



The borderization of Georgia’s breakaways as a tool of Russia’s long-term struggle with the EU and NATO

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It is with a great pain that I am forced to state that the process of Russia’s expansion to collect other people’s land, which has been going on for centuries, is continuing in the XXIst century. If Europe and America, if the whole world continues to look on the aggressive actions of Russia in a silent manner, the Georgian tragedy may turn into a tragedy of a global scale.¹

E. A. Shevardnadze, 2009

Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in tremendous geopolitical changes. The bipolar international order that had been consolidated since the end of World War II came to the end, a number of independent countries were born, while most of the existing ones had to revise their foreign and security policies. However, the disintegration had the greatest impact on “mother” Russia itself, entailing socio-cultural, economic, military, and last but not least geopolitical consequences. In particular, the psychological consequences were especially painful. The Russian nation was well aware of the loss, not only of its constituent republics, but also its affiliation and status as a superpower and the hegemon of Eastern Europe and Asia. Russians have never forgotten the humiliation when the West and IMF rejected their request to cancel \$70 billion USSR debt, while the architects of the new attitude towards them: Yegor Gaidar, Anatoly Chubais, and Andrey Kozyrev or were considered “people of the West.” The initial euphoria of cooperation with the West based on Gorbachev’s “new thinking” doctrine quickly changed trajectory as a result of the deteriorating Russian economic situation and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact.² Taking power in the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin created a system completely different from the “ethnocracy”³ that was blamed for the collapse of the Soviet Union. He consolidated and centralized power into a semi-authoritarian system based on “managed democracy,” reduced the power of the oligarchs, and preserved the unity of the state. The changes he implemented allowed Russia to return to the stable policy aimed at restoring its position and, in accordance with the

¹ Шеварднадзе, Эдуард, *Когда Рухнул Железный Занавес: Встречи и Воспоминания* (Москва: Издательство Европа, 2009, p. 307).

² Materski, Wojciech, *Gruzja*, Wyd. 2 popr. i uzup, Historia Państw Świata w XX i XXI Wieku / Instytut Historyczny Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Trio, 2010).

³ Marciniak, Włodzimierz, *Rozgrabione Imperium: Upadek Związku Sowieckiego I Powstanie Federacji Rosyjskiej*, Wyd. 2, Arkana historii (Kraków: Arcana, 2004).



Primakov's doctrine, the international recognition of the Russian right to maintain its sphere of influence in the so-called "Near Abroad" states. The former Soviet states were supposed to grant Russia not only the monopoly on cooperation, usage of the natural resources and Soviet infrastructure located there, but also constitute a buffer zone, distancing potential external threats. By integrating that doctrine with the natural resource policy, Russia re-joined the superpower pretenders by 2000, consistently implementing established goals. This balance was disturbed by the 2004 NATO membership of the former Warsaw Pact and Soviet Union Republics: Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

Russia was also concerned about the so-called color revolutions appearing in the post-Soviet space: the 2003 Rose Revolution in Georgia, the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine, and the 2006 Denim Revolution in Belarus, causing unwelcome developments in the stabilization policy and the Near Abroad doctrine.⁴ Russia quickly recognized these events as a product of the United States and other Western powers, which pose a vital threat to its national security.⁵ Pro-Western bent and pro-NATO aspirations of Georgia - led by the charismatic Mikheil Saakashvili - crossed the Rubicon at the 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest. While the Alliance failed to offer Georgia and Ukraine a Membership Action Plan, it welcomed the possibility of their future accession to the Alliance making some vague and unspecified promises.

As a result of the deterioration of Russian-Georgian relations, sporadic armed incidents between Georgia's armed forces and separatists from the republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, as well as Russia's so-called intervention troops, have returned. In July 2008, Georgia conducted an exercise with NATO called "Immediate Response-2008" at the Vaziani Military Base, close to the Tbilisi capital. In Moscow's opinion, the U.S. and the West have fooled Russia by pursuing offensive policies at its borders by, among other things, inviting neighboring countries to integrate with NATO and the EU. In retaliation, the concurrent Caucasus-2008 exercises were conducted by Russia in close proximity to the NATO exercise. The announced goals of the exercise, included practicing assistance to Russian peacekeepers in Abkhazia and South Ossetia raised Georgia's concerns.⁶ The mutual Georgian-Ossetian-Russian provocations in the last days of July and early August 2008 led to a full-scale war. On August 8, 2008, Georgia opened fire at Russian troops based in the area of the Georgian-Ossetian 1992 conflict, which Russia considered an attack on its peacekeepers. At the same time, the separatist authorities of South Ossetia requested Russian assistance, while on August 9, the separatist Republic of Abkhazia, backed by Russian aviation forces, launched operations intended to expel Georgians from the Kodori Gorge. On August 26, 2008, Russia recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which changed the geopolitical situation in the South Caucasus.⁷ Since that moment, Russian forces

⁴ Nikitina, Yulia, "The 'Color Revolutions' and 'Arab Spring' in Russian Official Discourse," *Connections*, 2014.

⁵ Volker, Kurt and Fried, Daniel, "The Speech in Which Putin Told Us Who He Was," accessed May 13, 2022, <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2022/02/18/putin-speech-wake-up-call-post-cold-war-order-liberal-2007-00009918>.

⁶ РИА Новости, "Участники Учений 'Кавказ-2008' Отработают Миротворческие Операции," accessed May 8, 2022, <https://ria.ru/20080715/114022328.html>.

⁷ Allison, Roy, "Russia Resurgent? Moscow's Campaign to 'Coerce Georgia to Peace'," *International Affairs* 84, no. 6 /2008, doi:10.1111/j.1468-2346.2008.00762.x.

have been stationed in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia without the consent of the Republic of Georgia.

