dealing with regional subsystems is mainly driven by rational-choice arguments, which treats the structure and content of the subsystem as anarchic or hierarchic, bipolar or unipolar.⁴ In contrast, constructivist scholarship has a different approach, based upon shared perceptions rather than material factors; they argue that a region exists if its states and outside parties believe that the states in question constitute a region. In other words, a region is what states make of it. It is self-perception and identity that produce observable behaviours, so in this context regions cannot be pre-defined, and states' attachment to a regional order is not fixed. As Katzenstein points out, the flexibility of these terms explains why international relations scholarship shows so little progress in the analysis of regionalism.⁵

⁴ That said, it should be noted that neo-realism and neo-liberalism awards only minimum attention to spatiality. For a broader discussion, see Väyrynen Raimo, 'Regionalism: Old and New', *International Studies Review*, 2003, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 25-51.

⁵ See Peter Katzenstein, Takashi Shiraishi, *Beyond Japan: the dynamics of East Asian regionalism* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2006).

An elaborate explanation of regional subsystems in international relations has been produced by Thompson, Cantori and Spiegel, Russett, Väyrynen, Fawcett and Hurrell. A comprehensive study by Cantori and Spiegel puts the emphasis on geographic proximity, regularity of interaction, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, social and historical relations, and a sense of common identity and regional perception that can be produced or strengthened by the attitudes of external states. They define a subordinate system as '*consisting of one state or of two or more proximate and interacting states which have some common ethnic, linguistic, cultural, social and historical bonds, and whose sense of identity is sometimes increased by the actions and attitudes of states external to the system*'.⁶ Accordingly, for each state in the region, the activities of other members of the region (be they cooperative or antagonistic) are significant determinants of its foreign policy. They further define four pattern variables in a subsystem which include 1) the nature and level of cohesion; 2) the nature of communications; 3) the level of power; 4) the structure of relations. Size, interestingly does not matter in subsystems- it can comprise one state or several states, but if a single state occupies a region then the subsystem and the internal system are identical. Meanwhile, a state

⁶ Louis J. Cantori and Steven L. Spiegel, *The international politics of regions: a comparative approach* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970), p. 6.

or even a region can belong to more than one regional subsystem. This usually happens when the subsystem has a weak regional identity. Bruce Russett's criteria (social and cultural homogeneity, external behaviour, political institutions, economic interdependence and geographic proximity) also illustrate the ambiguity of region as an organizing concept. Russett's work treats geographic criteria as complementary, not of vital importance for the existence of a region.⁷ Similarly, Thompson's definition lists twenty-one commonly cited attributes, which he later shortens to a list of three conditions for defining a regional subsystem: general proximity, regularity and intensity of interactions, and shared perceptions of the regional subsystem.⁸ These three conditions overlap with those given by Cantori and Spiegel. According to Thompson, a subordinate (hereafter subsystem) system is a component of a larger system with systemic properties of its own, with identifiable boundaries that separate it from its environment. A recent study by Hurrell and Fawcett determines seven forms of regionalism: regionalization, regional awareness and identity (cognitive regionalism), state promoted regional integration and regional cohesion. Among other factors, the absence of regional coopera-

7 Bruce M. Russett, *International regions and the international system: A study in political ecology*, (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1967), p. 11.

8 William Thompson, 'The regional subsystem', *International Studies Quarterly*, 1973, vol. 17, no. 1., pp. 89-117.

tion is attributed by Hurrell to state weakness and lack of state cohesion.

⁹ Other recent studies on the so called 'new regionalism' stress the relationship between globalisation and regionalization, specifically, looking at the latter as a response to the former.¹⁰

South Caucasus as a regional subordinate system

When talking about regionalism in the South Caucasus, the first question that arises is to what extent such a politically divided region can be viewed as a regional subsystem. In other words, what makes the South Caucasus a region? Is it a social construct formed during the Soviet discourse with no substantial regional attributes? These questions will be answered with reference to the conceptualizations made by Spiegel and Cantori on regional subsystems.

Geographic proximity

The term "Caucasus" has been used to refer to the mountainous geographical area between the Black and Caspian Seas, across the borders of Turkey, Iran and Russia. In terms of its geographical features, owing mostly to its mountain range, the Caucasus may be considered a single unit, but as with other regions, it is not always easy to determine where the exact boundary lies. Within the

9 See Hurrell, 'Regionalism in theoretical perspective'.

10 See Björn Hettne, 'The new regionalism revisited', in Frederik Soderbaum and Timothy Shaw, *Theories of new regionalism*, pp. 22-42.

Soviet Union, the Caucasus, along with the Baltic region, Central Asia and to a much lesser extent the Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova had a regional identity. As a geographic unit, the Caucasus comprises two distinct regions- Transcaucasia with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, and the North Caucasus, which includes seven republics within the Russian Federation (Adyge, Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachay-Cherkessia). The distinction between the North and South Caucasus dates

geographical and political identity of the Caucasus has especially been strong in the Southern Caucasus, primarily due to the national independence movements.

There are more than 50 different ethnic groups in the Caucasus. During the centuries between pre-classical antiquity and the fourteenth century AD, the Caucasus underwent successive invasions by various groups, including the Scythians, Alani, Huns, Khazars, Arabs, Seljuq Turks, and Mongols. The region was also a host to different religions and enjoyed contact with the Mediterranean and Asia. These varied influences have left their mark on the culture of the peoples of the Caucasus.

