TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

A **PONARS** EURASIA WORKSHOP

About the Eurasian Strategy Project and PONARS Eurasia

The geopolitical space of Eurasia and the security challenges that arise within it require strategic thinking, as well as specific regional expertise and insight. As we approach the passage of two decades since the end of the Cold War and breakup of the USSR, it becomes apparent how the Eurasian continent is a dynamic space which must be conceptualized, understood, and engaged wisely. The Eurasian Strategy Project places the states of Central Asia, the Caucasus, Eastern Europe, and Russia in the context of their development as part of the entire Eurasian landmass. The project aims to look at issues that are truly Eurasian in scope, and to bring attention to the insights and understanding we can have only by thinking of the region as a linked and interrelated whole.

In particular, through publications, conferences, and meetings, the Eurasian Strategy Project seeks to promote structured interaction between academic, think-tank, and U.S. policy communities. The current core of the project is PONARS Eurasia, the Program on New Approaches to Research and Security in Eurasia, an international network of over 60 social scientists that seeks to promote scholarly work and policy engagement on transnational and cross-border issues, as well as comparative political and public policy topics, within the Eurasian space. The project also convenes meetings with a cohort of former U.S. policymakers and analysts to identify key developments and vital unknowns in Eurasia that will have a significant impact on U.S. national interests in the coming decade. These meetings seek to develop specific policy analysis and strategies for currently serving U.S. policymakers and analysts, and to serve as a nonpartisan expert forum for critically assessing U.S. policy in Eurasia.

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THE BLACK SEA REGION IN RUSSIA'S CURRENT FOREIGN POLICY PARADIGM

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 41

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In the two decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia's vision and policy toward the Black Sea region (BSR) has gone through at least four stages:

- The "initial phase:" 1991 (or even 1988) – 1994, characterized by the emergence of armed ethnic conflicts, their "freezing," and the establishment of a new post-Soviet status quo;

- The "Chechen" phase: 1995 – 2002, when Russia mainly viewed the situation in the BSR through the prism of the Chechen war;

- The "recovery" period: 2003 – 2008, when Russia began acting along several dimensions. Though loosely connected in practice, these activities were marked early on as a high priority in Russia's strategy. As early as September 2003, then Russian President Vladimir Putin referred to the Azov-Black Sea region as a zone of Russia's "strategic interests." He stressed that the Black Sea provides Russia with a direct exit to its most important transport routes, and thus that an effective security system is needed for the region;

- New active regional strategy phase: August 2008 - present, beginning with the five-day war in the Caucasus.

A new BSR strategy closely coincides with the main characteristics of Russian foreign policy: it is very assertive, based on principles of *realpolitik*, and clearly geo-economically

and geopolitically motivated. More than any other dimension of Russian foreign policy, the BSR strategy is geographically-based and viewed as a strictly regional project, although it possesses global aspects and provides Russia with global options.

Underpinning this strategy is the notion that Russia has more rights than the United States or the European Union to play a leading role (or perhaps a shared leadership role with Turkey) in the BSR for a number of historical, geographic, military, economic, and political reasons. The paradox of the situation is that in the West, Russia, in spite of being one of six Black Sea littoral states, is predominantly perceived of as an outside power. In truth, Russia has not only its finger but its whole arm in this regional "cake."

Russia's position in the region can perhaps be best defined by the title of an old Soviet cult classic: "One's own among strangers – a stranger among one's own" (*svoy sredi chuzhikh – chuzhoi sredi svoikh*). A *regional-focused, interest-based,* and *regional-valued* vision marks the key difference between the Russian approach and Western (i.e. U.S. or EU) ones, in which the BSR is predominantly viewed through an *instrumental* lens as a means of achieving goals in either *other regions* (the Middle East, Central Asia) or *globally* (energy security, democratization, and market economic expansion).

Indeed, the BSR can be seen as a testing ground for two dominant contemporary developmental trends: *regionalization* and *globalization*. The five-day Georgia-Russia war strengthened Russia's position in the BSR, while the new postwar regional political context has provided Russia with unprecedented levers in it. These levers can be used either to stabilize and develop the region or to transform it into another arena of geopolitical competition, part of a zero-sum game between Russia and the West. The BSR thus stands to become either the grounds for a regional partnership (including elements of peace enforcement, as needed) or competition between non-regional forces. In the current situation, both scenarios are equally realistic.

Russia's Interests and the Structure of the BSR

Russia's current vision of the BSR, its institutions and preferential partners, depends on the interests Russia perceives.

From a *military-security* perspective, Russia proclaims that its main interest is in keeping the Black Sea a peaceful and stable area with an open and direct exit to the Mediterranean and Atlantic Ocean. In other words, for now and the foreseeable future, Russia is interested in preserving the status quo. Indeed, for the last five years, Moscow has demonstrated its cooperative intent in the framework of the "Black Sea Harmony" and "Active Endeavour" military exercises with other Black Sea states and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

At the same time, a number of events before and during the five day war demonstrated the *military* threats to Russia's interests that exist in the BSR:

- Turkey's decision to allow U.S. ships to pass through the Dardanelles to support Georgia brings into question one of the oldest BSR agreements, the 1936 Montreaux Convention restricting naval traffic of non-Black Sea nations;

- The Russian-Ukrainian dispute over the Strait of Kerch concerns the same risk, i.e.

that Russian vessels will not be allowed to travel from the Sea of Azov to the Black Sea;

- The expansion and utilization of military bases by the United States in Romania and Bulgaria was perceived by Russia as an exploitation of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty and a violation of the Russia-NATO agreements of 2002;

- The Russian-Ukrainian Treaty on the Black Sea Fleet, due to expire in 2017, is another headache for Moscow. A number of authoritative Russian admirals consider the new Russian naval base under construction in Novorossiysk as militarily unsuitable for a number of meteorological and geographic reasons;

- Finally, Russia remains one of the three – and in the long-term, potentially only – non-NATO country in the region. From a military-political point of view, Russia perceives NATO, Ukraine, and Georgia as actors who aim to change the status quo.

Thus, in the military-political sphere, the BSR covers a large part of the space and nomenclature of Russian-Western relations, including Russia-NATO and Russia-EU relations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the United Nations.

Meanwhile, from the perspective of Russia's *acute security domain* (focusing on regional conflicts and regional instability, including in the North Caucasus), the Russian view of the BSR is currently limited to the three South Caucasian states (as well as the two newly-recognized republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia) and Turkey. Russia does not view the participation of outside powers as necessary, but recognizes that some of them can be beneficial (the EU) or inevitable (the OSCE or UN), while some are highly undesirable (NATO and the United States). Russia would strongly prefer a narrow and strictly regional-based security format.

Turkey's more-or-less independent policy line makes it a potential partner for Russia in the BSR. Following the election of a pro-Islamic political party in 2002, the country formulated a new national security strategy supposedly more independent from the United States. This policy trajectory was highlighted by the country's 2003 rejection of American requests for support during the invasion of Iraq.

While Turkey has its own vested interests in the region, the basic commonality between Russia and Turkey is that both countries share a regional military-security posture toward the BSR. This approach is apparent in Ankara and Moscow's views of the frozen conflicts (i.e., Nagorno Karabakh) and other high-conflict potential areas, such as Iran. For the time being, Turkey prefers to maintain the status quo in the BSR. As a result, there is no doubt that Russia fully supported the Peace and Stability Pact that Turkey proposed for the region immediately after the war.

The promptness with which Ankara put forward its Peace and Stability Pact—visits to Baku and Tbilisi, outstanding steps towards achieving a rapprochement with Yerevan—resemble in a fashion Moscow's reaction to the tragic events of September 11, 2001. One may come to the conclusion that Turkey sees the situation after August 8, 2008 as a unique opportunity to restore its position as a regional power – particularly as a peacemaker and

mediator – in the BSR. Ankara's dividends, if it succeeds, are obvious:

- Gaining more regional weight while obtaining more leverage in its dialogue with Washington, which is not happy with Turkey's independent position on many acute issues including Iraq and Iran, and Brussels, which is not ready to accept Turkey as a member of the EU in the foreseeable future;

- Directly and indirectly, Turkey's strengthening in the region makes it a highly desirable counterweight to Russia for the three South Caucasus states in the BSR;

- Cooperation with Russia may decrease the level of competition in the energy sector by finding commonly acceptable solutions and in this way help Turkey at least partly realize its ambitions of becoming an energy hub for Europe (thereby also increasing its chances for EU membership).

Pros and Cons for the West

An analysis of the postwar situation paradoxically does not yield entirely pessimistic results. The initial reactions of key world players (the EU, NATO, and leading European powers) to Russia's military (re)action in the Caucasus and recognition of the two republics were rather moderate and toothless, surprisingly so for Moscow which expected far worse. By December, the EU had restarted negotiations on a new cooperation agreement with Russia, NATO suggested a return to "business as usual" mutual activities, and Ukraine and Georgia did not receive NATO Membership Action Plans (MAPs).

At the same time, Russia welcomed the prompt intervention of the EU—or rather of French President Nicolas Sarkozy. This was due to the simple fact that it came from the EU, rather than NATO or the United States. To Russia, the EU is a valid political actor, counterbalancing the United States, and in general a very desirable one for its foreign policy strategy. As a result, Moscow has agreed *de facto* to the internationalization of peacekeeping in the region, which it resisted for years. The key element of a 2007 plan elaborated by EU Special Representative in the South Caucasus Peter Semneby – the allocation of EU observers and peacekeepers in Abkhazia and South Ossetia – has to a degree been implemented: the EU now monitors their borders. In the same sense, Turkey's initiative works: it makes peace, stability, and conflict regulation in the region a *common matter*.

In a situation when neither NATO nor the EU has a coherent strategy for the region, and regional states outside these institutions remain far from meeting the criteria to join, balanced regional efforts (such as Russia-Turkey) supported by the West may lead to the stabilization and Europeanization of the BSR. Such a strategy has already yielded positive results: there were direct talks for the first time in many years between the Azerbaijani and Armenian presidents, as well as Armenian-Turkish contacts at the highest level.

Another positive consequence of the new regional strategy may become a reality if the incoming U.S. administration changes its present posture toward Iran and engages in dialogue. This course is supported not only by Russia and Turkey, but also by leading European powers and U.S. allies. Engagement with Teheran could lead to cooperation on both a regional and wider scale. Apart from security and stability dividends, it could also

serve the EU's goal to diversify energy sources and transit routes. Russia, in turn, will make up for losing some of its control over Europe's energy supply by developing nuclear energy projects and by gaining geopolitical influence in the BSR and in the Middle East.

For Russia – in a paradoxical way – cooperation in a very difficult and partly hostile BSR can put an end to its current situation of "strategic loneliness."

TOWARDS A STRATEGIC RESPITE IN THE BLACK SEA AREA

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December 2008

Introduction

In this brief paper I will try to analyze whether the Black Sea may acquire a meaningful place in the international relations of Eurasia. While there are very few reasons to treat the Black Sea region as a promising construct in an economic, strategic, or ideational sense, the notion of Black Sea regionalization has had the capacity to attract a significant amount of attention from both U.S. and local policymakers, due to a coincidence of short-term interests related to the creation of a zone of stability bordering Russia, Central Asia, and the Middle East. Moreover, given the virtual absence of serious revisionism over the status quo, virtually all great and small actors around the Black Sea are interested in what I would call a "strategic respite." This gives the region a chance to become a hub for short-term regional cooperation.