What the borderization means and where it comes from

As a consequence of Russia's recognition of the independence of both breakaway republics, Georgia has lost control over 20 percent of its territory. Despite the previous wars in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, both self-proclaimed republics remained in the status of completely unrecognized subjects until August 2008. The Russian Federation's recognition of the breakaway republics was followed by the recognition of other UN member states allied with Russia, namely Nicaragua, Venezuela, Nauru, Vanuatu, Tuvalu, and Syria, albeit in 2013 and 2014 Vanuatu and Tuvalu broke off relations and withdrew their respective support. The so-called Six Point Ceasefire Agreement and the commitment of the parties to immediate fulfillment of their obligations, as well as the so-called Tagliavini report⁸ published a year after the events (dividing the blame for the outbreak of the conflict between Georgia, Russia and the separatist republics) caused the attention of the media and the global arena to diminish significantly, reducing importance of the Russo-Georgian constructive conflict regulation. This led to a situation where a conflict that in theory had been frozen was de facto still continuing. Georgia has fulfilled its obligations under the signed document, while Russia has not only failed to withdraw its troops to the pre-August War alignment, but has substantially increased the number of troops in the two breakaway republics by building and renovating military bases there. As the guarantee of stabilization, at the end of 2008 war, a major deployment of Russian Federation Forces occurred in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Under agreements with the separatist republics, the personnel of the 4th Military Base and 7th Military Base had been sent there.⁹ Moreover, approx. 1,500 Russian Federation Border Guards were sent to ABK and SO, respectively. The presence of the Russian troops in both breakaway republics remains of importance for the Russian Federation to secure its influence in the region.¹⁰

Russia has also initiated an extensive passport policy, distribution of social services, and pensions for those who have applied for a Russian passport. In addition, the financial support and projects for the economic development of de facto republics have been launched. Russia's *Rossotrudnichestvo* (Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation) has been actively involved in both republics, promoting the Russian language and keeping them in the Russian information sphere.

Soon the work on the delimitation of "sovereign territory" and the establishment of borders with Georgia were initiated, which received a codename borderization or as Tbilisi Administrated Territory used to call it – a creeping occupation.¹¹ By borderization one should consider installation or upgrade of different type of installations that make possible to physically separate the unrecognized territories from the Georgian homeland. This term

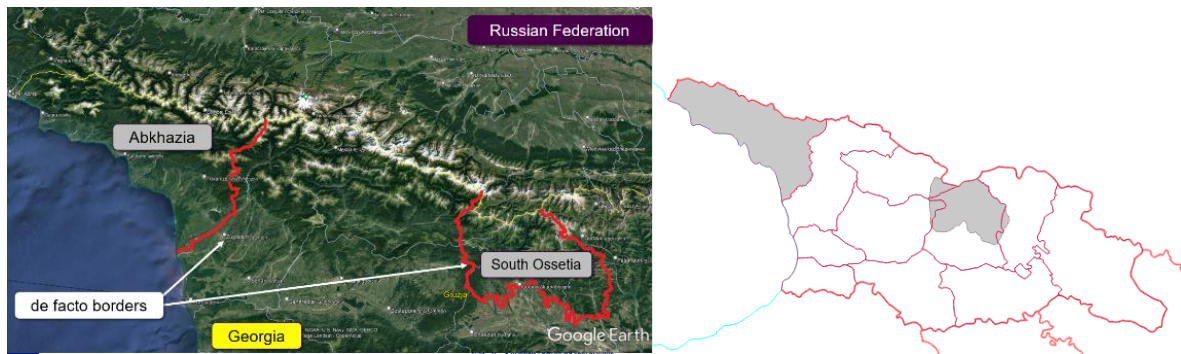
⁸ De Waal, Thomas, "The Still-Topical Tagliavini Report," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, accessed May 18, 2022, <https://carnegiemoscow.org/commentary/61451>.

⁹ Batashvili, David, "Russian Military Forces: Interactive Map," GFSIS, accessed May 13, 2022, <https://gfsis.org.ge/maps/view/russian-military-forces>.

¹⁰ Nation, Craig, "Russia and the Caucasus," *Connections*, no. 2 (2015).

¹¹ Georgian Foundation For Strategic And International Studies, *Borderization – Creeping Occupation*, accessed February 3, 2022, <https://gfsis.org.ge/maps/view/georgian-territories-occupied-by-russia>.

includes a whole infrastructure, namely primary, secondary and tertiary fences, surveillance equipment, HUMINT, checkpoints, trenches, ground lines, crossing points, and facilities of South Ossetian/Abkhazian and Russian Federation actors being installed along the disputed Administrative Boundary Lines, preventing local people from freely relocating between both parties.¹² However, in case of both republics, the historically changing areas considered endemically Abkhazian/Ossetian remained disputable, which was known even in the Soviet era. Georgia is consistently rejecting discussions on the formation of the Demarcation Commissions, since it would imply a de facto recognition over its territorial loss. For this reason, Russia and the breakaway republics claim the ceasefire lines as constituting the “new borders.”



Picture: de facto borders and the regional distribution of the Abkhaz and South Ossetian ethnic groups.

The dividing line considered to be Abkhaz so-called border is relatively short, and the topography greatly reduces the necessity of fencing. The situation is very different for the SO, where the so-called border with Georgia is nearly three times longer and much more penetrable. The borderization process was launched between 2009 – 2011 and was being implemented mostly by the Russian Federation Border Guards. By 2013/2014, bordering was mainly a psychological tool intended to manifest the “independence” and to emphasize the existence of the so-called border. In this phase, the vast majority of the so-called “crossing” cases were handled with permissiveness. In 2014, the discussion on the need for a SO Parliamentary Committee on Border Delimitation was initiated, which resulted in the resumption of borderization. In the beginning, some primitive and inexpensive control methods were used, such as trenches or increased patrolling activities. Over time, this has been accompanied by the installation of surveillance systems, Mobile real-time surveillance Patrol Systems (OKAPI), and HUMINT. The actual, that is, physical borderization was launched in 2017 and became part of the strategy shift of the SO Parliamentary Committee on Border Delimitation. This form of demarcation was considered a strategic priority and a vital interest; therefore, the process has greatly accelerated. Borderization is carried out selectively and irregularly, while demonstrative construction processes generate tensions and protests from the territory under the physical control of the Georgian authorities (so called Tbilisi Administrated Territory) as well as communities inhabiting the land targeted by the disputed activities. In the respective cases of the two separatist republics, the process is being

¹² Amnesty International, “Georgia: Behind Barbed Wire: Human Rights Toll of “Borderization” in Georgia - Amnesty International,” accessed May 17, 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur56/0581/2019/en/>.

politically used as a form of pressure and a way to moderate Georgia’s pro-Western aspirations.