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To understand to what extent such a mutually hostile and politically divided region as the

back to the early nineteenth century and was drawn by the then-Russian Empire, using the Caucasus mountain range as criteria. Thus the region north of the Greater Caucasus Mountains was called Hither Caucasia (Northern Caucasus) and the part to the south, along the lesser Caucasus Mountains, became Transcaucasia (Southern Caucasus). The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have seen the formation of a Transcaucasian political identity through the establishment of Russian imperial rule of the Transcaucasus as a single unit, the Transcaucasian Confederation in 1917 and later on the Transcaucasian Soviet Socialist Union (1921-1936). The

South Caucasus can qualify as a region, it is necessary to refer additionally to Thompson’s attributes for regions and the four pattern variables developed by Spiegel and Cantori. The primary factor of geographic proximity is present in the case of the South Caucasus. A secondary factor, regional awareness or internal and external recognition as a region, is also strong. The international community has historically tended to view the countries as a region. The European Union, OSCE and NATO in particular have sought to strengthen the regional identity of the South Caucasus since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Self-identification is

also very clear; the sense of a Caucasian identity is strongly felt in the three societies. The size of the region does play a role to a degree, in that a larger South Caucasus that included more states would make it easier to strengthen the aspects of regionalism. Theoretically, the region is too small to form an alliance that would influence the balance of power in the regional security complex; therefore alliances as GUAM need the involvement of external actors. The pattern of relations between the states in question suggests a particular degree of regularity and intensity. The interaction between Georgia and Azerbaijan has intensified over the last few years thanks to the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipelines. However, the regularity of interactions is not as high as between the Benelux states during the 1950s, for instance. As for Armenia and Georgia, the pattern of relations remains passive due to the different foreign-policy orientations of the two states as well as a lack of economic potential. It should be noted that these inter-country interactions were more intense under the Soviet Union. The subsystem in the South Caucasus is clearly subordinated to the dominant system, whereby changes to the dominant system (whether the global system or broader regional system) will affect the subsystem. It does not enjoy broad autonomy. The subsystem in the South Caucasus is not interdependent, but rather dependent on the dominant system. It has very

restricted autonomy and the intrusive system (in this case the broader regional system centred around Russia) is extremely clear. Institutional relations at the regional level do not exist in the South Caucasus; although Georgia and Azerbaijan are represented in GUAM, there is no explicit subsystemic organization that brings together all three countries.

Social cohesion

Social cohesion is a key factor in the regional subsystem. Without a high level of social cohesion, neither integration nor consolidation (whereby nations are not preparing for war against one another, but are not becoming unified) can occur.¹¹ Cohesion is divided into ethnic, linguistic, religious, social, political and economic fields. In the South Caucasus, social cohesion is minimal. There are social similarities represented in a common history and the consciousness of a common heritage. The three states and the relevant autonomous regions all share a common Caucasian culture that exists independently of religious distinction. This culture, used by the Soviet Union as a means to achieve unity in the ethnically diverse South Caucasus, is observed in the form of similarities in dance, cuisine, values and social behaviours, leftover from a common historical heritage. However, diversity in ethnicity and religion (Azerbaijan is over 92% Muslim, Armenia is over 99% Gregorian, Georgia is 85% Orthodox)

¹¹ See Cantori and Spiegel, p.11.

along with entirely different languages and alphabets, all elements that form the basis of social cohesion, draw significant divisions between the peoples of the South Caucasus. Traditions that derive from religion provide further divisions. The Caucasus has never had the level of religious cohesion that Western Europe has, with the religious unification between Catholic and Protestant states, and the impact of the Vatican on the former. The South Caucasus experienced a period of direct imperial rule from Moscow beginning in the eighteenth century, but prior to that it had never experienced any form of unification, either through a religious organization such as the Papacy, or a regional institution like the Concert of Europe. Before Russian rule, the de-facto principalities in the Caucasus were defined by religious identity. Thus, in terms of social cohesion, regional identity in the South Caucasus faces greater challenges.

Economic cohesion

Economic cohesion implies distribution and complementarity of resources. Regional subsystems require a common level of development. Hence, if all states in a region are poor, there will be a low level of interaction. At present, there is hardly any trade-based economic complementarity in the region. The only economic complementarity in the South

At present, there is hardly any trade-based economic complementarity in the region. The only economic complementarity in the South Caucasus is in the oil and gas sector, between Georgia and Azerbaijan, the former offering a transit for the fossil fuel resources from the Azerbaijani sector of the Caspian Sea.

Caucasus is in the oil and gas sector, between Georgia and Azerbaijan, the former offering a transit for the fossil fuel resources from the Azerbaijani sector of the Caspian Sea. Given that energy production is a vital sector of the Azerbaijani economy, this transit might have a spill-over effect to other bilateral trade opportunities. So far, this has not occurred, primarily due to the low levels of trade potential in both countries. The trade turnover between either of the three countries with any of the other regional states is larger than between themselves. Direct trade between Armenia and Azerbaijan is ruled out, and trade between Georgia and Armenia is minimal. Most products not produced in either of the three countries are cheaply imported from Russia, Turkey or Iran. The complementarity of resources between Germany and France (coal and steel), or between the Benelux states, is not comparable to the South Caucasus. In addition, the region is too small to benefit from the elimination of trade barriers or

the formation of a customs union. As a result, any free trade area specific to the Transcaucasus area must include states outside the region. Thus, at present the complementarity of resources is too weak to support regionalism in the South Caucasus.

Interdependence

Interdependence is one of the key attributes of a regional subsystem. In the South Caucasus it is observed in the security and economic sectors. In terms of security, there is a high level of interdependence between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia and Azerbaijan and Georgia. Any political instability in Armenia has an impact on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and Azerbaijan's exercising of its right to restore territorial sovereignty by use of force would have immediate implications for Armenian security. The elites in both states are well aware that a military settlement of the conflict would have serious implications, but at the same time a unilateral settlement in favour of one of the parties is not viable; that would create a negative form of interdependence. As for Georgia and Armenia, the latter has a vested interest in the security of ethnic Armenians living in the Javakhetia province in Georgia - any disturbance there could damage relations between the two countries. Georgia and Azerbaijan enjoy positive interdependence largely thanks to the existing oil pipeline and the forthcoming gas transit route. The Azerbaijani minority in Georgia has

Any political instability in Armenia has an impact on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and Azerbaijan's exercising of its right to restore territorial sovereignty by use of force would have immediate implications for Armenian security.

not so far been the object of any political discontent between the two countries. Any instability on Georgian territory (including Abkhazia and South Ossetia) will have a negative impact on Azerbaijan's economic stability.