The Black Sea as a Region – Pros and Cons of Cooperation

It is very difficult to argue that the Black Sea region is likely to reach an advanced level of international cooperation. There may be some grounds for optimism in terms of regional trade, but there are also significant barriers to such cooperation. In the first place, there is no hegemonic power that is ready to provide the public good necessary for creating the structures of cooperation.

Second, there is very little shared cultural or ideological basis upon which to build such structures. Third, major regional states are looking elsewhere for the purposes of economic integration, mostly towards the European Union, but not necessarily towards each other. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, regional states are preoccupied with mitigating different security threats in order to create meaningful long-term cooperative structures for enhancing their respective national securities.

These predicaments are compounded by the absence of any cooperative institutional structures that would buttress their interaction. The only existing arrangement, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), is too widely stretched and diverse to effectively manage regional cooperation. Not only are multilateral institutions absent or largely ineffective, critical bilateral relations are also in disarray: Russian-Ukrainian and, particularly, Russian-Georgian relations are worsening. Also, Turkey's strategic cooperation with Georgia (and the United States) is under strain in the wake of the Russian invasion of Georgia in August 2008.

Despite the lack of obvious imperatives for regional cooperation, the Black Sea region may become a hub of cooperative regional interaction in the short-term, based on an increased need for stability and regional predictability by states in the region. Moreover, the United States may use the notion of regional cooperation to restore its regional standing in the Middle East and the southern tier of the former Soviet Union (the Caucasus and Central Asia). The confluence of these rationales for creating a cooperative environment around the Black Sea may lead the United States and regional states to increase efforts at enhancing bilateral and multilateral ties across the Black Sea.

U.S. Policy in the Region: Regaining Hegemony Through Multilateralism

During U.S. President George W. Bush's last term in office, a largely rhetorical policy of democracy promotion replaced the emphasis on energy transportation prevalent under Bill Clinton. The next administration is likely to encounter numerous challenges in the Caucasus and Central Asia, including declining security cooperation with Russia, further backsliding on democracy in local states, the deterioration of the security environment in Central Asia following mounting difficulties in Afghanistan, the erosion of the U.S. strategic partnership with Turkey, and the weakening of the most trusted U.S. partners – Ukraine and Georgia.

Thus, the next U.S. administration is likely to inherit a challenging environment for U.S. interests, as well as no coherent policy towards the Caucasus and Central Asia. Under conditions of scarce resources, the new president will face a dilemma of either continuing efforts of expanding American

influence further into Central Asia in search of energy security or consolidating existing relations with key regional allies and partners around the Black Sea. If the next U.S. administration chooses the latter, it may consider revitalizing relations with Turkey and further strengthening Ukraine and Georgia as strategic partners in the region, thus consolidating the base for future expansion into Central Asia. For this purpose, the provision of more regional hegemony (even if under conditions of scarce resources) may be a worthwhile decision.

More broadly, it is likely that the United States will adopt a more multilateral approach in its foreign relations, including the Black Sea area. Recent turbulence in U.S. bilateral ties with regional states (most prominently Turkey and Russia) constrains U.S. capabilities to carry out any more ambitious plans in either the Middle East or Central Asia. The Black Sea region seems to be a natural point of departure for rebuilding multilateralism.

Rationales for Cooperation for the Regional States – Stability and Predictability

Besides the United States, regional states are also interested in at least short-term stability around the Black Sea. Russia has been doubly hit by international ostracism and the recent financial crisis, after which it may need to recover its international standing as well as seek other avenues of international cooperation. Enhanced cooperation in the Black Sea would dispel some of the fears about Russia, as the region involves the most volatile Russian neighbors (Ukraine and Georgia), as well as Russia's major partners (the EU and Turkey). Moreover, the failure of the color revolutions to spread must have produced a cooling effect for Moscow and shifted its attention to less "zero-sum" areas of interaction with the West than ideological battles (such as economic relations or even regional security cooperation).

Turkey's foreign relations have been strained by recent U.S.-Russia and EU-Russia controversies, as well as the crisis in Georgia. The restoration of some form of cooperation in the Black Sea, involving Russia, the United States, and the EU, would bring the traditional Turkish policy of simultaneously engaging different and disparate actors to its desired equilibrium.

Ukraine and Georgia, in the absence of a clear time horizon for membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, are looking for new international structures that would, on the one hand, make Russia a bit more predictable and, on the other hand, would enhance these countries' prospects of integration within Western economic and security structures. The Black Sea dialogue may provide an alternative for immediate NATO membership and help Ukraine to manage its imminent crisis with Russia over the status of the Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol. For Georgia, in the absence of ideological commitments from the United States and strategic disregard from the EU, the Black Sea remains the only

viable way of promoting a "pro-Western" foreign policy.

Bulgaria and Romania may benefit from new cooperation in the Black Sea as this would give them a new transit function linking Europe to the wider Central Asia, especially considering the distant but still credible prospect of gas pipelines running from Central Asia to the EU. As for the broader EU, Black Sea cooperation would add to the existing network of multiple regional agreements to safeguard European energy and security interests.

A Way Out of Georgia's Strategic Predicament

Russian military intervention in the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia has highlighted the fact that these formerly "frozen conflicts" are *de facto* Russian-Georgian conflict areas. This recognition indicates an urgent need for both countries to settle their recently tumultuous relationship on the basis of an enduring security pact, guaranteed by third parties.

Much like the beginning of the Cold War 60 years ago, it is now commonly assumed that recent Russian assertiveness toward the post-Soviet space reflects the Kremlin's decision to regain control of its lost areas of influence. In fact, Russian politicians may be motivated by their own perceived security concerns, namely: (1) the stability of Putin's regime, and (2) the resurgence of militant separatism in the North Caucasus and elsewhere, threatening, again, Putin's grip on power.

Both of these threats, as perceived by ruling circles in Moscow, have been directly related to Georgia as a revolutionary pro-Western country bordering the North Caucasus that proved to be an awkward partner in Putin's war in Chechnya. It is also evident that the Kremlin sees NATO and the United States as prime potential troublemakers, who operate from behind Georgia.

What can be done to address Russian fears and insecurities and, at the same time, contribute to Georgian security as well as the peaceful resolution of conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia? A potential Russian engagement in the Black Sea security dialogue could create a forum for establishing a Russian-Georgian security pact, backed by the United States, regional countries, and, potentially, the EU.

Such a pact could alleviate fears on both sides. It would guarantee (1) Georgian independence and sovereignty; (2) the stability of the Russian North Caucasus; (3) definition of the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the peaceful and secure return of refugees (under international guarantees). The United States, Turkey, and European states could become the guarantors of this security pact, restraining both Georgia and Russia from repeating the August 2008 scenario. Possible legal guarantees of the pact may range from the potential neutrality of Georgia to international peacekeeping in conflict areas.

It is the right time for the Georgian leadership to realize there is no escape from their country's regional security predicament. What creates both short- and long-term security threats to Georgia is the actual and potential instability on the northern and southern slopes of the Caucasus. Rather than trying to extract itself from its regional setting by joining elusive European and transatlantic structures, Georgia's policies should be directed toward cooperative efforts with Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia, with the involvement of outside powers, to prevent the spillover effects of ethnopolitical conflicts in the region.

Despite numerous efforts to create such a regional security arrangement, none has yet to emerge. The obvious reasons behind this failure have been the absence of a single regional hegemon and of common threats and resources, as well as the difficulty of bringing all disparate and contradictory issues into a single overarching solution. However, the potential multilateral Black Sea security dialogue, with most interested parties involved and a focus on a Russian-Georgian security pact, could give a plausible start to security management on a wider regional level.

Conclusion: Assessing the Prospects of Black Sea Regional Cooperation

The convergence of short-term interests between the United States and the Black Sea littoral states for promoting regional stability may compensate for the absence of institutional structures and immediate economic incentives. The objectives of security, energy, and stability through democratization may bring most of the regional states to the same table, at least until the next round of regional competition takes off. The Black Sea region may become a hub of stability by default, providing a buffer between the Middle East, Europe, and Russia, with the consented hegemony of the United States, in conjunction with the EU and NATO. It is unlikely that such cooperation will resolve some of the most pressing problems of the region, such as the conflicts in Georgia or Turkey, but it may provide an institutionalized forum for discussion that would enhance predictability, which remains a serious challenge for all regional states. The Black Sea has not yet formed into a security complex, which leaves opportunities for constructing a security community in this area.

SECURITIZATION AND IDENTITY

THE BLACK SEA REGION AS A "CONFLICT FORMATION"

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 43

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In the 1990s, many studies of regions at Europe's margins were grounded in a "New Regionalism" approach. This approach focused on a type of intra-regional relations, in which security ranked much lower than economics, environment, communication, or technology. In the Baltic, Nordic, and Barents regions, cooperation was strengthened through policies of conditionality, norms diffusion, and social learning. There were expectations that the most fruitful region-building experiences could be duplicated in other areas, including the Black Sea region (BSR). However, many factors have pushed the BSR in an opposite, much less peaceful, direction.

The BSR can most appropriately be viewed as a "security region." Regions of this type are based upon durable patterns of amity and enmity rooted within regional milieu. Members of security regions may jointly securitize an external power or a specific threat, or they may securitize each other as an indispensable element of their intersubjective (that is, linked to each other) identities. In the BSR, this seems to be the case, in the sense that the countries belonging to it may not be able to construct their particular identities without resorting to constant – even highly conflictual – references to neighboring countries' policies. For example, there is no way to describe Russian identity without pointing to such emblematic regions as Crimea, and Sevastopol in particular; in the same way, it is unthinkable for Georgia to speak about its identity without the narratives of Abkhazia or South Ossetia. One may claim that Ukraine raises identity issues for Russia, and vice versa; the same is true for Armenia and Azerbaijan. It is these rivalries that turn the BSR into what Ole Waever and Barry Buzan have

dubbed a "conflict formation."

The elevation of security to the top of the BSR agenda comes as a projection of political logics, since the major developments in the region are driven by security decisions that are deeply political. The acceptance or rejection of Turkey's European Union application, as well as of Ukraine's and Georgia's applications to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, are certainly political actions, as they imply answers to where the borders of Europe (and the Euro-Atlantic security space) lie and whether exceptional bargaining should be applicable to specific countries, including Russia.

Against this backdrop, two ways of conceptualizing the BSR from a security perspective may be singled out. First, the region might be viewed as one moving from a "conflict formation" to a set of bilateral security relations that have the potential to bind it together but have not yet achieved sufficient cross-linkage among units to do so. This interpretation is obviously optimistic; potentially it may come true only in the case of NATO expansion to Ukraine and Georgia, paralleled by Russia's closer contractual association with NATO within the "Partnership for Peace" program.

Alternatively – and far more realistically - the BSR may be seen as an area unable to become a security bridge between two competing spatial orders, Euro-Atlantic and Russian. The BSR represents a margin where the divisions between "EU-Europe" and the post-Soviet areas are neither final nor uncontested. It is an academic truism to speculate about the "fuzzy borders" of the EU, yet the contours of the Russian spatial order are also not that well fixed. The ambiguity stems from numerous nationalist voices in Russia questioning whether Crimea belongs to Ukraine, as well as from the existence of sizable communities of Russian citizens in Transdniestria, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia.

The concept of "overlay" – a situation in which great power interests come to heavily dominate a region – may be helpful in this situation. Some Russian experts admit that most of the current problems in the BSR are regional projections of more fundamental differences in Russia's relations with its major Western partners. This explains why all activities of the EU and NATO in the BSR fuel geopolitical rivalries. The BSR is considered in Moscow as a place where a "counter-coalition to Russia" is being formed, which if successful, might lift Ukraine to the status of a regional power and, conversely, drag Russia down from the level of a great power to that of a regional power. Under this scenario, the idea advocated by some Russian intellectuals of a Moscow-led "second/non-Western Europe" (which would include Russia along with Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, and even some Balkan countries) is doomed to failure.