Pictures of: the so-called border sign (left), primary fence (middle) and ongoing borderization process (right) in the SO area. Source: <https://gfsis.org.ge/ge/maps/view/georgian-territories-occupied-by-russia> (22.05.2022)

A considerable increase in the pace of work was noticed in the strategically important moments for Georgia - e.g. during the intensification of cooperation with NATO, joint military exercises, Kurt Volker’s speech on the deep-sea port capabilities or prior to the U.S.-Russian discussion on the security guarantees in December 2021. The borderization process not only undermines the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, but also greatly complicates and delays the possible peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Currently, the Administrative Boundary Line in the Abkhazia region is 148 km long, of which approximately 60 km remains passable. Overall, approximately 64 percent of the passable area of the ABL is fenced now. Although, due to the pandemic restrictions the pace of borderization had slowed in the ABK theater in 2020 and 2021, the progress continues in other ways, mostly focusing on reinforcement, upgrade of existing infrastructure and extending inexpensive trenching process. In turn, the South Ossetian ABL is 391 km long of which approximately 230 km is passable. Until 2022, 38 percent of the passable area has been fenced and restricted in access. The fencing pace has significantly increased since 2019, giving approximately 23-24 km of new fence between November 2019 – November 2021. In both cases, though, there is no complete consensus on the trajectory of the ABL.¹³ There exist multiple variations in both the Abkhaz and Ossetian theaters, which contributes to generating tensions and enables their instrumental usage by both, breakaway republics’ de facto administration and the Russian Federation representatives on the ground.

The borderization is a long-term and ongoing process. There are at least three sets of rationales justifying the Kremlin’s interest in preserving the process and indicating that it will

¹³ Абайти, Мария and Джоиева, Анна, “Споры о Границе Усугубили Политический Кризис в Южной Осетии,” Кавказский Узел, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/370546/>.

be continued. The first set includes the geopolitical rationale. The borderization is considered by Russia not just as a form of physical demarcation of the so-called borders in the occupied Georgian republics. It is also a form of pressure aimed to force the Georgian authorities to accept the post-2008 August war status quo and recognize the independence of the separatist republics. Through borderization, Russia manages to suppress Georgian pro-Western aspirations and lower the local community morale. Russia is permanently increasing instability and pressure in the so-called borderlands with breakaways when witnessing Georgia's successive steps of cooperation with the EU, NATO, or the United States.¹⁴ Within a few years, Russia has almost completely seized control over the borderization process, as well as the so-called armed forces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In the vast majority of reported cases, the process of installation of fences and devices is carried out by the Russian Border Guard personnel. They are also responsible for majority of illegal detentions, provision of patrols, and de facto control over the crossing points, while so-called South Ossetian Border Guards and Abkhaz Border Guards became recently much less visible. Russian soldiers and Border Guards are better equipped and better trained; they are also the primary source of communication with the state of Georgia and the international institutions in diffusing tensions.

It goes without saying, that Russia considers Georgia to be still its sphere of influence and interest. The best demonstration of this approach are the June 2019 protests, when thousands of protesters have taken to the streets after Russian envoy, Sergei Gavrillov, member of the Communist Party, took the speaker's seat in the Georgian Parliament. That behavior was read as a manifestation of an effort to preserve the political dominance over Georgia, sparking mass demonstrations in the country. In retaliation to the protests focusing on Russia's occupation of Georgia, Vladimir Putin used again Russia's punitive policy,¹⁵ signing a decree suspending flights between Russia and Georgia which heavily influenced Russian tourism to Georgia.

At least since 2019 Russia has become noticeably edgy about the United States, NATO, and EU projects & activities in Georgia, which has been accompanied by a series of disinformation campaigns and hybrid methods being used against them. In March 2019 the U.S. Special Representative for Ukraine, Kurt Volker declared that the eagerly awaited Anaklia Port should be of strategic importance for Georgia's security. On whether the port should have capabilities to host U.S. or NATO submarines, he stated in general, that the ports are by definition designed for hosting vessels and submarines.¹⁶ However, the TASS - Russian News Agency duplicated the information with a strong emphasis on the deep-sea

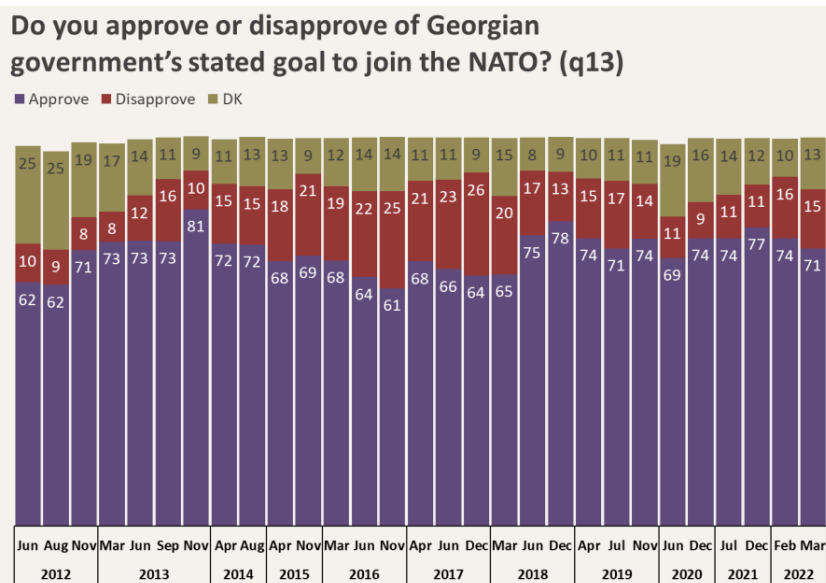
¹⁴ Lomia, Ekaterine, "Georgian Ethnopolitical Conflict as a Subject of Confrontation Between the USA and Russia," *Journal of Liberty and International Affairs, Institute for Research and European Studies*, no. 2/2021, doi:10.47305/JLIA217200901.

¹⁵ Cenusa, Denis et al., "Russia's Punitive Trade Policy Measures Towards Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia", CEPS working document 400/2014 (Brussels: CEPS, 2014), <http://www.ceps.eu/book/russiapercentE2percent80percent99s-punitive-trade-policy-measures-towards-ukraine-moldova-and-georgia>.

¹⁶ *GeorgianJournal*, "Development of the Anaklia Deep Sea Port Should Be in the Interest of Every Georgian, Says Kurt Volker," September 3, 2019, accessed May 10, 2022, <https://georgianjournal.ge/politics/36062-development-of-the-anaklia-deep-sea-port-should-be-in-the-interest-of-every-georgian-says-kurt-volker.html>.

port’s ability to host NATO submarines.¹⁷ Soon after, Russia undertook measures to delay the construction. In a few months, Georgian authorities had completely stopped the implementation of the Anaklia deep-sea port project,¹⁸ which was later summarized as a “no-tease policy” towards Russia. According to Gen. Hodges, Anaklia could be to Georgia what the development of the NASA program was to the United States, and the construction of the port itself would greatly increase Georgia’s prospects for NATO accession.¹⁹ Its execution could also completely reconfigure the roles and positions of existing regional actors - as U.S. Secretary of State Mark Pompeo emphasized. Although the Kremlin has avoided any direct statements, Russian Deputy Minister G. Karasin has repeatedly warned that Georgia must finally identify the destiny of Anaklia and consider what it might bring in the long run. The construction of Anaklia would hit Russia multidimensionally, not least by depreciating the importance of the Novorossiysk port. Almost in line with the Georgian decision to halt the project, the work of the Russian consortium *RusMorPort* on the Taman deep-sea port has been accelerated. The Georgian political scene has also been severely destabilized.