The region remains highly dependent on Russia in security and economic areas. Any military intervention by the Georgian government in South Ossetia would have a spill-over effect in North Ossetia, and the resumption of military operations in Mountainous Karabakh could have implications for the Russian military bases in Armenia. Economic dependence on Russia is felt strongly in Armenia and Georgia, and to a lesser extent in Azerbaijan. Developments in Azerbaijan's large oil and gas sector have reduced the country's economic dependence on Russia in recent years. Nevertheless, all three states have large migrant labor force in the Russian market and their primary trade is with Russia. The souring of relations between Moscow and Tbilisi in 2006

led to the ban on Georgian wine in the Russian market and the deportation of a large number of migrant workers, at high economic cost to Tbilisi. Armenia's dependence on Russia for national security is even higher.

Communications

The nature of communications across the region is defined by the structure of relations between the states (conflict/cooperation/antagonism). The political problems that emerged in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union have had a long-term impact on the level of regionalism in the South Caucasus. It is true that Russian colonialism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries helped to construct a regional identity, which was further strengthened during the Soviet era. However, the post-colonial state-building processes of the early 1990s were specific to each country, which undermined the development of regionalism. The nationalistic rhetoric used by elites in all three countries as a means of nation-building, along with the subsequent conflicts, acted as impediments to the consolidation and development of the existing common cultural heritage in the South Caucasus. There were few attempts in 1990s by the then Georgian President Gamsakhurdia to establish a common Caucasian confederation (to include the North Caucasus), but these were ultimately unsuccessful. Furthermore, relations between religiously and linguistically semi-homogenous Azerbaijan and Iran and

religiously homogenous Georgia and Russia were overshadowed by political problems. Besides, interaction capacity (technological and social infrastructure for transportation and communication) in the South Caucasus is not particularly well-developed.

Communication between the government elites is extremely limited between Armenia and Azerbaijan, but not between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. There are about 30,000 Armenians still living in Azerbaijan, although the number of indigenous Azerbaijanis in Armenia is almost zero. There are large numbers of mixed marriages left over from Soviet times. Couples tend to live in Russia, Azerbaijan or abroad. As for Georgia and Azerbaijan, political communications exist at a high level, but societal or individual communications are not at a level comparable to areas of advanced regionalism such as Western Europe or Latin America. This is mainly due to the low level of interaction capacity; additionally, the ethno-cultural differences between the two nations constitute a further obstacle. On the other hand, communication between Azerbaijanis and Turks is very frequent, despite the relative geographic distance in comparison to Georgia. This is due to the economic and overall attractiveness of Turkey and the ethno-linguistic ties between the countries (Turkish and Azerbaijani languages are similar). Both Georgia and Azer-

baijan have expressed mutual solidarity during tough times, and political dialogue between the elites of the two states has been ongoing since independence. In addition, there is a strong network between Georgian and Azerbaijani NGOs.

Conclusion

According to the criteria established by the literature on regionalism, the South Caucasus could at best be considered a sub-region of the larger Caucasus region. The Caucasus region meets the minimal criteria of regionalism, but there remains limited potential for development. The attempts to unite the Caucasus in a confederation were largely based upon these criteria, but have failed to progress beyond the minimal criteria of geographic proximity and to a lesser extent regularity of interaction.

As a sub-region, the South Caucasus is a long way from becoming a regional subsystem that is autonomous from the international system or even the regional hierarchy. It does not enjoy that degree of autonomy from the regional subsystem of the CIS; most of the security and economic processes in the South Caucasus operate very much within the context of the CIS and Russian hegemony. That said, this paper also notes that the South Caucasus as a sub-region does meet the minimal criteria of regionalism, and has better chances of

Communication between the government elites is extremely limited between Armenia and Azerbaijan, but not between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. There are about 30,000 Armenians still living in Azerbaijan, although the number of indigenous Azerbaijanis in Armenia is almost zero.

developing regional characteristics than the Caucasus does as a whole.

Cantori and Spiegel's assessment criteria suggest that for the moment, the South Caucasus does not have much foundation for regionalism. The important indicators for the potential of regionalism are all absent in the South Caucasus. Social and economic cohesion are not at a sufficiently high level, nor is the level of communication (interaction capacity and communication between societies). The region is dominated by ethno-territorial conflicts, power-political rivalries, alignment efforts (often with external powers), and divergent foreign policies. If the secondary variables of regionalism were stronger, then one could speak of overcoming the challenges mentioned above. However, at a time when those criteria are also missing, it would be premature to speak of evolving regionalism in the South Caucasus. Equally, the calls of international organizations and international community for integration in the South Caucasus are ill-founded.

In conclusion, the elements of regionalism in the South Caucasus are too weak to lead to any substantial integration. It can develop along two paths- either the countries will work to enhance the existing features of regionalism (geographic, common heritage, historical links), or the individual states might integrate with other broader regions. Since regionalism in the South Caucasus has a limited natural basis, whichever trajectory the three countries follow will be determined and dominated by political factors, rather than the cultural or other factors discussed in the literature. For example, more regular interaction between Central Asia and Azerbaijan could potentially undermine another endogenous variable- the common Caucasian heritage. This could lead to Azerbaijan's regional integration with Central Asia rather than the Caucasus. Equally, predictions that the common cultural, religious and ethnic links shared by Iran and Azerbaijan would lead to a closer union between the two countries after Azerbaijan's independence. The uneasy political relations between the two countries and the non-appeal of the Iranian state model have undermined the common cultural basis that could have served closer cooperation or regionalism. In contrast, the political and cultural appeal, common historical and ethnic roots and the linguistic similarity between Turkey and Azerbaijan has produced a high level of cooperation between the two countries. Regionalism in the South

Caucasus is so weak that it is impossible to predict what path its development will take.

With regard to the vociferous calls by the international community for integration in the South Caucasus, this article concludes that such a process has no exogenous or endogenous support or basis. Integration is a distant prospect for this region, which lacks virtually all of the factors necessary for this process. Right now, there is little basis for discussion of integration in a region where relations are dominated by highly politicized ethnic and inter-state conflicts.