How can Russia's policies be understood from the vantage point of the "security region" concept? First, Russia securitizes all attempts to treat it as an anomalous country. Russia's key security problem is the threat of marginalization stemming from a lack of due respect and recognition. Russia's place in "international society," Moscow feels, is questioned or contested by many governments in the West. Moreover, how the borders of this "international society" are drawn, and the roles within it distributed, is of primordial importance for Russia's positioning in adjacent regions. The Kremlin fears it will be excluded from the formation of an international security order on the basis of

Russia's alleged failure to meet Western standards of democracy. This explains the reasons behind Russia's multiple attempts to draw the attention of Western leaders to the allegedly undemocratic nature of the Ukrainian and Georgian political regimes.

Second, NATO enlargement is perceived as one of the major threats to Russia's security. Within the BSR this type of securitization leads to serious problems in Russia's relations with Ukraine and Georgia. Russia uses NATO as one of the most important reference points in the mental construction of the "unfriendly West" and, therefore, puts it in a highly negative discursive framework. Securitization achieved momentum with Vladimir Putin's statement that Russian missiles might be re-targeted to Ukrainian territory should Ukraine join NATO. In fact, Putin's provocative statement was a reverberation of an existing anti-Ukrainian platform developed by one of the leading voices of Russian conservative nationalism, Yegor Kholmogorov. He has advocated the pursuit of a policy of "pragmatic irredentism" (meaning that Moscow should have an upper hand in supporting the political claims of Russian-speaking communities in neighboring states), the treatment of Ukraine as a country with "secondary" or artificial statehood, and a recognition of the "technical" (that is, temporary and conventional) nature of Russia's interstate borders with bordering countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). This type of reaction could be explained to a significant extent by the feeling of traumatic defeat that Russia suffered during the "color revolutions" a few years ago.

Ukraine's NATO application only strengthened the securitizing moves undertaken by Moscow. For example, first vice premier Sergei Ivanov predicted that in a few years Ukraine will introduce a visa regime between the two states, a perspective that runs against Russian expectations. In the meantime, Russia's representative to NATO, Dmitry Rogozin, put Crimea, together with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, in a group of territories that will not compromise on NATO accession and will pursue pro-Russian policies.

Third, the Georgia – Ukraine linkage is perceived by Russia in an ostensibly security-related context. In official media, Ukraine in August 2008 was portrayed as a country led by overt sympathizers of the Saakashvili regime who sell arms to Tbilisi and prevent the Russian fleet from operating in the Black Sea. The findings of a Ukrainian parliamentary commission which established that a number of Ukrainian nationals were involved in Georgia's attack on South Ossetia were met in Russia as proof of the close connections between Kyiv and Tbilisi.

Fourth, when dealing with BSR countries, Russia places a number of identity-related issues in a security context. The Kremlin has repeatedly claimed that the Russian language is discriminated against in Ukraine, and that its political elites are willing to rewrite the history of the Second World War. In particular, the attempt of the Ukrainian government to equate the *Holodomor* – the mass starvation of the 1930s – with genocide aimed specifically at the Ukrainian population has been harshly rebuffed by the Kremlin. Moscow presumes that criticism of Stalinism automatically translates into lambasting and challenging Russia today. Even more significantly, the proponents of the *Holodomor* concept have been said to represent a "new type of Nazism" in today's

Europe (by Gleb Pavlovsky, one of the Kremlin spin doctors). The security implication of such logic is clear.

Fifth, the entire spectrum of border-related issues is tackled through a security prism. Examples include Russian claims that Georgia turned a blind eye to the infiltration of Chechen terrorists to the Pankisi Gorge and Russia's unexpected attempt to build a sea dike to the small island of Tuzla that provoked conflict with Ukraine. Arguably, Moscow plays a double game in this respect: on the one hand, it shows readiness to fortify its own borders, while on the other hand, it interprets all European recommendations to impose stricter regulations on the border regime between Ukraine and Russia as unfriendly and provocative, precisely because of their divisive effects.

Sixth, alleged encroachments on Russia's economic interests are also seen from a security perspective. States like Georgia and Moldova have been portrayed as sources of low-quality products that are presumably below Russian food standards, while Ukraine is treated as a threat to Russian economic security because of its non-payments for Russian gas, on the one hand, and participation in constructing new energy transportation routes that bypass Russia (including the Odessa–Brody pipeline), on the other.

At the same time, it is precisely along these lines that Russia itself is securitized by some of the BSR countries. Russia's attempts to present itself as a "normal power" are frequently equated with resurgent Russian imperialism; Russia's resistance to NATO's eastward enlargement is interpreted as a challenge to the independence of Georgia and Ukraine; Russia's demands for market prices for oil and gas are portrayed as politically motivated and retaliatory measures aimed at punishing neighboring countries for their more independent policies. This situation could be called "symmetric securitization": Russia faces alienation and securitization from part of the BSR nations and itself launches similar mechanisms against them.

Yet securitization is never complete since Russia is trying to simultaneously articulate two different arguments: all attempts to interpret the foreign policies of Ukraine and Georgia as threatening to Russia's interests are paralleled by repeated endeavors to discursively debilitate both countries. The "post-Orange" Ukraine is predominantly covered in the Russian media as an unstable and weak country, dependent upon the United States and thus unable to make "serious decisions." This peculiar portrayal of Ukraine runs against the logic of securitization, in a way. By the same token, the dominant securitization of the Saakashvili government is culturally constrained by multiple narratives portraying Russia and Georgia as historically linked by good-neighborly relations and sharing much in their religious and cultural identities. The security-based conceptualizations of the BSR, thus, do not entirely neglect de-securitization perspectives.

This peculiar combination of securitization and de-securitization in the BSR only complicates the search for a new Russian identity in the aftermath of the August 2008 war. Instead of providing a background for a new and more coherent understanding of the Russian mission in the so called "near abroad," the military conflict with Georgia has blurred identification lines and raised many new questions. The primary source of

Russia's inconsistency is its vacillation between two different types of foreign policy - normative and decisionist. The first option presupposes an adherence to clear rules of the game based upon international institutions and a unified interpretation of international law. In particular, the Russian representative to NATO has called for the establishment of an international tribunal (modeled after the one already existing in the Hague) to deal with ethnic cleansings in the South Caucasus. President Medvedev has not only called for "repairing" the existing European security architecture, ineffective in Russian eyes, but he has also criticized acceptance of the principle known as the "security dilemma" ("we are not supposed to build our security at the expense of others.") Within this framework, Russia must keep integrating into the existing structures of international society, however unfair or imperfect they might be. The second option is grounded in individual / sovereign acts of power, including issues of recognition and non-recognition, punishment, and assistance. By reiterating that what Russia did was grounded in its own opinions and assessments ("*For us*, the present Georgian regime has collapsed. President Saakashvili no longer exists *in our eyes*," Medvedev argues), or by claiming that Russia has "special relations" with states where its privileged interests lie, Medvedev adhered to a rather individualistic/unilateralist type of policymaking.

One may conclude that as a direct effect of the August 2008 war with Georgia, Russia has further complicated its identity-building endeavors. Postwar self-assertive Russia, under closer scrutiny, appears to be at a crossroads. The war against Georgia became a continuation of a highly mythologized method of identity making which requires both enemies and victors. Yet the reverse of this is a growing inconsistency in Russia's international identity.

BLACK SEA SECURITY AND THE RISING ROLE OF RELIGION

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 44

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The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), like any autocephalous church, has an exclusive territory of jurisdiction, but its canonical territory extends beyond Russia's state borders. Russian authorities would like to reinforce the position of the Moscow Patriarchate in the worldwide Christian community in general, and in the post-Soviet states in particular. To do so, it has to cooperate with authorities in Russia's neighboring states. Its efforts, however, have resulted in some differences of opinion, both within the Orthodox Church and between Orthodoxy and the Catholic Church, especially in Ukraine.

The Black Sea region is one of the most complicated areas of relationship between different Orthodox churches:

1) It is a region where the Russian Orthodox Church faces a problem of supremacy. Interests of different churches clash specifically in Ukraine and Moldova.

2) The Russian Orthodox Church plays a complicated political game in the region in order to protect its status in the Universal Orthodox Church.

The role of religious factors is on the rise in political processes in Russia and other post-Soviet states. This role is twofold. On the one hand, the activity of these churches as institutions might be considered a challenge to regional and national security. When religion artificially becomes a central issue of contention (either by the state or by another actor), it poses a potential threat to domestic and international order. When government and religious organizations are mixed in states with weak civil society institutions, there is a high risk that religious fundamentalism and/or authoritarianism will develop.

On the other hand, religion provides new opportunities and creates a new structural

environment for dealing with ethnic separatism, extremism, and terrorism in the region. We believe that the Black Sea region is unique as a region where religion has many possibilities to reinforce the ability of the state to bargain. The strongest religious actor in the region is the Orthodox Church. Important roles are also played by Muslims in the North Caucasus and Crimea, the Georgian Orthodox Church, the Armenian Apostolic Church, and the Greek Catholic (Uniate) Church in Ukraine.

Historical Background

Since 1991, the ROC's international activity has been guided by the formula of "several states but one patriarchate." The main priority for the ROC has been to maintain the unity of its canonical territory. After the collapse of the USSR, the ROC granted various degrees of independence to some local churches in the former Soviet states. Two exarchates were created in Belarus and Ukraine, and the Estonian, Latvian, and Moldovan churches were granted autonomy. Their new status allows these churches a certain freedom of activity limited by the basic rules established by the ROC. The most complicated situation is in Ukraine. In spite of wide privileges, the Ukrainian exarchate, a group of priests led by Kyiv metropolitan Filaret, has been struggling for autocephaly since 1991. In 1992, the Moscow Patriarchate refused to allow the status of the Ukrainian Church to be changed. After this, Filaret was expelled from the priesthood and, from the ROC's point of view, could no longer be considered an official party in negotiations.

As a result of secessionist tendencies, there are several independent Orthodox jurisdictions in Ukraine: the main ones are the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, under the Moscow Patriarchate (Metropolitan of Kyiv and All Ukraine Vladimir), and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under the Kyiv Patriarchate (Metropolitan Filaret has been its leader since 1995). Others include the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church established in 2000 in Kyiv and led by "Metropolitan" Mefodi; the Ukrainian Autocephalous ("renovated") Church, established in 2003 in Kharkiv and led by "archbishop" Igor; the Ukrainian Apostolic Orthodox Church, which has existed since 2002 in Kyiv and led by "archbishop" Luka; the Autocephalous Orthodox canonical Church, established in Kiev in 2005; and the Autonomous Orthodox *obschina* established in 1999 under the leadership of "Metropolitan" Petr.

Ukrainian authorities are interested in the unification of Ukrainian Orthodoxy and its independence from the Moscow Patriarchate. They consider a united Ukrainian Orthodox Church to be an instrument for integrating Ukraine with the West and a symbol of its independence from Russia. The ROC fears the duplication of the "Estonian Model" in Ukraine. Due to the support of the Constantinople Patriarchate, a canonical Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church was established and subsequently accepted as an autonomous church under the Constantinople Patriarchate's jurisdiction. Currently, there are thus two parallel patriarchates in Estonia.