The Borderization process leaves a strong psychological imprint on the Georgian society. It is inseparably accompanied by the disinformation campaign and the hybrid methods that undermine the EU, NATO, and U.S. credibility, while triggering a sense of constant anxiety and insecurity about one’s future. The consequence of such a process is, *inter alia*, a decline of the Georgians’ support towards NATO accession by as much as 6 points only between December 2021 and March 2022.



¹⁷ TACC, “Волкер: Порт Анаклия Имеет Стратегическое Значение Для Грузии,” March 11, 2019, accessed May 10, 2022, https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/6207351?utm_source=google.com&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=google.com&utm_referrer=google.com.

¹⁸ Ulyyett, Richard, “Analysis – in a Win for Russia, Anaklia Deep Sea Port Project Descends into Chaos,” *PortSEurope*, September 1, 2019, accessed May 7, 2022, <https://www.portseurope.com/in-a-win-for-russia-anaklia-deep-sea-port-project-descends-into-chaos/>.

¹⁹ Twitter, “Ben Hodges on Twitter: “A Deep-Water Port at Anaklia Would Be a Game-Changer...European Nations Would Invest in This Port as a Portal Between Eurasia and Europe...And Would Therefore Start Taking a Real Interest in Georgia’s Security and Its Borders...Which Is Why the Kremlin Has Opposed It.” / Twitter, accessed May 12, 2022, https://twitter.com/general_ben/status/1263558889691324423.

Picture: of the Georgians' support for the NATO accession. There is a visible decrease since the pandemic borderization acceleration and Russia's aggression on Ukraine. Source: NDI: <https://www.ndi.org/georgia-polls> (28.04.2022)

In March 2021 the de facto KGB of South Ossetia has launched a disinformation campaign on the EU mission violating impartiality by provocative joined Georgian-EU patrols along the Tselisi-Uista area, which was the most serious hotspot in last years. In February 2021, the EU representatives were accused of crossing the so-called state border in the Mereti area, that has become a hotspot in 2020. However, until that moment, the EU mission had been conducting patrols along the ABL for several years, without any complaints from the Russian-South Ossetian side. Yet, once Russian Federation Border Guards started to conduct borderization activities there, a discretionary perception of the trajectory of the ABL had been used for the propaganda purposes. In May 2020, de facto SO government has accused the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia, the Georgian Government and the U.S-built Lugar Lab of collecting South Ossetian's biological materials in order to carry out genocide in the future.²⁰ This disinformation campaign designed to weaken trust in the United States, EU, and Georgia was deeply rooted back in 2018, when Vladimir Putin claimed an “alarming genetic research” being conducted in the United States built lab in Georgia.²¹

A form of pressure on the Georgian government and the public also includes variants of the demarcation of the ABL, which are used interchangeably,²² when convenient. The new demarcation line of the so-called SO border was introduced just before the security guarantee position sent by Russia to the U.S. and was most probably designed as a wake-up call for Georgia. Between November and December 2021, the so-called Demarcation Commission posted a series of new maps concerning the disputed areas. By changing the reference map, de facto SO authorities would gain another 200 km² of territory.²³ The choice of locations for the dispute was not random, as it struck the population, arable land, irrigation systems, and the former soviet airfield, and could lead to a potential escalation of the situation, similar to the events known from Chorchana. The de facto SO state Commission on Demarcation and Delimitation tied in 2021 to politicize the borderization topic at least three times. However, since the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the project, announced as crucial, has been completely abandoned.

The fact that the borderization process is being used as a Kremlin tool is also evidenced by the obvious convergence in the intensification, weakening, and especially its deceleration in critical moments affecting Moscow's policy. In the first weeks of August 2020, the noticeable decrease in the pace of work was most likely related to events in Belarus and the need for resource relocation. At the time, there were ongoing protests in Belarus, which Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed to suppress within the framework of the post-Soviet

²⁰ Agenda.ge, “Russian-Occupied Tskhinvali Accuses Tbilisi, EUMM Georgia, of Collecting Biological Materials of ‘Its Residents’,” accessed May 12, 2022, <https://agenda.ge/en/news/2020/1590>.

²¹ Agenda.ge, “Putin Claims ‘Alarming Genetic Research’ Being Conducted in US-Built Lab in Tbilisi,” accessed May 12, 2022, <https://agenda.ge/en/news/2018/2169>.

²² Zurabashvili, Tornike, “Tselisi-Chorchana Crisis: Facts, Details and Chronology,” Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://gfsis.org.ge/publications/view-opinion-paper/130>.

²³ Абайти, Мария and Джоюева, Анна, “Споры о границе усугубили политический кризис в Южной Осетии” accessed April 22, 2022, <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/370546/>

Collective Security Treaty Organization.²⁴ Similarly, once the Russian peacekeeping operation in Kazakhstan and later Russia's full-scale attack on Ukraine were launched, the borderization process in SO drastically slowed down, as the personnel have most likely been seriously affected by the ongoing offensive. When the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resurfaced in 2020, SIGINT equipment disappeared from the South Ossetian territory, which significantly reduced the operational capabilities of the separatist republic and the Russian military activity.

In the weeks preceding and following the Russia-U.S. talks on security guarantees, South Ossetia together with Russia have intensified a hybrid campaign to build up tensions along the ABL. From a strategic perspective, the goal was to support Russia's rhetoric in terms of protection of its sphere of influence in the Near Abroad. There was a significant increase in the attitude of historical injustice and expectations of border delimitation with Georgia, which represented a form of pressure on Tbilisi tightening its relationship with the NATO. The psychological campaign involved also "controlled leakage" of information on planned territorial claims, significantly affecting Dzvileti, Chonto, Adzvi, and Tsnelisi - considered by all sides as the hotspot areas along the Administrative Boundary Line with SO. Meanwhile, the activity of the military actors patrolling the ABL, including the borderization process and deployment of COMINT devices increased significantly. As a result of the campaign, the residents of the hotspot areas demonstrated disillusionment and doubts over the ability of the Georgian authorities or the EU mission to secure their safety.