Cyber-war:

*A new chapter in international
law development*

**Kamal
Makili-Aliyev**

Abstract

Cyber-warfare is no longer science fiction. It is quite real. With global infrastructure growing increasingly dependent on cyberspace and its networking systems, defense against cyber-attacks is already a worldwide concern. Unimaginable 20 years ago, states dependent on the networked world are trying to come to a consensus on the regulation of cyberspace. International law regulation of cyberspace is one of the key issues. Can states use force in response to cyber-attacks? Can a cyber-attack be so serious that it can trigger self-defense mechanisms via international law? Is it possible that future cyber-attacks could erupt into full scale physical wars? What are states' current attitudes towards cyber-warfare norms in international law? This article will illuminate these issues and several other important questions, analyze key aspects of international legal regulation of cyberspace and cyber-warfare, and present conclusions.

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Today, international law is facing a new age of development in terms of *jus ad bellum*. More and more, terms like ‘cyber-attack’ or ‘cyber-war’ are already being used to define breaches of computer systems around the world at national level. At the same time, an ever-increasing number of such breaches demand legal coverage at both global and national levels. It seems that neither international law nor the legal systems of the majority of countries have been developed to address the current cyber security situation. The implications of such a backlog are hard to underestimate. Already, the threat posed by the growing number of what are now called ‘cyber-attacks’ extends beyond private or corporate entities to international peace and security.

Right now, there exists a variety of opinions on the threat of cyber-attacks and cyber-war. Former Director of National Intelligence Michael McConnell argues that “[t]he United States is fighting a cyber-war today, and we are losing. . . . As the most wired nation on Earth, we offer the most targets of significance, yet our cyber-defenses are woefully lacking”.¹ McConnell considers the defense of key cyber-infrastructures critical to state security. At the same time, some scholars believe that while cyber-espionage — stealing government and corporate secrets through infiltration of information

systems — is a major challenge, the risks of major cyber-attacks are exaggerated.² Many experts say that terrorist or criminal groups also pose cyber-threats, but they also note that for now, the greatest potential for damage through cyber-attacks lies with a handful of countries.³

Not long ago, the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies announced that the latest research on cyber-warfare indicates a growing consensus that future conflicts may feature the use of cyber-warfare to disable a country’s infrastructure, meddle with internal military data, try to confuse a country’s financial transactions, or accomplish any number of other potentially crippling acts.⁴

This confirms the view that the current situation creates a considerable number of new risks, and endangers international security. This article is concerned with the extent to which international law regulates cyber-capabilities in the modern world, and will address specifically the question of whether a cyber-attack can constitute an act of aggression - and if it does, does that justify a response that

1 . Mike McConnell, *To Win the Cyber-War, Look to the Cold War*, WASH. POST, Feb. 28, 2010, at B1.

2 . Seymour M. Hersh, *The Online Threat*, NEW YORKER, Nov. 1, 2010, at 44, 48.

3 . See CTR. FOR STRATEGIC & INT’L STUDIES, *SECURING CYBERSPACE FOR THE 44TH PRESIDENCY 13* (2008), available at http://csis.org/files/media/isis/pubs/081208_securingcyberspace_44.pdf

4 . Press Release, John Chipman, Dir.-Gen. & Chief Exec., Int’l Inst. for Strategic Studies, *Military Balance 2010—Press Statement* (Feb. 3, 2010), available at <http://www.iiss.org/publications/military-balance/the-military-balance-2010/military-balance-2010-press-statement/>.

involves the use of force? Additionally, this article strives to better understand contemporary relationships between international laws that regulate force, and cutting-edge technologies.

Use of force in international law and cyber-attacks:

The UN Charter is the starting point for legal regulation of the use of force. Its Article 2(4) provision rules that “[a]ll Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations”.⁵ At the same time, Article 51 of the UN Charter states that: “[n]othing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations”.⁶ Prohibition of use of force is quite strict, though despite debates on the actual possibility of military force usage in self-defense, it is universally accepted that Article 51 is the only exception to the rule of Article 2(4) of UN Charter. At the same time it is also generally accepted that the term “armed attack” is a much narrower notion than “threat or use of force”.⁷

If we consider the definitions provid-

ed above, the questions of whether a cyber-attack can constitute a prohibited “use of force”, and whether military force can be deployed as self-defense in return, become alarmingly clear. Because we are dealing with new technologies and the related terminology, interpretation of the aforementioned articles of the UN Charter become somewhat tricky.

On one hand we have the view of the majority in international law that Article 2(4) on the prohibition of force and the related Article 51 on the right to self-defense refer to military attacks and related hostilities.⁸ That view is supported by the wording of Article 51: self-defense against “armed” attacks. Again, this norm also suggests that the drafters of the UN Charter understood “force” as a broader category than “armed attack”. Nonetheless, the drafting history of the UN Charter as well as an analysis of the terminology used throughout the document in question demonstrates a strong intent on behalf of the drafting team to regulate armed force more strictly than any other method of coercion.⁹

On the other hand, however, there are also views that Article 2(4) should be interpreted more broadly, and that it prohibits coercion generally, armed force being only one (if the most evi-

5. U.N. Charter art. 2, para. 4.

6. *Id.* art. 51.

7. See Albrecht Randelzhofer, *Article 51*, in 1 *THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS: A COMMENTARY* 788, 796 (Bruno Simma ed., 2d ed. 2002).

8. Bert V. A. Roling, *The Ban on the Use of Force and the U.N. Charter*, in *THE CURRENT LEGAL REGULATION OF THE USE OF FORCE* 3, 3 (A. Cassese ed., 1986).

9. Michael N. Schmitt, *Computer Network Attack and the Use of Force in International Law: Thoughts on a Normative Framework*, 37 *COLUM. J. TRANSNAT'L L.* 885, 905 (1999).

dent) method.¹⁰ This approach is problematic in the sense that coercion can be legal, and indeed can constitute a reasonable element of international relations between many states.¹¹ But this interpretation has merit even if it is difficult to differentiate between legal and illegal coercion.