Moldova is another site of rival Orthodox Churches in the post-Soviet space. There are two in Moldova: the Moscow Patriarchate, which is supported by Moldovan authorities, and the Metropolitan Church of Bessarabia, reestablished in 1992 and supported by the Romanian Patriarchate. Moldovan officials support the ROC due to its positive role and balanced attitude toward the "frozen conflict" in Transdniestria. According to some

experts, the ROC is the only institution that keeps the two parts of divided Moldova together. Indeed, Aleksei II, during a visit to Moldova, officially supported the principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the former Soviet states.

The Georgian Orthodox Church is bound to the Russian Orthodox Church by history. Patriarch Aleksei and Catholicos Ilia had good personal relations, and the two churches have traditionally emphasized their friendly relations. The Moscow Patriarchate values Catholicos Ilia's support of the Patriarchate's policies in Ukraine, Moldova, and Estonia. However, the Georgian government has several times accused the Moscow Patriarchate of interference inside Georgian canonical territory. In reality, the ROC conducts a very delicate policy in the region, refusing to extend its jurisdiction over the territory of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, even after Russia's official recognition of these two republics' independence in September. The ROC is more interested in receiving Ilia's support in negotiations with Constantinople Patriarchate Bartholomaios than it is in protecting its interests in Estonia, Moldova, and Ukraine. This suggests that the ROC can afford, or is allowed to have, its own foreign policy based on interests that do not always coincide with the official position of the state.

Historically, the ROC has had its most complicated relationship with the Catholic Church. Catholics first appeared in Russia in the sixteenth century, and after the division of Poland in the eighteenth century, 10 million Catholics became citizens of the Russian Empire. Today, there are 177,000 Catholics living in Russia. The Vatican is very active in the post-Soviet space, which worries the ROC. There are two main issues of disagreement between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church: dogmatic contradictions and proselytism. The ROC has never been involved in missionary activity in "foreign" territory (with the exception of old believers). The most complicated situation is in Ukraine. The Greek Catholic (Uniate) Church with strong links to the Vatican is a very active actor in Ukraine's domestic political life, and not only in the west.

The Church as a Political Instrument

In summer 2008, Ukraine celebrated the 1020th anniversary of the Baptism of Rus. Ukrainian political authorities tried to convince Patriarchate Aleksei to grant the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) autocephalous status. There are pros and cons to such a decision, both for Ukraine and Russia. In general, however, there are several risks. First, the Universal Orthodox Church might lose ground due to the generally weakened position of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Some experts predict that contradictions between the several existing churches in Ukraine will not be solved peacefully in this situation. As a result, the influence of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church might grow, and the Vatican's position in Ukraine would strengthen.

Second, the ROC worries about the involvement of the Constantinople Patriarchate. From the formal point of view, Patriarch Bartholomaios can grant autocephalous status to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. However, experts predict that this would have several negative consequences. First of all, the Constantinople Patriarchate does not have enough power and authority to interfere in the domestic affairs of Ukraine. It would create a power vacuum in the country. The Vatican could also easily broaden its influence in the region, simultaneously developing a dialog with the Constantinople Patriarchate.

As well, a policy aimed at increasing the influence of the Constantinople Patriarchate in Ukraine would stimulate negative reactions not only from the Moscow Patriarchate, but from other Orthodox Churches (for example, the Greek Orthodox and Romanian Orthodox) which are not interested in the weakening of Universal Orthodoxy.

Third, the creation of a new independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church under the current circumstances could stimulate a split in Ukrainian society due to the fact that a majority of the eastern and southern parts of the country are still oriented toward the Moscow Patriarchate. In this case, some experts do not exclude a scenario in which Ukraine is starkly divided into two Churches: Greek Catholic and Orthodox.

Fourth, Ukrainian authorities might face a struggle over property such as buildings, monasteries, and churches. Some monasteries and cathedrals that are sacred for all Orthodox are located in Ukraine (for instance, the Kyiv-Pechersky Monastery and the Sofia Cathedral) and could be sources of rival claims.

Conclusion

Unlike in secularized Europe, the Black Sea region is witnessing the rising role of religion. There is a need for a new definition of religiosity in order to understand the situation in this region. The governments of Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia use the Church as a political instrument. There is evidence that they want to see the Church as an ally in political games (both domestic and international). There is also a risk that rising religiosity here will increase inequalities and consequently cause counter-mobilization. It is thus necessary to avoid framing political and socioeconomic issues in terms of religious heritage. States, international organizations, and other nonreligious actors should stay out of the Churches' disagreements and let them overcome their disagreements themselves.

In the Black Sea region, Orthodox Churches lack the authority and mechanisms needed to influence outcomes by encouraging policymakers to adopt policies formed by their religious tenets and beliefs. This is the difference between these states and Western Europe and the United States. It is a well known fact that domestic evangelical groups work to convince the U.S. government through a mixture of soft and hard power to oppose funding for contraception and abortion internationally. The Russian Orthodox Church, like other Orthodox Churches in the region, does not seek to influence foreign policymakers in this manner, but this does not mean that policymakers do not seek to influence religious leaders. As a consequence, the Church is often used as a political instrument, which is very destructive. The security dimension of the rising role of religion in the region warrants additional investigation.

The future role of the Church as a political instrument is an actively discussed issue among experts after the death of the Patriarch Aleksei II. There are two views: either the Church should be absolutely independent from the state, or the state should more actively participate in religious life with the Church considered (to some extent) an instrument of state policy. The former patriarch was against state interference. The most influential candidate to be the new patriarch, Metropolitan Kirill, would follow Aleksei's tradition. At the same time, we should expect a rise in the activity of the ROC on the post-Soviet space.

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO BLACK SEA REGIONAL SECURITY

A UKRAINIAN PERSPECTIVE

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 45

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In August 2008, the Russian Federation demonstrated the will to exercise the concept of a "multipolar world" through military action. Most regional powers are unlikely to accept this concept, which in practice is based on the idea of spheres of influence (which Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has referred to as "privileged spheres of interests"). However, none of these powers, even those who are members of the European Union and/or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, are presently able to mobilize sufficient political, economic, and military resources to overcome the pressure of a Russian Federation seeking to impose its political will.

Ukraine, as one of the regional Black Sea powers, is extremely vulnerable to these new challenges. The "multipolar world" enforced through the Georgian war poses an obvious threat to the basic interests of Ukraine. Practically, this "multipolar world" means the sum of regional "unipolarities," based on the dominant power of "regional leaders" and accepted by others. Sovereign democratic Ukraine, as a rather weak state, is threatened by the possible success of this Russian-articulated "multipolar" model.

There are at least three competing alternatives of the new regional order in the Black Sea region:

1) The "multipolar world" model proposed by the Russian Federation and for which the Black Sea region serves as a "pilot project";

2) The Black Sea region as a Euro-Atlantic periphery;

3) Pluralistic heterogeneity as a temporary consensus.

The End of the "1991 World Order"

The "1991 world order" may be defined as the regional international system that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union. That order was based on the *de jure* recognition of borders, territorial integrity, and respect for basic principles of international law.

Despite certain deviations and conflicts that predated Soviet collapse, the basis of the peaceful Soviet "divorce" and formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was the transformation of the administrative borders between fifteen former Soviet republics into the international borders of newly independent states (NIS). Only former republics, not autonomies or other territories, enjoyed full-fledged independence and international recognition. This consensus was welcomed and legitimized by the international community.

The Russian-Georgian war, followed by Russia's *de facto* annexation of *de jure* Georgian territory, changed the basis of the international order which emerged in the post-Soviet space in 1991. Formal consensus, a milestone of stability and security in the western NIS, no longer exists. It was destroyed by the Russian Federation in August 2008.

Currently, the NIS do not have a common approach toward even the simplest question of how many Soviet successor states exist. For Russia, there are 17 (11 CIS + Georgia + 3 Baltic states + Abkhazia + South Ossetia). For everyone else, there are still 15. There are no mutually accepted criteria for recognizing new states. There is no consensus that the United Nations Security Council is the sole legitimate body authorized to sanction the use of force abroad (despite the fact that the official Russian foreign policy concept of June 2008 still incorporates this notion).

The crucial challenge of international order in eastern Europe after August 8, 2008, is connected to the need for achieving consensus on the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. What kind of consensus is possible, however? Some of the main elements of the international order Russia now offers represent a deepening conflict between Russian policies and the basic national interests of most of the neighboring NIS, including Ukraine.

The "Multipolar World" as a Challenge to Peace and Security: The Black Sea Region

The concept of a "multipolar world" has become a crucial element of Russian international politics and rhetoric. As seen from inside Russia's putative "backyard," a multipolar world really consists of regional "unipolar worlds" where domination by a regional leader is stronger than the theoretical dominance of a global power in a semi-mythical unipolar world. Such dominance is based upon a wide range of specific "humanitarian" elements: "common history" (including control over interpretations of history), common identity, language, religious institutions, and control over information space.

Translated to Russia's neighbors, the substance of the multipolar world is *de facto*

limited sovereignty. These "backyard" states can continue to rely on their existing borders and Russia's acceptance of them only if certain limits to their sovereignty are accepted.

In the Black Sea region, these limits include (based on recent experience):

1) *The securing of Russian "compatriot" humanitarian and political rights:* In the narrow sense, "compatriots" are Russian passport holders. In the broader sense, they are all those who identify themselves with the "Wider Russia" (or post-Soviet) cultural and social space. In practical terms, a friendly policy to Russian "compatriots" should include official status for the Russian language, Russian-language education, and a privileged position for the Russian Orthodox Church. National interpretations of history are acceptable only within the framework of a "common history" with Russia.

2) *Information policy*: openness of the national media market for Russian media and easier availability of state-controlled Russian TV channels.

3) *Coordination of foreign and security policy with Russia*: Countries in the region should either follow allied policy (the CIS Collective Security Treaty) or be neutral. Joining any other security alliance (such as NATO) will not be tolerated. The presence of Russian military bases in the region should be prolonged; any other permanent foreign military presence is unacceptable.

4) *Acknowledging Russia as the only country with the legitimate right to use force in emergency situations*: Regional peace enforcement, peace-building, and peacekeeping are the exclusive privileges of Russia. UN approval is not a necessary prerequisite for the regional use of force.

5) *Local irredentism as punishment:* The partition of existing states in the region is to be an outcome of non-compliance with the abovementioned points.

Irredentism is a sensitive issue for almost all the western NIS. There are "frozen conflicts" in Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Moldova. In Ukraine, irredentist attitudes are mostly hidden, but they could be provoked under certain circumstances. Crimean separatism was overcome in the mid-1990s, but its roots have not disappeared and could be reactivated.

At the same time, by recognizing the independence of some irredentist regions and stimulating others, Russia creates its own domestic risks. The North Caucasus remains a region with the potential for instability and separatism. In the mid-term, regional separatism might appear in the Russian Far East and Urals. By recognizing Georgia's breakaway regions, Russia plays a risky game.

Russia thus has an interest in preserving the "1991 world order" in order to minimize risks to its own security and stability. However, the Russian political elite has made a decision to sacrifice a certain degree of stability and break the rules in order to improve its status and position in the short-term, taking advantage of obvious weaknesses in the West. In the end, this decision may be costly, especially taking into account the global economic crisis that may undermine the Russian economic "miracle."

The stress on multipolarity as a value to Russia is almost entirely instrumental. Moscow exploits the concept of multipolarity in order to maximize its position, status, and influence

in the world. In this context, it considers the Black Sea region a "pilot project"; the new democracies in the region are fragile and vulnerable, and Western influence, despite recent EU and NATO enlargements, is limited.