The second group justifying the Kremlin's interest in continuation of the borderization process is the financial - military rationale. In both separatist republics Russia has invested forces and means, including financial ones. Russian military bases in Abkhazia have been built or renovated. Despite Tbilisi's objections, Russia is systematically unifying the command system, components, and technological solutions with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The 7th Russian Military base located in Abkhazia is a JAF base with Russian equipment being stored. In September 2019, Vladimir Putin instructed Russian Federation Armed Forces to allocate funds on modernization of the so-called ABK Armed Forces in order to achieve tactical compatibility and unification of standards not later than in 2022.²⁵ The policy of Russian passport distribution to Abkhazian and Ossetian residents brings financial implications, including the pay-out of the Russian pensions. As part of its deterrence policy, Moscow flexes its muscles every year by conducting hundreds of exercises and training sessions with Abkhazian and Ossetian troops. It also carries out mirroring drills each time NATO engages Georgia in Tbilisi Administrated Territory or in the Black Sea region. Each time these activities are associated with the increased activities along the ABL.

In the Abkhazian theater, in August 2019 Russian Federation Armed Forces conducted large scale exercises simultaneously to the "Agile Spirit 2019," that took place on the Tbilisi Administrated Territory. At the same time, unusually high presence of Russian Federation Coast Guard patrolling vessels demonstrating provocative approach was observed several

²⁴ Polish Press Agency, "Ekspert O Doniesieniach O Pojazdach Zmierzających Z Rosji Na Białoruś," *Onet*, August 18, 2020, accessed May 16, 2022, <https://www.onet.pl/informacje/onetwiadomosci/bialorus-ekspert-o-doniesieniach-o-pojazdach-zmierzajacych-z-rosji-na-bialorus/hrn7fkm,79cfc278>.

²⁵ "Putin Orders Government to Allocate Funds for Modernization of Occupied Abkhazia's Army," accessed May 7, 2022, <https://www.interpressnews.ge/en/article/103907-putin-orders-government-to-allocate-funds-for-modernization-of-occupied-abkhazias-army>.

times in the proximity of the ABL and on Tbilisi administrated waters, while Russian Federation Border Guards intensified their presence on the ground, installing and maintaining “border infrastructure.” Also, very rarely seen Mi-8 RF helicopter flights were reported at the Administrative Boundary Line with Abkhazia, close to the Sea, while the NATO exercise was held. In turn, there were no similar actions from Georgia nor NATO regarding Russo-Abkhaz large scale sea exercise in the Ochamchire area in April the same year. When in the end of 2019 ten NATO ships visited and trained in Georgian territorial waters in line with the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP), in the beginning of 2020 the Russian Southern Military District announced increase in practical trainings of the Russian Federation Armed Forces personnel in Abkhazia. In parallel, Russian Federation Border Guards increased their presence and borderization at the Administrative Boundary Line.

The whole 2020 and 2021 were regularly used by South Ossetian based Russian media and de facto South Ossetian authorities to press charges on Georgia strengthening cooperation with NATO, as possibly preparing for a military offensive.²⁶ For instance, the annual, special operations forces exercise in Europe “Trojan Footprint 21,” together with “Defender Europe 2021” have been announced as a threat to Russia’s positions in the Caucasus and the NATO reconnaissance training designed to “test and verify its capabilities in a new theater.”²⁷

The third set justifying the Kremlin’s interest in continuation of the borderization process is the socio-political rationale. In contrast to the unpredictable Georgian leadership and a society that is negatively oriented to Russia, Abkhazian and Ossetian politicians are appointed with the control and consent of the Russian Federation. The Abkhaz and Ossetian societies are positively oriented towards Russia and its citizens. Both republics are kept in the Russian information sphere, while their societies, unlike Georgians, teach and use Russian as their first language. The ruble remains the currency of payment in both breakaway republics. Russian soldiers are well settled there. As stationed “abroad” they have better conditions, including financial ones without giving up contact with their mother tongue, Russian media or their families, which are allowed to stay there with them. The conducting of borderization by the Russian Federation Border Guards is thus not only accepted by societies, but also understood as the allied support, profitable for all: Abkhazians, Ossetians, and the Russian Federation troops stationing in the breakaway republics. The presence of Russian forces is therefore an element of building the image of the Russian Federation troops as the “comrades ready to be one of them,” to provide assistance, and to reinforce the so-called border of the independent republic.

Between 2019-2021 The Russian Federation Border Guards with de facto SO authorities took advantage over covid pandemic with the so-called border infrastructure installation and redoubled its efforts which has been internationally condemned.²⁸ Their actions resulted in new waves of disinformation campaigns, accelerated physical fencing activities, Russian

²⁶ “Учения НАТО Defender Europe 2021 Назвали Репетицией Войны С Россией,” accessed May 6, 2022, https://sputnik--ossetia-ru.translate.googleusercontent.com/20210403/Ucheniya-NATO-Defender-Europe-2021-nazvali-repetitsiey-voyny-s-Rossiey-12033641.html?_x_tr_sl=ru&_x_tr_tl=pl&_x_tr_hl=pl&_x_tr_pto=op,wapp.

²⁷ “Дополнительная Напряженность: Югоосетинский Эксперт об Учениях НАТО в Грузии,” accessed May 6, 2022, <https://sputnik-ossetia.ru/20210511/Dopolnitelnaya-napryazhennost-yugoosetinskiy-ekspert-ob-ucheniyakh-NATO-v-Gruzii-12200003.html>.

²⁸ Agenda.ge, “Georgian MFA: Russia Doubled Its Illegal Activities in Georgia Amid Pandemic,” accessed May 12, 2022, <https://agenda.ge/en/news/2020/1604>.