Of these two perspectives, the second one actually allows the interpretation of a cyber-attack as the “use of force” as meant by Article 2(4), and also justifies self-defense as a response to such an attack, in line with Article 51. The main issue here is focusing on the interpretation of UN Charter based on its intent rather than its text. Following that logic, offensive cyber-attack capabilities, such as inserting malicious computer systems codes to disable public or private information systems or functions that rely on them, have distinct similarities with use of military force, economic coercion, and subversion. Cyber-attacks also, of course, have unique characteristics. Such attacks evolve very quickly and in unpredictable ways.¹²

The U.S. Defense Department’s analysis of the matter argues that: “If we focused on the means used, we might conclude that electronic signals im-

perceptible to human senses don’t closely resemble bombs, bullets or troops. On the other hand, it seems likely that the international community will be more interested in the consequences of a computer network attack than in its mechanism”.¹³ Basically, this report suggests that cyber-attacks can be considered equal to armed attacks, and thus the state can invoke the right to self-defense. These views of the U.S. government are reinforced by the statements given by officials.¹⁴

The situation as a whole gives rise to speculation that as states start to perceive cyber-threats as an integral part of their security policies, the questions of cyber-warfare and UN Charter provisions will become more and more important to the international community. At the same time it is not certain whether international law would demand the broader legal interpretation of the UN Charter, or whether new legal instruments would be adopted to deal with the cyber-attacks as they currently exist - bearing in mind their constant development and evolution.

10 . Ahmed M. Rifaat, *International Aggression: A Study of the Legal Concept* 120, 234 (1980).

11 . Alexander L. George, *Coercive Diplomacy: Definition and Characteristics*, in *THE LIMITS OF COERCIVE DIPLOMACY* 7, 7-11 (Alexander L. George & William E. Simons eds., 2d ed. 1994).

12 . Matthew C. Waxman, *Cyber-Attacks And The Use Of Force: Back To The Future Of Article 2(4)*, *THE YALE JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL LAW*, Vol. 36: 421, 2011, p. 431.

13 . U.S. DEP’T OF DEF., *AN ASSESSMENT OF INTERNATIONAL LEGAL ISSUES IN INFORMATION OPERATIONS* 18 (1999), available at <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/dod-io-legal/dod-io-legal.pdf>, reprinted in 76 *INT’L L. STUD.* 459, 483 (2002).

14 . Hillary Rodham Clinton, *U.S. Sec’y of State, Remarks at the Newseum in Washington, D.C.* (Jan. 21, 2010), available at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/01/135519.htm>; *Advance Questions for Lieutenant General Keith Alexander, USA Nominee for Commander, United States Cyber Command: Before the S. Armed Services Comm., 111th Cong. 11-12* (Apr. 15, 2010), available at <http://armed-services.senate.gov/statemnt/2010/04%20April/Alexander%2004-15-10.pdf>.

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The U.S. position is probably the closest to a consequence-driven interpretation of "force" or "armed attack" with respect to cyber-attacks, not only in terms of what it includes (i.e. what the UN Charter explicitly prohibits that would allow the invocation of self-defense rights), but also for what it excludes. Computer-based espionage, intelligence gathering, or even some preemptive cyber-operations or countermeasures designed to disable an adversary's threatening capabilities, for example, would generally not constitute prohibited force because these activities do not produce destructive consequences analogous to an actual (physical) military attack.¹⁵

Some legal experts have expressed views that for a cyber-attack to qualify as "force" or "armed attack", it must directly lead to "vio-

¹⁵ Sean P. Kanuck, *Information Warfare: New Challenges for Public International Law*, 37 HARV. INT'L L.J. 272, 275-76 (1996).

lent consequences."¹⁶ Such consequences might include causing a major power system to explode by infiltrating and disrupting its computer control system, for instance. Such measures would constitute "force" or armed attack"; however causing the same system to just to shut down by the same means — even for a long time — probably would not. This position is more concerned with the mechanisms employed to produce harmful effects, and it implies that

a state facing cyber-attacks could act in armed self-defense only against certain very specific attacks in cyberspace.

This position has been adopted by Pentagon in its new Cyber Strategy, in the main a product of the notion of "equivalence." If a cyber-attack produces the death, damage, destruction or high-level disruption that a traditional military attack would cause, then it would be a candidate for a "use of force" classification, which could merit self-defense. The Strategy has also prompted a debate over a range of sensitive issues not addressed by the Pentagon in its report, for example, whether the U.S. can ever be certain about an origin of the attack, and how to decide when computer sabotage is serious enough to constitute an act of war. These

¹⁶ Yoram Dinstein, *Computer Network Attacks and Self-Defense*, 76 INT'L L. STUD. 99, 103 (2002).

questions have already been disputed within the military.¹⁷ One problem raised by such an approach is that “violent” damage can be significantly less serious than “non-violent” damage. This is clear when we consider, for example, the damage imposed by economic sanctions, compared with certain enforcement operations; or, for instance, a cyber-attack that takes down the power grid for an extended period, potentially leading to lead to public health problems and compromising public safety, despite the initial act being “non-violent”. Despite these objections, the Pentagon’s view is supported by some scholars.¹⁸

The Pentagon recognizes that civilian and military infrastructure has grown more dependent on the Internet. This motivates the military to formalize the Pentagon’s cyber strategy. The realization that they have been slow to build up cyber-defenses prompted them to establish a new command last year, headed by the director of the National Security Agency. This new initiative is in charge of consolidating military network security and attack efforts. The Pentagon itself was shaken by the cyber-attack in 2008, a breach significant enough that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs briefed then-President George W. Bush. Pen-

tagon officials said they believed the attack originated in Russia, although they didn’t say whether they believed the attacks were connected to the Russian government. Russia has denied any involvement.¹⁹ This incident clearly shows the developments in the cyber-warfare situations around the world. There are other examples of serious cyber-attacks that will be discussed later in this paper.