The Black Sea as the European and Euro-Atlantic Periphery

Three countries of the region, Turkey, Romania, and Bulgaria, are NATO members. Two others – Ukraine and Georgia – have expressed a will to join NATO and were granted an ambitious promise of future membership at the April 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest. In December, relations between NATO and the two aspiring states of the region were upgraded to the format of Annual National Programs, which previously applied only to MAP countries. NATO now treats these countries as *de facto* candidates for full-fledged membership. In both political and technical terms, Ukraine and Georgia have sufficient tools to conduct the reforms necessary to achieve NATO standards. In the long term, both countries can become NATO members, which would mean that the Black Sea would be 90 percent transformed into an internal NATO lake.

For most regional powers, NATO is an attractive and workable long-term security solution. However, this scenario's prospects for success are not clear, at least in the short term. Lack of consensus in Ukraine, an impulsive Georgian leadership and separatist challenges, the institutional weakness of both states, internal divergences within NATO, and, above all, strong Russian opposition together pose a challenge to the rapid expansion of NATO in the Black Sea region. Therefore, NATO accession is unlikely to be the only instrument used by the West to provide greater regional stability and security.

Indeed, the EU's growing commitments in this part of Europe are another element of the regional architecture. On December 3, 2008, the European Commission launched the "Eastern Partnership" (EaP) as an outcome of a joint Polish-Swedish initiative published in June 2008. The EaP provides a specific regional umbrella for Europe's eastern "partners": it covers Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and potentially Belarus. Therefore, the focus of the EaP is concentrated around the Black Sea region.

The EaP goes beyond the existing European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in several respects:

- It explicitly presents itself as a political message of EU solidarity, unlike the previous, largely technical, ENP documents;

- It suggests that Partnership and Cooperation Agreements will be replaced by Association Agreements (following a Ukrainian model currently under negotiation);

- It suggests the establishment of a new instrument, the Comprehensive Institution-Building Program (CIB), on a bilateral track;

- It provides detailed procedures for the establishment of free trade areas and visa facilitation regimes among ENP neighbors; the former is linked to the regional dimension through a proposed Neighbourhood Economic Community;

- It also provides clear and detailed suggestions on how to deepen energy

cooperation with the eastern ENP countries;

- The regional/multilateral track is considerably more political than in existing ENP documents;
- It calls for fresh funding to be allocated to the new initiatives. 350 million euros in new aid will go toward strengthening state institutions, border control, and assistance for small companies.

Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued an official commentary regarding the EaP, noting that the creation of "a single space of stability, security, and prosperity at the east of the European continent based on European political, economic, and social norms and standards is a common goal of Ukraine and the European Union….Ukraine is ready to support and to use in a pragmatic way every element of the Eastern Partnership *if the new EU policy is not interpreted as an alternative to potential EU membership* (emphasis added) but on the contrary brings Ukraine closer to this goal."

The EaP may serve as a complementary tool of the EU's exercise in "soft power" in the region. It may also prove to be an instrument of engagement which does not provoke an aggressive reaction from Russia. However, the policy is not sufficient to overcome deep divergences in the region on security issues. It is also not a tool for the full-fledged integration of target countries into the EU. Under the EaP umbrella, states of the region can prepare themselves for accession to the EU only in the long-term (15-25 years).

Pluralistic Heterogeneity as a Mid-term Prospect

A sustainable long-term solution to the security dilemmas that appeared, or were reactivated in the Black Sea region after August 8, 2008 are not likely to emerge soon. The real future for the short term, and even the mid-term (5-8 years), lies between the two scenarios described above.

The main actors are likely to reach some kind of local consensus on the most sensitive issues, such as the need to minimize the use of force and prevent violence, as well as to cooperate in combating terrorism, piracy, and certain soft security threats. Pluralistic heterogeneity is the most obvious term to describe the probable international sub-system in the Black Sea region over the next several years. In the long term, however, either the whole region will be covered with Western institutions or it will be divided into spheres of influence under the framework of a "multipolar world."

VAE VICTORS

THE RUSSIAN ARMY PAYS FOR THE LESSONS OF THE GEORGIAN WAR

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 46

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The dust of the five-day August war between Russia and Georgia was partly settled by the end of the year – and was partly blown away by the hurricane winds of the global economic crisis. The picture that has emerged out of the incomplete collection of hard facts (themselves distorted by massive propaganda campaigns) bears little resemblance to the initial impression of a colossal Russian military machine pulverizing a hapless Georgia. While Putin's loud accusations of "genocide" have proven false, it has become difficult to sustain the proposition that the operation was carefully planned by the Russian General Staff, which managed to catch Georgia's impulsive President Mikheil Saakashvili in a trap through a series of provocations. There are still many pieces absent from this puzzle of the "peace-enforcement"/"integrity-restoring" battle, but those party to the conflict have already drawn their conclusions and begun to implement lessons. It is therefore possible to make some preliminary assessments regarding the next round of escalating tensions in the summer of 2009, after the usual winter break.

Moscow Does Not Believe in (Generals') Tears

The question of "lessons learned" is typically raised with greater urgency after a defeat than a victory and might be dropped altogether after a victory that turns

out to be so easy and complete. It is, nonetheless, looming very large in Moscow despite the triumphalism that continues even in the wake of the financial crisis. Significantly, it is not the motley crew of armchair strategists that is asking this question but the top leadership — and with uncharacteristic persistency. The issue of who is actually learning these lessons, however, is directly related to another question : who was actually in charge of the war? In the rigidly over-centralized system of power built and still effectively controlled by Vladimir Putin, the answer should be self-evident. In reality, it is not.

Part of the confusion stems from the fact that, at the dramatic start of hostilities, Prime Minister Putin was in Beijing attending the Olympic opening ceremonies, while President Dmitry Medvedev had departed from Moscow to enjoy his vacation at a Volga retreat. A related fact is the limited responsibility granted to Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov (appointed in February 2007 and re-appointed in September 2007 and May 2008), who was instructed to focus on the defense budget and not interfere in operations. The main part of the problem, however, is the thorough reshuffling of the top brass, perhaps better described as a purge, during the summer of 2008:

- Experienced and outspoken Yuri Baluyevsky was replaced as Chief of the General Staff by Nikolai Makarov (former Deputy Defense Minister and Commander of the Siberian MD [Military District]) in June 2008;

- Aleksandr Rukshin was fired from his position as Chief of the Main Operational Department of the General Staff in July 2008 with no replacement; the Department was ordered to temporarily relocate due to repairs;

- Aleksei Maslov (seasoned in the North Caucasus MD) was replaced as Commander of the Ground Forces by Vladimir Boldyrev, former Commander of the Siberian and Volga-Urals MDs, on August 5, 2008.

- Aleksandr Morozov was replaced as the Chief of Main Staff of the Ground Forces a bit earlier, in January 2008, by Nikolai Bogdanovsky (former deputy Commander of the Far Eastern MD).

Due to these replacements, the whole upper echelon of the High Command, from the Commander-in-Chief to the top figures in the Defense Ministry, General Staff, and Command of the Ground Forces, was completely disorganized. On August 9, Boldyrev was assigned the task of organizing a temporary headquarters for combat operations in Vladikavkaz, from where he had few control means to direct the battle around Tskhinvali and was definitely out of the picture in Abkhazia. Anatoly Nogovitsyn, who was the primary "talking head" of the war, was neither qualified nor well-positioned for the job (he was appointed head of the Military-Scientific Committee of the General Staff in July

2008 after six years as a deputy commander of the Air Force).

The key decisions in the crucial first hours of the war were apparently made at a remarkably low level in the military hierarchy. It is possible to assume that a key role was played by Vladimir Shamanov, the Chief of the Main Directorate for Combat Training of the Ministry of Defense, who was returned to active service in October 2007 and who in July organized the "Caucasus-2008" exercises (which were not attended by the High Command). The two main figures responsible for issuing orders for combat deployment likely were Sergei Makarov, Commander of the North Caucasus MD, and Anatoly Khrulev, Commander of the 58th Army, both of whom served under Shamanov in the second Chechen War. Their key contacts in Moscow were presumably Aleksandr Kolmakov, First Deputy Defense Minister (appointed in September 2007, former commander of the airborne troops), and Aleksandr Moltenskoi, Deputy Commander of the Ground Forces (appointed in September 2002, former commander of the federal forces in Chechnya). The main responsibility, however, was placed on Khrulev, who led the troops in the field and went into South Ossetia with the first column ambushed outside Tskhinvali.

Medvedev (who claims that he can "remember by the minute" that "most difficult day" of his life) and Putin (who found himself formally out of the chain of command) could hardly have been pleased with the independent decisionmaking of a gang of "Chechen warriors." Claiming authorship of the victory, they have to suppress the lesson that local wars can be fought and won without orders from the High Command. No one from the group of "suspects," not even Khrulev (who was wounded in action), was promoted or rewarded. The main conclusion was that the officer corps, first of all in the Ground Forces, had to be brought under control by means of further purges.

A Khrushchevian Cut with a Rumsfeldian Twist

Medvedev's postwar statements about "modern organizational structures" for the Armed Forces initially seemed to be just a variation on the meaningless "innovative army" theme—until Serdyukov suddenly presented a narrow but detailed set of guidelines for real reform, which had long been declared unwarranted. The decision to shift from a traditional regiment-division structure to a more flexible battalion-brigade model is based on the experience of many local wars but implies that the army is now preparing to fight only those. The decision to disband the "cadre" (or reduced strength) units and upgrade the "permanent readiness" units would help in rectifying the misbalance between officers, NCOs, and soldiers; currently the share of officers is above 30 percent. These decisions amount to abandoning the Soviet pattern of preparing for "total war" by massive mobilization and need to be elaborated in clearly formulated concepts, but they also make good sense.

The rational content of these reforms, however, is undermined by the

uncharacteristic radicalism of the proposed cuts, which resemble the reductions ordered by Khrushchev back in 1961. Serdyukov's plan prescribes the reduction of the officer corps from 350,000 to 150,000, and it is detailed according to particular ranks: the number of generals would go down from 1,107 to 886; colonels, from 25,665 to 9,114; and majors, from 99,500 to 25,000. In contrast, the number of lieutenants will increase from 50,000 to 60,000. The structures of the Ministry of Defense apparatus would also shrink, from 22,000 to 8,500. Finally, the plan envisages replacing 140,000 NCOs with professional sergeants. The timetable for these massive "early retirements," particularly in the Ground Forces, where the total number of units would drop from 1,890 to 172, is as short as three years; the "rejuvenation" of the 1,000,000-strong Armed Forces must be completed by 2012.

This extraordinary rush stands in contrast to plans for rearmament that generally aim toward 2020, with the main deliveries scheduled, very preliminarily, for the second half of the next decade. The costs of retiring some 100,000 officers early are quite high, the promised retraining will also be expensive, and the increase in production (and retention) of lieutenants is going to be very costly. All these added expenditures are not included in the recently approved defense budget, which is one area over which Serdyukov is supposed to have full control. In an act of arrogance that recalls former U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, authorities did not take into consideration the opinions of military experts regarding these radical but incoherent ideas, which emerged somewhere in the Kremlin. The planned reforms go very much against the cautious approach maintained by Putin during his presidency, stand in sharp contrast with recently aggressive anti-U.S. rhetoric, and clash with the logic of crisis-mode political behavior, which would prescribe keeping the "power structures" content. Medvedev was expected to deliver a doctrinal address to the annual gathering of the High Command and justify the aims of the reform, but he did not show up.