Federation Border Guards facilities installation and surveillance system deployment. Any types of the cross-ABL movement, communication and contacts of local communities has been forbidden and considered as illegal, thus seriously affecting their well-being and violating fundamental human rights.²⁹ Consistently, according to witnesses, the only remaining form of telephone communication was jammed or tapped. In addition, all known unspoken agreements have been declared null and void. Only between June - October 2021, the borderization process in South Ossetia theater was more than 50 percent higher than in similar period in 2019 and approximately 40 percent higher than in 2020. In December 2021, the observations clearly indicated that the overall fencing activities were approximately 1.5 times as large as those in 2020 and almost 4 times larger than the year before. More fences have been installed, when ground lines length has been extended and the number of surveillance devices have been increased. In the case of Abkhazia, borderization works included renewal of communication roads between the military bases, as well as trenches installation. Unlike the previous years, the whole 2021 borderization process was focused mainly on a full scale borderization allowing to control and monitor areas (fence installation, observation points, surveillance systems and warning signs). The way construction was carried out made it impossible for local communities to coexist, communicate, or cross the Administrative Boundary Line unnoticed. Mr. Davit Vanishvili, the symbol of Georgian resistance to the process of borderization died being completely separated from the contact with Tbilisi Administrated Territory and unable to be mobile as a result of the so-called Ossetian citizenship rejection.³⁰



Picture: of Mr. Davit Vanishvili, being trapped in his backyard by the extension of the so-called security fence done by the Russian Federation Border Guards. Source: <https://twitter.com/GeoVatican/status/1054653431686877184/photo/1> (12.03.2022)

In 2022 the process has visibly slowed down, possibly due to the January 2022 Russian peacekeeping operation in Kazakhstan³¹ and the February 2022 aggression in Ukraine. The

²⁹ Parry Nat, “OSCE PA Human Rights Leaders Deeply Concerned About the Continued ‘Borderization’ Process in Georgia and Its Impact on Local Residents,” accessed May 6, 2022, <https://www.oscepa.org/en/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/human-rights-committee-leaders-deeply-concerned-about-the-continued-borderization-process-in-georgia-and-its-impact-on-local-residents>.

³⁰ Репорт.Ге, “‘Дата Папа Скончался’ - Умер Проживавший В Зоне Оккупации Дата Ванишвили,” accessed May 12, 2022, <https://report.ge/ru/society/data-papa-skonchalsya-umer-prozhivavshiy-v-zone-okkupacii-data-vanishvili/>.

³¹ Семиволос, Игорь, “Что Происходит В Казахстане,” *НВ*, January 5, 2022 ЕЕТ, accessed May 6, 2022, <https://nv.ua/opinion/kazakhstan-protesty-kak-mogut-razvivatsya-sobytiya-v-almaty-rossiya-poslednie-novosti-50206665.html>.

personnel and materiel issues in South Ossetia have most likely been seriously affected by relocation or delegation to perform other assignments. Yet, due to lack of forces and resources, the bordering activities were replaced by an increased patrol frequency and trenching activities along the Administrative Boundary Line.

Protracted but not frozen – conflict in Georgia

By the facts presented, one should consider whether the Russian-Georgian conflict should be referred to as frozen.³² Russian violation of the terms of the ceasefire agreement, the progressive borderization and permanent occupation of one-fifth of the Georgian territory, spontaneously erupting anti-Russian protests opposing Russian interference in Georgian politics, constant disinformation, and hybrid campaigns conducted by the separatist republics with the support of the Russian Federation, and finally, a significant intensification of tensions related to the so-called “border process” reflected in the peak of the 2019 Chorchana events – clearly indicate a protracted form of conflict.

In September 2019, the situation on the demarcation line between Georgia and South Ossetia reached a critical point due to the establishment of a checkpoint by Georgian forces in Chorchana - Tsnelisi area, which is disputed due to the natural resources located in this area. The South Ossetia urged Tbilisi to remove the installation with an immediate effect. As a result of Tbilisi unresponsiveness, the South Ossetian authorities decided to establish new positions on the Tbilisi Administrated Territory, thereby violating the Administrative Boundary Line.³³ In tandem, South Ossetia’s KGB announced the indefinite closure of checkpoints, preventing communication and the movement of the local population. While officially the Russian Federation has refrained from comment, the Foreign Ministry has accused Tbilisi of “provocation,” and the actions in the region were led by an FSB officer from Russia.³⁴ De facto South Ossetian authorities have also confirmed being in constant communication with the Russian FSB. Presently, the conflict remains dormant, but it remains very clear, none of the sides will tolerate further deterioration of the security situation in that area.

The past practices of Russian peace-making only enhanced the Russian military position in the region. So-called Russian peacekeeping operations have contributed to the prolongation of conflicts rather than their resolution, which is advantageous for the Kremlin. These provide it with relatively low-cost control of the near abroad, and the political ambitions of the controlled states. Maintaining protracted conflicts in the post-Soviet zone is the most effective tool to prevent pro-Western changes and Euro-Atlantic integration of the region and to disrupt the implementation of fully independent international policies of the controlled entities. This is perfectly reflected in the recent settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resumed in 2020, where the ceasefire agreement once again failed to end the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan and did not lead to its final resolution. However, it ensured that

³² Fischer, Sabine, “Not Frozen!,” Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), accessed May 18, 2022, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/not-frozen-conflicts-in-the-post-soviet-area>.

³³ Civil.ge, “Chorchana Checkpoint Escalation: An Incident or a Trend?,” accessed May 4, 2022, <https://civil.ge/archives/318406>.

³⁴ Civil.ge, “В Цхинвали Назначили Нового Председателя «Комитета Госбезопасности»,” accessed May 12, 2022, <https://civil.ge/ru/archives/315993>.

Russia maintained its influence by introducing Russian peacekeeping forces into Nagorno-Karabakh.

The breakaway territories' situation in light of recent reports

The recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia was an example of the Kremlin's revisionist policy.³⁵ It was used to put the pressure on Tbilisi which resisted to join the CIS and to accept Russian bases on its territory. As a result of the failed policy of pulling Georgia into re-integration with Moscow and the Russian-speaking information sphere, the procedure was applied to the breakaway republics from 2009. The deep integration and dependence resulted in economic pressure designed to force subsequent steps towards greater consolidation. Abkhazia and South Ossetia recognition cemented the new territorial divisions and greatly secured Russian influence over Georgia.

The independence of the two separatist republics was and remains illusory. Their very existence relies heavily on Moscow's financial and economic support, while the inviolability of their lands is secured by the Russian military forces deployed there.³⁶ Both separatist republics have been instrumentalized by Russia, which almost immediately turned them into military base locations in order to control Western Transcaucasia.