While Article 2(4) of the UN Charter was never really deemed capable of entirely preventing armed collisions and hostilities without solid international backup sufficiently strong and independent to implement it, when looking at previous uses of the provisions of Article 2(4), it becomes evident that the provisions of Article 2(4) can both reduce the chances of aggression, and amend the form that aggressive actions take, by increasing the costs of certain actions. In any case, the Charter’s normative principles set boundaries for measures taken by states to defend or advance their security interests by dictating procedures through which those measures are justified publicly and measured against international community expectations, which affect the costs (political, diplomatic, etc). Some scholars take the argument even further, claiming that norms governing the “use of force” exert significant internal pressure on state decision-making, especially among

17 Siobhan Gorman and Julian E. Barnes, *Cyber Combat: Act of War: Pentagon Sets Stage for U.S. to Respond to Computer Sabotage with Military Force*, WALL STREET JOURNAL (May 31, 2011), available at <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304563104576355623135782718.html>.

18 Walter Gary Sharp, Sr., *CYBERSPACE AND THE USE OF FORCE* 140 (1999).

19 See Gorman, *supra* note 17.

some types of states.²⁰

Scholars studying the problem of legal regulation of cyber-attacks usually focus on the problems of identification and attribution: it is not always possible to discern quickly or accurately the perpetrator of an attack. The nature of digital information infrastructure facilitates anonymity, even allowing adversaries to route their attacks through computer systems belonging to other parties. In addition, the nature of forensics means that it may be very difficult to pin a case of penetration or disruption of a computer or information networks to the responsible party, even though forensic capabilities are generally improving, though not evenly across states. Even if individual perpetrators can be identified, it may be difficult to identify on whose behalf they are operating.

This perception is shared by Pentagon Cyber Strategy critics. Gorman points out that: “[Strategy] will also spark a debate over a range of sensitive issues the Pentagon left unaddressed, including whether the U.S. can ever be certain about an attack’s origin... [that] have already been a topic of dispute within the military”.²¹

Though it seems only to be a techni-

²⁰ See Sean D. Murphy, *The Doctrine of Preemptive Self-Defense*, 50 VILL. L. REV. 699, 702-05 (2005); See also Thomas H. Lee, *International Law, International Relations Theory, and Preemptive War: The Vitality of Sovereign Equality Today*, 67 LAW & CONTEMP. PROBS. 147, 158 (2004).

²¹ See Gorman, *supra* note 17.

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cal issue, the issue of identifying the source of the attack also brings up large-scale jurisdictional problems. When cyber-attack occurs, it can affect a variety of transit computers all around the world and in many different countries. On the other hand, states are usually limited in their jurisdiction outside their sovereign borders. And even if the attack can be accurately traced to its source, there are problems with publicity. States are not usually in the habit of immediately acknowledging the breaches in their systems, because it might provoke discussion of their technical capabilities, revealing private information to their opponents or third parties. A relevant example is the aforementioned case where malicious software got into the Pentagon’s classified and unclassified computer systems through a flash drive inserted into a military laptop. That happened in 2008, but the U.S. did not acknowledge “the most significant breach of US military computers ever” until almost two years later, and still there was nothing mentioned about the scale of the damage or if the sources of the cyber-attack

had been identified.²²

There are also problems with the identification of the perpetrators and, as a result, with the enforcement of the law.²³ The basic thought here is that the ability to determine the ultimate perpetrator and sponsor of cyber-attacks may be crucial in taking effective defensive or deterrent actions, following a state's internal legal obligations, and justifying a state's external responses. At the same time, the level of certainty a state requires internally is usually different to the level of certainty that is needed to externally justify responses of such state.

Ultimately, the main thought remains that besides the specific challenges of regulating certain types of conflict, previous experience of interpreting the U.N. Charter illustrates important principles about the relationship between law and power, and that these principle are applicable to a discussion of cyber-capabilities. Competing interpretations of Articles 2(4) and 51 have always reflected distributions of power. The corollary of this is that efforts to revise legal boundaries and thresholds may have re-allocative effects on power by raising or lowering the costs of using resources and

22 William J. Lynn III, *Defending a New Domain: The Pentagon's Cyberstrategy*, FOREIGN AFF., Sept./Oct. 2010, at 97. See also Ellen Nakashima, *Defense Official Discloses Cyberattack*, WASH. POST, Aug. 25, 2010, at A3.

23 COMM. ON OFFENSIVE INFO. WARFARE, NAT'L RESEARCH COUNCIL, TECHNOLOGY, POLICY, LAW, AND ETHICS REGARDING U.S. ACQUISITION AND USE OF CYBERATTACK CAPABILITIES 10-11 (2009), at 252-253, 303.

capabilities that are not equally apportioned.²⁴

America's new "International Strategy for Cyberspace" and its international law implications:

The "International Strategy for Cyberspace: Prosperity, Security, and Openness in a Networked World" (hereinafter Strategy) was released by the current U.S. Administration on May 16, 2011. President Obama's statement on the Strategy pointed out that this was "the first time that our Nation has laid out an approach that unifies our engagement with international partners on the full range of cyber issues." Building the rule of law through international norms and processes is considered crucial in maximizing the potential of cyberspace, and at the same time deterring any threats to its expanded use.²⁵

The 1990s marked the beginning of widespread private, corporate and governmental use of Internet, and since then, the U.S. government has been trying to regulate the use of cyberspace and protect its users from harmful activities. The international growth of cyber-crimes was a direct result of increasing importance of cyberspace in social and economic spheres as well as in the political life.

24 See, Paul B. Stephan, *Symmetry and Selectivity: What Happens in International Law When the World Changes*, 10 CHI. J. INT'L L. 91 (2009); See also, Waxman, *supra* note 12, at 448.

25 White House, *International Strategy for Cyberspace: Prosperity, Security, and Openness in a Networked World* (May 2011), available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/international_strategy_for_cyberspace.pdf.