Missiles of Choice and Gunboats of Last Resort

The postwar months saw an increase in the activity of Russian strategic forces and the Navy, which added to rising international concerns about the progressive (or regressive) militarization of Russia's foreign policy. The large-scale exercises *Stability-2008* in September-October featured a series of intercontinental missile launches (both land and submarine-based) and staff games involving all elements of strategic forces; Medvedev observed them in the Northern Fleet and in the Volga-Urals MD. Besides the exercises, two tests of the *Bulava* SLBM (one successful) and one test of the RS-24 ICBM were conducted during the autumn. Seeking to reinforce this nuclear momentum, Medvedev announced a plan for deploying new tactical missiles *Iskander* in the Kaliningrad oblast (in order to target American ballistic missile interceptors in Poland), but

the negative reaction in Europe and the "think-again" signals from U.S. president-elect Barack Obama's team led to some awkward backpedaling.

Strategic demonstrations were complemented by the visit of two Tu-160 bombers to Venezuela, followed by the transatlantic cruise of nuclear cruiser *Petr Velikii*, which also arrived in Venezuela in November after detouring to Libya. The destroyer *Admiral Chabanenko* visited Cuba in December. Aircraft carrier *Admiral Kuznetsov* performed a Mediterranean cruise also in December, while destroyer *Admiral Vinogradov* from the Pacific Fleet paid a visit to India in order to participate (together with *Petr Velikii*) in joint Russian-Indian naval exercises in January. These unprecedented efforts at demonstrating the global reach of the Russian Air Force and Navy (which also included an anti-pirate deployment of frigate *Neustrashimy* to the Gulf of Aden) were not that convincing since no new strategic bombers or major surface combatants were added to the arsenal (or would be in the near future). They were also compromised by the accident on board the new nuclear submarine *Nerpa* that claimed 20 lives, as well as by a chain of accidents in the Air Force that prompted consideration of the heavy loss of planes in the Georgian war.

One important context for Russian naval hyperactivity of autumn 2008 was the Black Sea Fleet's efficient and rapid deployment in the course of the Georgian war. Unlike the chaotic fighting around Tskhinvali, this operation was duly controlled from naval headquarters. Its outcome convinced the Kremlin that the Black Sea Fleet a) was quite important in local wars in the Caucasus; b) badly needed modernization but could not be reinforced; and c) could not, under any circumstances, be withdrawn from its main base in Sevastopol and relocated to Novorossiisk. The fast-deepening economic crisis upsets efforts aimed at squaring this naval circle. However, at least one positive factor for Russia has been a permanent crisis of governance in Kyiv, which has made it all but impossible for Ukraine to formulate a definite position on the Sevastopol issue.

Conclusions

Moscow's pronounced reliance on military demonstrations might be driven by a psychological need to secure a new status quo after a risky outburst of "revisionism." The motivations behind the decision to launch a breathtakingly radical military reform, however, are hard to locate within the realm of rational explanation. While the Byzantine court in the Kremlin has never been guided by Aristotelian logic, decisionmaking has further been twisted by depression and panic among its courtiers. Even accounting for this, however, it is difficult to establish how the draconian cut in the officer corps can address the main problems facing the Armed Forces (including progressive contraction of the draft pool, shrinking numbers of professional sergeants and contract soldiers, and obsolescence of the bulk of weapon systems). Neither can it be linked to the key lessons from the Georgian war (the need to strengthen rapid deployment forces,

upgrade communication systems and intelligence, and restore the capacity for troop support by combat and transport helicopters). The proposed reform is also out of character for the existing bureaucratic regime and goes against Putin's style of leadership, always attentive to the needs of *siloviki*. It is also not advanced by any committed team of reformers and does not fit the pattern of political behavior in this period of unfolding crisis.

The sum total of these contradictions is tall enough to predict that current military policy will undergo significant change in the near future; at the same time, the uncertain environment of a massive economic crisis makes it impossible to establish in what direction the changes will go. One option involves restoring the integrity of the chain of command by returning Putin to the position of president and commander-in-chief, which would make it possible to calm down the top brass by reversing some painful decisions while maintaining a certain momentum in military reform. A more worrisome perspective is that growing tensions inside Putin's system of power, thrown into disarray by the crisis, might create the need for a new "victory," while the military would be eager to reverse reforms by means of a new war. In this case, Georgia would again present itself as the most attractive target.

WILL SEVASTOPOL SURVIVE?

THE TRIANGULAR POLITICS OF RUSSIA'S NAVAL BASE IN CRIMEA

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 47

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Introduction: The Emerging Politics of Sevastopol

The August 2008 Russian-Georgian conflict has drawn renewed political attention to other areas of the former Soviet Union where Russia may assert territorial claims. Chief among these has been Crimea, the autonomous republic within Ukraine that hosts the maritime city of Sevastopol. Sevastopol is currently home to the Russian Black Sea Fleet (BSF), comprised of 50 warships, patrol boats and support vessels, 80 aircraft, and about 14,000 troops, as well as hundreds of supporting installations.

Russia's naval presence in and around Sevastopol is principally governed by a series of bilateral accords signed between Ukraine and Russia in 1997. With Russia's current basing lease set to expire in May 2017, the future of Russia's naval presence in Sevastopol has become an increasingly pressing and politically charged issue. A number of factors have contributed to this escalating politicization, including Ukraine's competitive domestic political dynamics following the Orange Revolution, Russia's aggressive resurgence, Ukraine's candidacy for NATO expansion, and local and regional political agitation within Crimea and Sevastopol.

This memo seeks to make conceptual sense of the past and future politics of

the Sevastopol naval base and place them in a comparative analytical framework. In the first section we specify the key provisions of the 1997 Russia-Ukraine accords regarding the base, its sovereign rights, and quid pro quo arrangements. In the second part we assess the emerging triangular political dynamics of the naval base and outline the preferences of the various actors involved. We pay particular attention to how Ukraine's "big three" political elites are approaching the Sevastopol issue. We conclude with some comments about likely future scenarios.

The Terms and Provisions of Sevastopol's Governing Agreements

Form and Duration of the Black Sea Fleet Accords

From 1992 to 1997, Russia and Ukraine made sporadic progress on dividing the Fleet, as negotiations were periodically interrupted by unilateral decrees on both sides that appealed to nationalist constituents, including Russian Duma proclamations in 1992 and 1993 that claimed Russian sovereignty over the harbor city.

In May 1997, both sides signed three basic agreements governing the status of the BSF. Technically the agreements were signed by the prime ministers as executive agreements rather than as treaties requiring parliamentary ratification. The Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership between the Russian Federation and Ukraine was followed on May 28 by a second agreement that divided the fleet and set forth the conditions for its operations. The fleet was legally divided 50/50, but the Ukrainian side then transferred most of its 50 percent share back to Russia for a final overall 82/18 percent split. The agreements allowed the Russian BSF to use the Sevastopol facilities for another 20 years on a lease basis. The agreement will be automatically extended for an additional five years unless either of the parties informs the other, with one year's written advance notice, that it wishes to terminate the accord in 2017.

Equally important, however, the 1997 BSF agreements formally codified Russia's recognition of Sevastopol and its network of support facilities as Ukrainian sovereign territory and property. Indeed, for the Ukrainian side the agreement was considered to be a transitional accord as the 1996 Ukrainian Constitution forbids the stationing of foreign military forces except on a leased or temporary basis.

On other issues, however, the 1997 agreements remained incomplete and left a number of outstanding problems. Chief among them were the actual military purpose and operational parameters of the fleet's activities or the naval base's "use rights." In addition, the sides have yet to fully inventory the hundreds of scattered BSF facilities across the peninsula, which has led to recent disputes about the ownership of lighthouses and other supporting landmarks.

Issues of Sovereignty: Ownership, Use Rights, and Taxation

The actual sovereign status of foreign military bases can vary significantly. In some cases, such as U.S. bases in postwar Japan or the enduring British bases in Cyprus, the base territory legally has been the sovereign territory of the sending country, similar to the status of a foreign embassy. In other cases, the host country retains *de jure* sovereign rights over basing territory and installations but enters into an agreement that allows the sending country to use the base for a certain amount of time. Other bases, such as U.S. communications installations in Australia, are legally joint-use facilities, while still others belong to a common security organization, such as the NATO bases in Incirlik, Turkey and Naples, Italy.

In the case of Sevastopol, the 1997 BSF accords recognize Ukraine's sovereignty over the city and its harbor facilities, while Russia is granted operational access by the lease. The agreements also give Kyiv the right to jointly station its naval forces outside Russian areas. The most important of the actual harbor berths – Sevastopolskaya and Yuzhvanya (containing 512 berths) – are designated for exclusive Russian use, while the Ukrainian navy retains the use of Balaklavskaya, as well as a number of facilities in other parts of Crimea including Yalta, Feodosiya, and Gvardeyskoye. The two sides share Streletskaya Bay.

Under the accords, Russia has a duty to notify Ukraine of the fleet's movements in and out of Ukraine's waterways, but this does not rise to the level of an obligation to consult prior to specific missions. Nor does Ukraine have the authority to prohibit the BSF from being used for military operations that Kyiv opposes.

Unlike U.S. basing agreements, no formal overriding Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) governs the legal status of Russian troops in Ukraine. Fourteen supplemental intergovernmental agreements have been negotiated to supplement the 1997 BSF accords and deal with outstanding legal and technical matters on an *ad hoc* basis. Economically, the Russian BSF does not enjoy a privileged tax status or payment system exemption; goods and capital transited through Sevastopol are subject to prevailing duties and excise taxes. On the matter of criminal jurisdiction, unlike the NATO system of concurrent jurisdiction codified in the NATO SOFA, Russia retains criminal jurisdiction over its troops.

Quid Pro Quo*: Compensation Terms and Shortcomings*

In the BSF case, the central quid pro quo element is Russia's agreement to pay an annual rental fee of $97.75 million for the 20 year duration of its lease. Essentially, the rental payment functions as part of Ukraine's debt write-off to Russia; aggregated over 20 years these lease payments will total $1.95 billion, nearly two-thirds of Ukraine's outstanding $3.0 billion debt to Russia at the time of the agreement's signing. Part of the politics of the issue, however, is that there

is still considerable disagreement as to the actual size and composition of Ukraine's bilateral debt.

In comparative terms, the $97.75 million and debt write-off is broadly consistent with other deals Russia has cut within and outside the post-Soviet space, including with Kazakhstan ($115 million annually to lease the Baikonur cosmodrome) and Cuba ($200 million a year from 1992 to 2002 to lease a communications installation at Lourdes). The $100 million payment for Sevastopol is also comparable with the $150 million annual base rights package that the United States unofficially provides to Kyrgyzstan for the use of Manas airbase.

However, none of the related facilities comes close to the scale and total area covered by Sevastopol's berths and installations. Indeed, by land value alone, the value of the total area of Sevastopol used by the Russian fleet is comfortably in the billions of dollars, a fact that Ukrainian critics of the compensation package consistently point out. In a controversial declaration in spring 2008, President Viktor Yushchenko proposed that Ukraine settle its outstanding $1.3 billion gas debt to Russia and then begin charging Moscow an increased rent for Sevastopol. He and other Ukrainian officials and analysts now interpret Article I of the 1997 BSF division agreement, which obliges Ukraine to pay off its debt to Russia by 2007, and Article II, which allows for "direct payments" by the Russian side following the debt settlement, as legal cover for demanding increased direct payments from Moscow. However, Russian officials counter that any such direct payments still could not exceed the initially agreed upon annual rental fee of $97.75 million.