However, a far-reaching divergence is noticeable in the de facto approaches of the authorities of the two Republics. While de facto South Ossetian authorities would like to join the Russian Federation, de facto Abkhazian authorities oppose this idea.³⁷ Abkhazia has been trying to remain an independent state for decades, which has its foundations in the history of that ethnic group and has always been manifested in the dialogue with Moscow. It also does not remain entirely dependent, as it continues to be very popular among Russian-speaking tourists and offers a well-developed agricultural potential. As the de facto opposition reported, the first attempts to absorb Abkhazia by Russia were to be made in 2014 following the Crimean scenario. As a result of the referendum, the republic was to enter the Russian Federation with a wide autonomy, but the de facto President Alexander Ankvab refused to accept that offer.³⁸ Despite the objections of the majority of Abkhazians, In December 2014, Abkhazia with the new de facto President, Raul Khajimba ratified the Strategic Partnership Agreement with Russia.³⁹ The agreement was to accelerate integration and coordination of the policy of the separatist republic with the Russian Federation. The authorities, however, managed to negotiate a terminological conversion, which helped to settle down the residents. After the events, changes in Russia's policy toward Abkhazia became gradually more evident. The funds and programs intended to support the de facto government were

³⁵ Allison, Roy, "The Russian Case for Military Intervention in Georgia: International Law, Norms and Political Calculation," *European Security* 18, no. 2 (2009), doi:10.1080/09662830903468734.

³⁶ Cooley, Alexander and Mitchell, Lincoln, "Abkhazia on Three Wheels," *World Policy Journal*, no. 2/2010, doi:10.1162/wopj.2010.27.2.73.

³⁷ Cooley, Alexander and Mitchell, Lincoln, "Engagement Without Recognition: A New Strategy Toward Abkhazia and Eurasia's Unrecognized States," *The Washington Quarterly* 33, no. 4/2010, doi:10.1080/0163660X.2010.516183.

³⁸ "Депутат Народного Собрания — Парламента Рауль Хаджимба Дал Интервью Журналистам | Новости Абхазии И Сухуми," accessed May 12, 2022, <http://abhazia-news.ru/06/deputat-narodnogo-sobraniya-parlamenta-raul-xadzhimba-dal-intervyu-zhurnalistam/>.

³⁹ Tekushev, Islam, "Abkhazia's Unequal Partnership with Russia," accessed May 12, 2022, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/abhazias-unequal-partnership-with-russia/>.

systematically reduced, and the de facto state was plagued by growing political, economic and energetic problems, which were seen as the Kremlin's efforts to destabilize Abkhazia's domestic scene. In recent years, there has been increasing pressure from Moscow to deepen cooperation towards multidimensional and multilevel unification with Russia on the model of the Union State of Russia and Belarus.⁴⁰ A most recent statement by the chairman of the State Duma committee on CIS affairs, Leonid Kalashnikov, about the possibility of holding a referendum in Abkhazia and South Ossetia on joining the Russian Federation caused confusion in both, the de facto Abkhazian Parliament and the society.⁴¹ This idea was supported later by mid-level politicians and political experts who called it "the right time that has come for Abkhazia." While de facto authorities responded stating that the RF is being perceived solely as a "strategic partner," but neither the de facto authorities nor the Abkhazian people had the intention of joining,⁴² their position, however, was very weak. The opposition leader, at the same time, stated that Abkhazia should seek membership in the Union State of the Russian Federation and Belarus.⁴³ This scenario is to be realized by the person of Mr. Inal Ardzinba,⁴⁴ the new de facto Foreign Minister, sent to Abkhazia by the Kremlin.⁴⁵

Unlike Abkhazia, the SO is entirely reliant on Russia for its economic and political power, therefore in the current state of affairs it is only up to Russia to decide if and when the South Ossetia will be incorporated. The topic of joining South Ossetia with North Ossetia and thus the Russian Federation comes up on a regular basis. The first historic so-called independence referendum in 1992 assumed separation from Georgia and fusion with North Ossetia in due course. These declarations were reiterated by the new de facto President in 2012. Since then, the de facto authorities of the separatist republic have regularly: in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 - urged Russia to join it. In late March 2022 Anatoly Bibilov has announced acceleration of the legal actions⁴⁶ aimed at reunification with the "historical homeland" and promised to organize a referendum on accession to the Russian Federation. Although Bibilov

⁴⁰ Deen, Bob, Roggeveen Barbara, and Zweers Wouter, "An Ever Closer Union? An Ever Closer Union? Ramifications of Further Integration Between Belarus and Russia," *Clingendael Netherlands Institute of International Relations* 2021 (2021), accessed September 12, 2021, <https://www.clingendael.org/pub/2021/an-ever-closer-union/>.

⁴¹ АБХАЗИЯ-ЦЕНТР, "Заявление Председателя Комитета Госдумы," accessed May 12, 2022, https://t.me/abkhazia_center/7528.

⁴² Апсныпресс, "Асида Шакрыл: Только Будучи Свободной, Независимой, Демократической Страной, Абхазия Сможет Остаться На Карте Мира," *АПСНЬПРЕСС*, April 1, 2022, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://apsnypress.info/ru/item/7376-asida-shakryl-tolko-buduchi-svobodnoj-nezavisimoj-demokraticeskoj-stranoj-abkhaziya-smozhet-ostatsya-na-karte-mira>.

⁴³ Civil.ge, "Abkhaz Opposition Leader Wants Union State with Russia, Belarus," accessed May 12, 2022, <https://civil.ge/archives/483438>.

⁴⁴ Апсны Адэныкатэи Аускэа Рминистрра, "Инал Арзынба «Соловьев Live» Аефир Ачы Владимир Соловьев Аинтервиу Иитеит," accessed May 5, 2022, http://mfaapsny.org/allnews/news/statements_speeches/glava-mid-abkhazii-inal-ardzinba-dal-intervyu-vladimiru-solovevu-v-pryamom-efire-solovev-live/.

⁴⁵ Шария, Виталий, "Назначение Инала Ардзинба: «МИД» Пишем, «Президентские Выборы» В Уме?," *Назначение Инала Ардзинба: «МИД» пишем, «президентские выборы» в уме?*, November 18, 2021, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://www.ekhokavkaza.com/a/31568100.html>.

⁴⁶ TASS, "South Ossetia to Take Legal Steps Soon for Joining Russia — President Bibilov," March 30, 2022, accessed May 12, 2022, https://tass.com/politics/1429945?utm_source=google.com&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=google.com&utm_referrer=google.com.

lost the elections, the new de facto President maintained that position. Yet, he suggested that the referendum would be organized “as soon as the right time comes” and “when Russia gives the appropriate sign.”⁴⁷

The two breakaway republics are a negotiating ticket for the Kremlin providing it with numerous forms of political influence over Georgia. Therefore, from the Russian perspective, the integration of these territories to Russia would not be advantageous as it would entail the loss of control over Georgia, carrying further international legal consequences. Nonetheless, taking into consideration the unification policy that has been carried over for years, and the strategic location of these two republics, as well as the failures suffered by Russia in the Ukrainian theater, it should not be excluded that in order to preserve the superpower perception of Russia among its citizens, the Kremlin may move to the scenario of “re-establishing Soviet Union 2.0.” Although strategically unjustified, such a possibility cannot be excluded. Especially since both republics, apart from their strategic location, have much to offer. The Lopanistskali Gorge, being part of the disputed area of TAT and SO is rich with mineral resources, especially talc, talc-schist, serpentinite, nickel, marble, and nephritis.⁴⁸ Abkhazia has fertile lands, coal and oil resources, while the village of Aibgha (recently quietly annexed⁴⁹ by Russia), located on the Abkhazian-Russian border, can offer minerals and a unique black marble deposit in Asia, one of the two richest deposits in the world. From this perspective, the potential for their incorporation seems both politically and economically justified.