In 2008, a report release by the Center on Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) report raised a number of concerns about the ineffectiveness of U.S. policies on protecting the Internet use and its users. The report explicitly stated that one of the most urgent national security problems for U.S. is its inability to protect cyberspace.²⁶ The current presidential administration began to revise its approach to cyberspace and concluded that the threats to cyberspace are right now one of the most difficult economic and national security issues that U.S. and its allies are facing.²⁷

The current administration is not concentrating exclusively on cyberspace security. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's speech on internet freedom in 2010 is a clear sign that the U.S. Administration is trying to introduce a normative perspective towards the Internet as a global political arena. Clinton said that U.S. advocates a single cyberspace (Internet) where all people have equal access to knowledge and ideas. She linked the achievement of this goal with the advance of freedoms of expression and worship, and freedom from fear and

26 Center on Strategic and Int'l Studies [CSIS], *Commission on Cybersecurity for the 44th Presidency, Securing Cyberspace for the 44th Presidency 11* (Dec. 2008), available at http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/081208_securingcyberspace_44.pdf.

27 White House, *Cyberspace Policy Review: Assuring a Trusted and Resilient Information and Communications Infrastructure 1* (2009), available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/Cyberspace_Policy_Review_final.pdf.

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want.²⁸ Most analysts agree that that this idea of “cyber-freedom” became more popular in the course of democratic uprisings in certain Middle Eastern and North African countries (the so-called “Arab spring”) in the first half of 2011, and that the U.S. used this opportunity to promote an ideology in connection with the possibilities new cyberspace technologies have created for mankind globally.

The New Strategy clearly incorporates the U.S.'s strategic approach towards cyberspace with economic, political and security elements of U.S. policy. The Strategy endeavors to develop and use the advances in economic, social and political areas as advantages for a world united by the Internet, as well as dealing with the dangers that restrict the value of cyberspace in terms of international relations and cooperation, communications and trade.

28 Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, *Remarks on Internet Freedom* (Jan. 21, 2010), available at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/01/135519.htm>.

The Strategy reaffirms “fundamental freedoms, privacy and the free flow of information” as the main guiding principles for achieving the aforementioned goals, and states that while safeguarding cyberspace the commitment to these guiding principles shall not waver. The Strategy points out that commitment to the freedoms of expression and association is abiding, but does not come at the expense of public safety or the protection of citizens. It also declares that U.S. is committed to ensuring a balance between the protection of citizens and their interests, and privacy, by giving law enforcers appropriate investigative authority, while protecting individual rights through appropriate judicial review and oversight to ensure consistency with the rule of law. The Strategy also advances the notion that states do not, and should not have to choose between the free flow of information and the security of their network systems. Maintenance of the security of networks shall not hinder the free flow of information. The Strategy acknowledges that guiding principles are often characterized as incompatible with effective law enforcement, anonymity, the protection of children and secure infrastructure. In reality, however, good cyber security can enhance privacy, and effective law enforcement targeting widely-recognized illegal behavior can protect fundamental freedoms. The Strategy states that: “[t]he rule of law — a civil order in which fidelity to laws safeguards people and interests;

brings stability to global markets; and holds malevolent actors to account internationally — both supports our national security and advances our common values.”²⁹ The Strategy aims promote open, interoperable, secure, and reliable information and communications infrastructure that supports international trade and commerce, strengthens international security, and fosters free expression and innovation. To achieve that goal, it is necessary to build and sustain an environment in which norms of responsible behavior guide state actions, sustain partnerships, and support the rule of law in cyberspace.³⁰ Striving to attain that goal requires the United States to engage internationally in integrated efforts through diplomacy, defense, and development policies.³¹ To reinforce such initiatives, the International Strategy defines U.S. government activities in that direction “across seven interdependent areas of activity, each demanding collaboration within... government, with international partners, and with the private sector.” These areas of activity are:

1. Economy (promoting international standards and innovative open markets);
2. Protecting networks (enhancing security, reliability, and resilience);

²⁹ See *International Strategy*, *supra* note 25, at 5.

³⁰ *Id.*, at 8.

³¹ *Id.*, at 11-15.

3. Law enforcement (extending collaboration and the rule of law);
4. Military (preparing for 21st century security challenges);
5. Internet governance (promoting effective and inclusive structures);
6. International development (building capacity, security, and prosperity);
7. Internet freedom (supporting fundamental freedoms and privacy).³²

Throughout, the Strategy stresses the need for the rule of law to govern cyberspace both domestically and internationally. In the text, the “rule of law” is described as “a civil order in which fidelity to laws safeguards people and interests; brings stability to global markets; and holds malevolent actors to account internationally.”³³ It is clear that international law and legal processes are crucial to the Strategy’s vision of openness, prosperity and security in the world of networking. The Strategy confirms that existing principles and norms of international law also apply in cyberspace, including respect for the fundamental civil and political rights of freedom of expression and association, privacy, and property; state responsibility to deny criminals safe haven; and

³² *Id.*, at 17-24.

³³ *Id.*, at 5.

What is particularly interesting is the Strategy’s understanding of the right to self-defense explained as: “Consistent with the United Nations Charter, states have an inherent right to self-defense that may be triggered by certain aggressive acts in cyberspace.”

the right to use force in individual or collective self-defense in response to armed attacks. What is particularly interesting is the Strategy’s understanding of the right to self-defense explained as: “Consistent with the United Nations Charter, states have an inherent right to self-defense that may be triggered by certain aggressive acts in cyberspace.”³⁴

The Strategy also emphasizes that due to the unique features of networking technology, emerging cyber-specific norms require development and implementation, while existing international legal norms that operate in cyberspace require greater clarity of definition. Such norms include:

1. Global Interoperability (States should act within their authority to help ensure the end-to-end interoperability of an Internet accessible to all);
2. Network Stability (States should respect the free flow of information in national network configurations, ensuring they do not arbitrarily interfere with inter-

³⁴ *Id.*, at 10.

- nationally interconnected infrastructure);
3. Reliable Access (States should not arbitrarily deprive or disrupt individuals' access to the Internet or other networked technologies);
 4. Multi-stakeholder Governance (Internet governance efforts must not be limited to governments, but should include all appropriate stakeholders);
 5. Cybersecurity Due Diligence (States should recognize and act on their responsibility to protect information infrastructure and secure national systems from damage or misuse)³⁵

While acknowledging the importance of the international law norms and principles, the Strategy also focuses on international cooperation and strengthening international partnerships that can build consensus around principles of responsible behavior in cyberspace, and the actions necessary to build a system of cyberspace stability.³⁶ One of the main problems with the Strategy is that it directly affects such principles of international law as respect for sovereignty and non-intervention in the domestic affairs of states, without discussing these principles. Thus the consensus building with countries that have the power to define how cyberspace functions (China, for example) may

lead to agreement only on the superficial principles of “responsible behavior” in cyberspace, avoiding the consensus in areas like political and civil rights.