Counterintuitively, the debt write-off structure of the lease payment has also had political drawbacks for Moscow. Not only can Ukrainian critics complain that Russia fails to pay "market value" for its facilities, but the lack of a substantial financial contribution to the regional and city budget also deprives Russia the opportunity of leveraging its rental payment into greater political support for its presence. Indeed, officials from Sevastopol's city government complain that few economic benefits from the BSF agreement actually accrue to Sevastopol or the Crimean republic (though they tend to blame Kyiv for this rather than Moscow).

In comparison, the United States offered generous quid pro quo payments and base compensation packages to secure base rights in Cold War base hosts such as Philippines, Greece, Turkey, and Panama, while economic carrots continue to play a central, if unacknowledged, role in securing the support of new base hosting governments in Kyrgyzstan and Djibouti. On the island prefecture of Okinawa, host to 75 percent of U.S. military installations in Japan, the government of Japan ensures that a tacit majority of the residents of the island acquiesce to the U.S. military presence by granting an elaborate set of

public works programs to local authorities and providing selective base-related payments to important interest groups.

Russian officials seem to have intuitively grasped this point and have recently hinted that, in exchange for a lease extension, they would be inclined to significantly improve their economic contribution and increase their direct support of Sevastopol's city budget. On September 23, 2008, Russian Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov suggested that Russia "could offer a package of proposals which could be favorable to both sides, and which would cover both the rent for the base in Sevastopol and the development of social infrastructure, cooperation in the defense-industrial sphere, shipbuilding, and other sectors." Such economic inducements have certainly not gone unnoticed by Crimea's parliamentarians, industrialists, and shipbuilders.

Sevastopol's Emerging Triangular Base Politics

How, then, should scholars and analysts understand the emerging politics of the Sevastopol issue? Though we are accustomed to thinking of foreign military bases and their governing arrangements as strictly bilateral issues, military bases have often become intertwined with the internal political dynamics of a host country's central government and the regional government of the foreign military installation's location. In such cases, the status of the foreign military presence is subjected to the relations and bargaining of three distinct parties: the foreign military sending country, the central government of the host country, and local or regional authorities. In the case of the United States, for instance, the status of the U.S. military presence on certain foreign islands – Okinawa/Japan, Azores/Portugal, Greenland/Denmark and Sardinia/Italy – has become a central issue in local-central politics within these host countries and regional governmental demands for increased autonomy, fiscal transfers, and decentralization.

In a similar fashion, Sevastopol should be viewed as subject to three distinct sources of political influences and interests: the Ukrainian national government, the Russian Federation, and a set of local actors within Crimea. First, Sevastopol is clearly within the sovereign jurisdiction of independent Ukraine and, as we will describe below, Ukraine's three main political elites have developed different positions on the issue. In Russia, leading foreign policy officials have shown greater pragmatism of late on the issue, even as Russian military commanders and some outspoken nationalist politicians claim that the city and its naval facilities should remain Russian, either by lease or simply through territorial readjustment. Nationalists argue that the naval base has served as the main hub for the Russian Black Sea Fleet for 225 years and maintain that, legally, Sevastopol itself was directly administered by Moscow during Soviet times, even after Crimea was formally placed under the administrative jurisdiction of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1954. The Russian navy in Sevastopol is

itself an interesting case as a political actor, as it can be considered both an implementer of the Kremlin's directives and a local player in its own right that has cultivated an extensive network of political and commercial ties within Crimea.

Within Crimea, the public (of which about 50 percent are ethnic Russian) and most political actors broadly support maintaining the base beyond 2017. Some local political authorities within the host city (which is close to 75% ethnic Russian) assert the more aggressive Russian nationalist position and regularly mobilize public demonstrations. For example, local authorities in summer 2006 disrupted an annual U.S.-Ukraine naval exercise in Feodosiya; shortly after, the autonomous Crimean parliament voted to declare the peninsula a "NATO-free zone." These three categories of political actors and their various triangular political relations are now central to the naval base's future.

Ukrainian Domestic Politics and the Sevastopol Issue

As Ukraine moves toward its next parliamentary and presidential elections, scheduled for January 2010, Crimea and the issue of the Sevastopol naval base are likely to take on renewed political attention in Ukrainian national politics. Unfortunately, as is often the case in Ukrainian politics, these delicate and strategically important issues show signs of getting reduced to the level of tactical political maneuvering and petty opportunistic behavior. The all too familiar "big three" of Ukrainian politics – Viktor Yushchenko, Yulia Tymoshenko, and Viktor Yanukovych – have approached the issue in different manners consistent with their domestic political pressures and requirements.

President Yushchenko has, to his credit, at least consistently adhered to one position. He clearly sees the stationing of the Russian navy in Crimea as a problem for national interests and security. Moreover, he views (and for good reason) the Sevastopol issue as one with greater implications for the political future of the Crimean peninsula, relations with Russia, Ukraine's future accession towards NATO and the European Union, and the broader security of the Black Sea region. At the same time, the statements and actions of the president (and many on his team) have reflected his typically reflexive "revolutionary style" and a lack of understanding of the need for scrupulous work in this field and of adequate thinking through of the problem.

The most striking example of this were his statements in the wake of the August 2008 conflict in Georgia. Undoubtedly, the president accurately expressed the concern of many Ukrainians about having a Russian fleet based in Ukraine being used against Georgia, Ukraine's closest friend and ally. However, this concern about Russia's "use rights" in connection to Sevastopol was handled inappropriately and clumsily, as the Ukrainian president made the inflammatory statement that Ukraine might prevent Russian ships from returning to their place of stationing. Obviously, Ukraine neither has the legal pretext to do so, nor the

will and capacity to enforce this threat. Making hollow threats and escalating the rhetoric over Sevastopol heightened national tensions without contributing anything constructive by way of a solution.

Furthermore, President Yushchenko has reelection ambitions. His position on the war in Georgia and his critical stance on Crimea and the Russian navy not only reflect his personal views, but also help him drum up support among the more nationalistic segment of the country's population, mainly in western Ukraine. Such efforts probably will not work, however, primarily because of the widespread disillusion with Yushchenko that runs deep through this very base. Moreover, support in western Ukraine has never been sufficient, by itself, to win a national election.

For her part, Prime Minister Tymoshenko has remained true to her principle of not having any clear set of principles, values, or ideologies. She continues to produce a masterful mix of calculated populism and opportunism. Tymoshenko's political moves can also be assessed on the basis of her desire to become Ukraine's next president. With a gamble more sophisticated than Yushchenko's, Tymoshenko tries to "sit on two chairs": to attract some of the more nationalistic voters but also to increase her support in Ukraine's east and south. To do this, she simply needs to refrain from stating her position on most issues, with Sevastopol no exception. Typically, she uses the excuse that, as prime minister, she does not bear responsibility for matters of high politics but for running the economy.

On Sevastopol, the prime minister does not want to appear as a "traitor" to the Ukrainian cause (as President Yushchenko attempts to portray her) or as wanting to cede Crimea and Sevastopol to Russia or agree to a basing lease extension. However, Tymoshenko is also doing her best not to appear needlessly anti-Russian. This is positively received in Moscow and, presumably, appeals to some pro-Russian voters. While there is no evidence to suggest that Tymoshenko enjoys any major support from Moscow, the Russian leadership clearly welcomed her recent stance (or lack thereof) on the Georgia conflict and NATO membership. Ultimately, however, Tymoshenko's presidential prospects are also shaky. She continues to be a very polarizing figure. It is hard to see exactly where she might find the bulk of a winning vote.

Victor Yanukovych is the only one of Ukraine's three leading politicians who is the leader of a party in any real sense (the president does not really have a party and the prime minister's party is a "one woman show"). The Party of Regions has wings and factions that differ on issues. The so-called ideologues are clearly pro-Russian in most respects, including on the issue of Sevastopol and the Russian base. Their position is closely related to the anti-NATO campaign in Ukraine and also to the issue of Russian as a second language. The pragmatic wing of the party, which as of late is increasingly unhappy about Yanukovych's

leadership, is more open to compromise. These members have not carved their positions in stone and, significantly, remain open to cooperating with the president. As a result, they do not want to antagonize him on a number of delicate issues, including the Russian base in Crimea.

It would be a mistake to perceive Yanukovych as a helpless puppet in the hands of Kremlin manipulators. He too has been trying to use Russia for his own political gain. However, he has mostly adhered to a pro-Russian line and is thus constrained in some of his positions. Besides, the pro-Russian agenda has been dictated to him not so much by Moscow as by his electorate. He has no one else to rely on but voters in the east and south, who are predominantly pro-Russian and have proved to be a very loyal voting bloc. All this explains Yanukovych's position on the issue of the Black Sea Fleet. He says that the base is good for both Ukraine and Russia; points to the alleged economic benefits of Russian stationing; and indicates that he is in favor of the Russian navy remaining there after 2017. At the same time, he knows that he needs to appear to be a pro-Ukrainian politician. He thus also mentions that any new agreement for a lease extension should be in line with Ukrainian national interests and even hints at the possibility of increasing the lease payment amount.

Concluding Thoughts: Will Sevastopol Survive?

We have argued that the triangular relationship among Ukrainian elite politics, Russian foreign policy, and Crimean regional politics holds the key to understanding the political future of Sevastopol and its likely political resolution. Although strategic factors will also play a part in Kyiv and Moscow's calculations, comparative analysis suggests that the issue will become embroiled in different facets of these changing political dynamics. Moreover, the issue of NATO expansion will also have an acute effect on the issue, as Russia and many Crimeans will vehemently object to Moscow ceding its most important naval base for the likely future use of the United States, Turkey, or any other members of the transatlantic alliance.

Comparative analysis also suggests that time is currently on the side of Kyiv, not Moscow. As the deadline for the 2017 expiration draws closer, Kyiv's bargaining leverage will increase, while Moscow's threats to find a suitable alternative will become less credible. From this perspective, Moscow's new agreement with the Abkhazian *de facto* government to allow Russian naval basing rights in Ochamchire can be understood as an attempt to lend greater strength to the Russian bargaining position vis-à-vis Ukraine as well as to consolidate its military position within the Georgian breakaway territory. Even in combination with an upgraded Novorossisk base, the Abkhazian deepwater harbor offers a poor substitute for the Sevastopol facilities. Russia is running out of time to complete the necessary upgrades that would be required of these alternative home-porting sites in time for a complete BSF evacuation in 2017.

With these factors in mind, we can speculate about three future scenarios for the Sevastopol issue:

First, if Kyiv holds firm to a lease non-renewal and Russia agrees to peacefully withdraw, Moscow will have to find a suitable set of alternatives; we should become aware of such a relocation plan relatively soon. Such a move has the potential to ignite local nationalist opposition in Crimea against the government in Kyiv. It will also signal a major concession on the part of Moscow, something that seems increasingly unlikely given the current geopolitical climate.

Second, Russia may not accept Kyiv's notice of eviction and could inflame pro-BSF nationalism within Crimea and pressure the Ukrainian government from within. This is the most dangerous scenario. Moscow may well link its refusal to withdraw to the NATO expansion process and other factors that it will label as threatening to its national interests. Although some sort of conflict over the legal status of the Crimean peninsula is not likely at this point, after the August events in Georgia, it cannot be ruled out either.

Third, there is the possibility that the two sides will reach a new "bridging" agreement that will be more favorable to Ukraine financially, shorter in duration (say five to seven years), and will offer Russian planners more time to make the necessary adjustments for a future withdrawal. Such a renegotiated agreement could be presented by the sides as either an extension or as an "extension prior to withdrawal." However, such a bridging agreement, while likely to avert the worst of the conflict scenarios, will only delay the resolution of the matter for a few more years.