Conclusions

The Russian decisions until now have indicated the creation of bridgeheads, which were strategic points of the Russian sphere of influence, and constituted a form of pressure on the states whose territories are de facto under its control. Historically, Russia has repeatedly deployed its forces in the Near Abroad states involved in armed conflicts in order to maintain its influence once the active phase of the conflict is over. In majority of cases, Moscow maintained those positions as a part of the peace-making strategy,⁵⁰ while blocking their pro-Western aspirations.

A consequence of the war over Transnistria is the permanent presence of Russian troops on territories legally owned by Moldova. In the 1990s and then after 2008, the permanent presence of the Russian Federation armed forces has also been maintained in the breakaway republics of Georgia.

The war in Georgia has taught the Russian Federation a lot. Whilst the Russian army defeated the Georgian army in only five days, it was not without a number of failures, which were quickly corrected with the announcement of the command system transformation in 2010. Ron Asmus stated that the Kremlin’s aggression in Georgia has ended the post-Cold War

⁴⁷ Кавказский Узел, “Gagloev: Not Right Time for Referendum on Joining Russia,” accessed May 12, 2022, <https://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/59086/>.

⁴⁸ Zurabashvili, Tornike, “Tselisi-Chorchana Crisis: Facts, Details And Chronology #”

⁴⁹ https://europeanvalues.cz/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Russian_and_Chinese_influences_in_Georgia-2021_update.pdf

⁵⁰ Jonson, Lena and Archer, Clive, *Peacekeeping and the Role of Russia in Eurasia* (London: Routledge, 2021).

security architecture.⁵¹ Naturally, the methods used in the conflict with Georgia were not only adapted but also perfected, being successfully implemented in the Ukrainian front. Thanks to the Georgian lessons learned, the annexation of Crimea and operations in the Eastern Ukraine (July-September 2014) were carried out in an efficient manner. In 2018 Ukrainian diplomat and politician, Andrii Bohdanovych Deshchytisia alerted that the Kremlin's exposed aggressive policy was very likely to continue, and the world should be prepared for it. Four years later, a full-scale aggression launched once again by the Russian Federation arrived to Europe.

The developments of the Russian-Georgian war, particularly the form of a blitzkrieg used to attack Georgia, the borderization of its occupied territories with no consequences from the international community, and Russia's return to the principle of "business as usual" with Georgia⁵² and the rest of the world during the territorial dispute, made Russia believe that the direction undertaken was right. Georgia found itself in an existential dilemma between maintaining a pro-Western course and its economic cooperation with Russia. Although in the society the threat perceptions and the wish for a closer relation with NATO and the EU had grown, the Georgian Dream government renewed economic cooperation with Russia. In the brief time since, a return to the strategy of pursuing forceful solutions as the only effective form of interaction with the West has been implemented by the Russian Federation.⁵³ Russia has tightened its grip on the "Near Abroad," dangerously approaching NATO's eastern flank, including making bold demands on the so-called security guarantees in December 2021.⁵⁴ It is not unreasonable to argue that the West's long-standing lack of firm reaction to Georgia's borderization - a de jure violation of the internationally recognized Six Point Ceasefire Agreement⁵⁵ - has given Russia a sense of moral right to interfere in the internal and external politics of the buffer states, and cemented its stance. This resulted in the subsequent aggression against Ukraine, military intervention in Kazakhstan, the deployment of the so-called peacekeeping forces in the Nagorno-Karabakh area, and most recently: plans to recognize Transnistria and invade Moldova.⁵⁶

As a consequence of the failure to take a rational approach towards Russia and to react adequately to the Russian policy in Georgia after 2008, we are now witnessing a much more complex situation, in which Russia considers the war with Ukraine as a de facto competition

⁵¹ Asmus, Ronald, *A Little War That Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West*, 1. ed., 1. publ (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2014), <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy1001/2009037705-b.html>.

⁵² Sinikukka, Saari, "Georgia's Search for the Third Way: Despite a Westward Pull, Georgia Attempts to Improve Its Relations with Russia," *The Finnish Institute of International Affairs*, FIIA Briefing Paper 157 (2014).

⁵³ Карпунин, Сергей, "Гарантии Безопасности Нужны Немедленно. Что Путин Говорил о Внешней Политике," *TASS*, December 23, 2021, accessed May 5, 2022, <https://tass.ru/politika/13284101>.

⁵⁴ Kramer, Andrew and Erlanger, Steven, "Russia Lays Out Demands for a Sweeping New Security Deal with NATO," *The New York Times*, December 17, 2021, accessed May 5, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/17/world/europe/russia-nato-security-deal.html>.

⁵⁵ U.S. M. Osce, "On Concerns over "Borderization" of Conflicts in Georgia," *U.S. Mission to the OSCE*, July 13, 2017, accessed May 6, 2022, <https://osce.usmission.gov/on-concerns-over-borderization-of-conflicts-in-georgia/>.

⁵⁶ Świerczyński, Marek, "Po Co Putinowi Nowy Front? Świat Patrzy Teraz Na Naddniestrze i Mołdawię," *Polityka*, May 6, 2022, accessed May 11, 2022, <https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/swiat/2164471,1,po-co-putinowi-nowy-front-swiat-patrzy-teraz-na-naddniestrze-i-moldawie.read>.

for a sphere of influence between Russia and NATO⁵⁷ in the area known as the “Near Abroad,” rather than a war between two subjects of the international law.⁵⁸

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⁵⁷ Метцель, Михаил, “НАТО “У Порога Нашего Дома”. С Какими Вызовами Столкнулся Путин в 2021 Году,” *ТАСС*, December 24, 2021, accessed May 5, 2022, <https://tass.ru/politika/13285939>.

⁵⁸ Starchak, Maxim, “Strategic Parity: Why “American” Arms Control Is Not Interested in Russia,” *Security Insights*, no. 71/2022, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/security-insights/strategic-parity-why-american-arms-control-not-interested-russia>.

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