These negotiations are already underway, and it has been reported that the U.S. and China have been holding private talks on cyber-security for more than two years. Their informal discussions have already led to progress in terms of cooperation to combat Internet fraud, an urgent problem for both countries. At the same time, the talks appear to have revealed a wide gap between the United States and China over almost everything virtual: policing computer networks, moderating cyber warfare, even controlling information. “Digital attacks and cyber snooping on U.S. technology firms and government agencies including the Pentagon, many of them believed to have originated in or been routed through China, have pushed cyber-security up the list of thorny issues troubling Sino-American relations.”³⁷

Conclusion:

Cyber-wars are already a threat to international peace and security. It is evident from both the recent instances of cyber-attacks all around the globe and the reactions the attacks have received. Countries are now in the process of realizing that international law needs a push towards

³⁵ *Id.*

³⁶ *Id.*, at 11.

³⁷ Reuters, *U.S. and China face vast divide in cyber issues* (15 July 2011), available at <http://bit.ly/roEGSc>.

the regulation of the conduct of the states, should a full-scale cyber-war suddenly erupt.

Scholars are more focused on cyber-security studies than ever; the U.S. and China hold talks on cyber-security issues trying to reach to common grounds at least on basic aspects of cyberspace regulations; the U.S. International Strategy for Cyberspace is being published (soon to be followed by the Pentagon's Cyber Strategy). All of these are the first signs of activities aimed at bringing international regulation to cyberspace.

Due to the growing and expanding use of the Internet and cyberspace in the Caucasus region, the international importance of regulation of cyber-warfare issues should not be underestimated here. Technological advances and IT infrastructure development together with the growing arms industry means that research of cyber-warfare means and methods is urgently required. Given the lack of the international monitoring in this area, there is a risk of "cyber-weapons" production. Considering that many international armed conflicts are live in the region (though lacking active hostilities), there is a strong possibility that with time, parties to these conflicts may turn to cyber-warfare. And here international law will be crucial. Who will be in the position to use armed force? Who will be exercising self-defense? What about respect for sovereignty? How will issues surrounding the seriousness of

the cyber-attack and the proportionality of use of force be dealt with?

All of the aforementioned questions will require answers. Though the U.S. International Strategy for Cyberspace recognizes the possibility of responding to a cyber-attack with armed force, this is the opinion of one state, and as the Strategy acknowledges, international law needs further clarification and extension of norms when it comes to cyberspace.

Hope remains for a productive and timely dialogue between states, which can produce a new chapter of international law to handle the cyber-warfare consensus.

Caucasus International's Twitterati-100: the 2011 guide to the foreign-policy Twitterverse

Over the past year, Twitter has become a hub for discussion and debate in international affairs. It has reinvigorated discourse and helped to democratize a dialogue that too often is confined to backrooms. It provides a space for conversation as well as a unique window into the world of the reporters, writers, thinkers and doers who make up the collective voice of international affairs.

Caucasus International has collected 100 Twitter users from around the world noted for their insights into the Caucasus region. This list has been compiled with the help of a panel of experts in social networking media, by studying the size of each tweeter's audience, the frequency of their tweeting, their audience engagement, and the impact of each tweet.

Caucasus International is proud to share the 100 best Twitter users in international affairs:

Government Officials, Leaders, Diplomats

Ban Ki-moon @secgen
UN Secretary General

Anders Fogh Rasmussen @AndersFoghR
NATO Secretary General

Barack Obama @BarackObama
President of the U.S

Abdullah Gül @cbabdullahgul
President of Turkey

Dmitry Medvedev @MedvedevRussia
President of Russian Federation

Ilham Aliyev @presidentaz
President of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Mikheil Saakashvili @SaakashviliM and @MSaakashvili
President of Georgia.

Serzh Sargsyan @armpresident
President of Armenia

Paul Kagame @PaulKagame
President of the Republic of Rwanda

Pervez Musharraf @PMPakistan
Former President of Pakistan

William Hague @WilliamJHague
British Foreign Secretary

Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu @MevlutCavusoglu
President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)

Barham Salih @BarhamSalih
Prime Minister of Iraq's Kurdistan region

Carl Bildt @carlbildt
Swedish Foreign Minister

Alexander Stubb @alexstubb
Minister for European Affairs and Foreign Trade of Finland

İbrahim Kaln @ikalin1
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Administration of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan

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Head of the Foreign Relations Department, Administration of the President
of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Danny Ayalon @DannyAyalon
Deputy Foreign Minister of Israel

Samad Seyidov @SeyidSamad
MP, Chairman of the Azerbaijani Parliament's Commission on Foreign
Affairs and Interparliamentary Relations

Asim Mollazade @AsimMollazade
MP, Chairman of the Democratic Reforms party of Azerbaijan

Shashi Tharoor @ShashiTharoor
Member of Indian Parliament

Hussain Haqqani @hussainhaqqani
Pakistan's Ambassador to the US

Namık Tan @NamikTan
Turkish Ambassador to the US

Elshad Iskandarov @eiskandarov
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Omar Bradley Chair of Strategic Leadership, Dickinson College, Penn State
School of Law and School of International Affairs, and Army War College

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Transatlantic Fellow at the German Marshall Fund with particular interest in
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Director of Research at the Brookings Doha Center and Fellow at the Saban
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PhD candidate in Arabic and Islamic Studies at Harvard University, author
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ICG Turkey/Cyprus Project Director

Andrew Exum @abumuqawama
Andrew Exum is a Senior Fellow with the Center for a New American
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Associate Professor, George Washington University

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Fletcher School, Senior Fellow

Aaron Y. Zelin @azelin
Research Associate in the Department of Politics at Brandeis University.

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