THE RUSSIAN BLACK SEA FLEET AFTER THE GEORGIA WAR

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Black Sea Fleet Activity in the August War

Russian ships left their bases in Sevastopol and Novorossisk and sailed for the Georgian coast on August 9, the day after hostilities began in the region. A total of 13 ships were involved in the operation, including the Slava-class cruiser *Moskva*, the Kashin-class destroyer *Smetlivyi*, several Grisha-class corvettes (*Suzdalets*, *Aleksandrovsk*, *Muromets*, and possibly *Kasimov*), the Nanuchka-class missile ship *Mirazh*, two patrol craft, three amphibious landing craft (two Ropucha-class,*Tsesar Kunikov* and *Yamal*, and one Alligator-class, *Saratov*), two mine warfare ships (*Admiral Zhelezniakov* and *Turbinist*), the transport ship *General Riabikov*, and the tugboat *Epron*.

This list includes the bulk of Black Sea Fleet (BSF) deployment-capable ships. The only major combatants not involved were the Kara-class cruiser *Kerch* and two Krivak-class frigates. The *Kerch* is currently undergoing sea trials after a decade-long period of repair and is therefore not yet ready for active service. The guided-missile frigate (FFG) *Ladnyi* was preparing for participation in operation Active Endeavor, though it subsequently returned to the Black Sea and shadowed U.S. and NATO ships that entered the region in late August. The FFG *Pytlivyi* is currently undergoing repairs. This deployment should thus be considered to demonstrate more or less the maximum possible capability of the BSF at the present time.

The stated goal of BSF ships deployed in this conflict was to provide naval support for Russian ground forces in the region and to be prepared to transport refugees out of the conflict zone. These goals were consistent with the Russian government's initial argument that it was conducting a support operation for its peacekeeping contingent in South Ossetia, which had been attacked by Georgian forces on August 8.

As the nature of the Russian military operation changed, first to focus on driving Georgian forces out of the disputed areas of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and then on destroying Georgian military capabilities altogether, the role of the BSF changed as well. Amphibious landing craft, accompanied by escort ships and patrol craft, were sent out of the Russian Navy's Novorossiisk base with naval infantry troops onboard. Some of these troops helped to secure the Abkhazian port of Ochamchira against the possibility of a Georgian invasion, while others secured the Georgian port city Poti.

As they approached the Russia-Abkhazia maritime border on August 9, some of the Russian ships encountered Georgian patrol boats, which were assumed to have hostile intent after they failed to respond to radio warnings to turn away. While sources are not consistent, it seems most likely that the Russian ships involved included the two amphibious ships *Tsezar Kunikov* and *Saratov*, accompanied by the corvette *Suzdalets* and the patrol ship *Mirazh*. It appears likely that the Russian ships sank at least one and possibly two of the Georgian patrol boats. The shots were fired by one of the two accompanying ships, most likely the *Mirazh.* After the initial encounter, the remaining Georgian ships fled and were later sunk at pier in Poti by Russian military forces.

We can make some suppositions about Russian naval command and control based on published reports about this battle. First, all available reports indicate that after potentially hostile ships were detected by radar on the *Mirazh*, the ship's captain contacted Vice-Admiral Meniaylo, the commander of the naval group based on the *Tsesar Kunikov*, who gave the orders to fire warning shots and then to attack the opposing ships when they did not change course. Once the opposing ships did change course, the Russian ships ceased to attack because "there were no orders to destroy all targets."

None of the reports show any indication that the fleet's actions in combat had to be approved by commanders at fleet headquarters or in Moscow. This is somewhat surprising given the Russian military's tendency toward centralization of authority. In normal situations, ship commanders in the Russian navy are given little control over decisionmaking. There are two possible explanations. The more likely one is that ship commanders are given authority to take whatever action is necessary to defend their ships if they believe they are in imminent danger. Another possibility is that the naval group commander did contact Moscow and received clearance to fire on the Georgian navy ships prior

to ordering the attack. This is less likely, given the relatively short timeframe between the ships' detection and the order to fire.

Overall, the BSF naval group's actions during the Georgia conflict provide additional support for the supposition that Russian navy ships operate with a relatively low threshold for weapons use, and ship commanders are authorized to take action on their own if they perceive an imminent threat to their ship. In situations where an imminent threat does not exist, virtually all major decisions are taken by the naval group commander, rather than the commanders of specific ships in the group. Only if the ship is operating alone does the ship commander have the authority to make major operational decisions.

Black Sea Fleet Capabilities and Performance

The Georgia war in and of itself does not allow us to say much about the capabilities of the BSF, as the Fleet was not seriously tested by the Georgian navy, which consisted solely of a few patrol craft and two small missile ships, which were most likely not actually armed with missiles at the time of the conflict. Furthermore, with the one exception discussed above, most of the Georgian navy sailors and officers abandoned their ships in port rather than engage the Russian navy or withdraw to the south. As a result, most Georgian navy ships were destroyed by the Russian military at pier in Poti. While the Russian navy is no longer one of the most powerful in the world, it was clear before the conflict that it could easily handle threats from an adversary at this level of capabilities. Having said that, BSF ships that participated in the conflict acquitted themselves fairly well, according to all observers. The navy clearly had a plan of action designed for the possibility of a conflict with Georgia, and this plan was implemented quickly and efficiently. A large percentage of the Fleet's ships were able to get underway within 24 hours of the start of hostilities. Several hundred naval infantry soldiers were placed on amphibious landing ships and deployed to Abkhazia, with missile ships and corvettes acting as escorts. These escorts successfully eliminated potential threats to the landing ships. Overall, the BSF's participation in the Georgia war showed that it is quite capable of playing a role in combat should it be called upon to do so in the future.

At the same time, the August events have not changed my overall assessment of the state and capabilities of the BSF. The Black Sea Fleet currently includes 28 operational ships and submarines with an average age of 25 years, though these are mostly smaller craft. There are six 1st class surface ships (four operational), two diesel submarines (one operational), seven Ropucha and Alligator amphibious landing craft (six operational), two relatively new Bora-class missile hovercraft, and 15 operational 3rd class ships, including small anti-submarine warfare (ASW) ships (Grisha), small missile ships, and minesweepers. Of the larger ships, only the *Moskva* and the *Smetlivyi* can be considered fully operational, though recent reports indicate that both of the Kara-class cruisers

will soon rejoin the fleet. The *Kerch* has recently emerged from overhaul and is undergoing sea trials, though some reports indicate that it still has difficulty operating in deep water environments. Following reports in June that the *Ochakov*, which has been in overhaul since 2000, has recently completed repairs and would become the Black Sea Fleet's new flagship, the ship was removed from drydock and the BSF announced that it would be scrapped in the near future.

Only four first-class combat ships have deployed outside the Black Sea in the last ten years. One of these (the *Pytlivyi*) is currently being overhauled. Even if all of the overhauls were completed successfully, the BSF would only have six large combat ships for the foreseeable future. As independent Russian military observers have noted, the entire fleet is much weaker than the assemblage of random NATO ships sent to the Black Sea in August-September 2008 in the aftermath of the Georgia war. Russian anti-ship weaponry is mostly outdated and would be unlikely to penetrate NATO's Aegis defense systems. At the same time, the guidance systems for Russian anti-ship missiles would be unlikely to survive a conflict with NATO.

Furthermore, the ships in the fleet are relatively old, and their lifespan is likely to have been negatively impacted by poor maintenance during the financially difficult 1990s. The *Moskva,* the youngest of these ships, is 26 years old, while the *Smetlivyi* was commissioned almost 40 years ago. It is likely that most of these ships will have reached the end of their useful lifespans in the next 10-15 years. This implies that by the time BSF ships may need to be relocated from Sevastopol in 2017, some of them are likely to be no longer active.

Impact on Cooperative Activity

The naval campaign of the Georgia war did not have a significant impact on the course of the war, which was fought almost entirely by both sides' ground forces. Nor did it affect the military balance in the Black Sea region to any great extent. But the use of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in combat has had a dramatic effect on political relations in the region and has led to a curtailing of the extensive program of naval cooperation between the Russian navy and NATO navies in both the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.

Before the recent conflict, Russian admirals often touted cooperation with foreign navies as a prime role of the Russian navy. They saw the participation of Russian naval ships in exercises and operations with foreign navies not only as a way to improve naval interoperability, but also as a means for improving interstate relations. According to them, multinational operations provided the Russian navy with opportunities to improve its skills and extend collaboration with neighboring navies, while also letting it show others that it can act as a responsible neighbor and is ready to direct multinational military operations in the region should the need arise. BSF ships participate in a number of

multilateral annual naval exercises and operations, including BlackSeaFor, Black Sea Harmony, and Active Endeavor. Together, participation in these three programs accounted for about one third of BSF ship deployments during 1999-2007. BSF ships have also participated in bilateral exercises with the navies of Italy, Greece, Turkey, and other Mediterranean littoral states.

Russian participation in NATO's Active Endeavor counter-terrorism operation in the Mediterranean provides an excellent example of the importance the Russian navy attaches to this type of activity and the active role it can play in such operations. While Active Endeavor has been an ongoing NATO operation since 2001, planning for Russian participation only got underway in 2004, with the first Russian ships participating in January 2006. The Russian navy attached particular importance to having at least a core group of officers develop sufficient English-language skills to be able to operate with the NATO group. As part of the operation, Russian ships routinely participate in joint exercises with NATO ships from a number of countries, including Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom. These exercises have included Russian helicopters landing on board NATO ships, practicing boarding of suspicious vessels, and other tasks typical of counter-terrorism and counter-piracy operations. In addition to the practical training provided by participation in this operation, the Russian navy values the status provided by Russian participation in a NATO operation. This was made clear in a report published in the official Russian Navy journal after the conclusion of the *Moskva*'s participation in Active Endeavor in January 2006. The report noted that this was the first time ships from a state that was not a NATO member had participated in the operation and noted the historical importance of the presence of the NATO Secretary General on board the flagship of the Russian Black Sea Fleet.

In retaliation for Russian action in the Georgia war, Russian ships were barred from participation in Active Endeavor, even though the *Ladnyi* had already arrived at the location of the operation off the coast of Turkey. Russian media reacted quite predictably, arguing that the operation was not so important and that Russian ships that had participated previously were exploited by being used as messenger ships rather than as full-fledged combatants. Nevertheless, as NATO and Russia slowly resume cooperative activities, it is likely that BSF ships will once again be invited to participate in Active Endeavor. In the long run, cooperative naval activities in the Black Sea are sufficiently institutionalized that they are likely to survive the current downturn in relations.

Future of the Russian Black Sea Fleet

In the aftermath of the Georgia war, the Russian government announced a significant expansion of its military activity, accompanied by a substantial increase in planned financing and a commitment to replace aging hardware. At the same time, the government announced a significant expansion of its

worldwide naval presence, with plans for four year-end long distance naval task force deployments simultaneously for the first time in well over a decade. In addition to ongoing deployments by two Northern Fleet combat ships to the Mediterranean Sea and Venezuela, and by the Baltic Fleet escort ship *Neustrashimyi* to the Gulf of Aden, the Northern Fleet's sole aircraft carrier *Admiral Kuznetsov* and accompanying ships have deployed for exercises in the Mediterranean with the Black Sea Fleet flagship *Moskva*. Furthermore, the Pacific Fleet destroyer *Admiral Vinogradov* is sailing to the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea to make a series of port calls and conduct exercises with *Peter the Great* and *Admiral Chabanenko* as they return from Venezuela. The Russian navy will soon have as many as 8-10 major combat ships deployed at the same time. While this is the highest number of ships deployed simultaneously by the Russian navy since the collapse of the Soviet Union, we should not forget that the Russian navy has only approximately 18 major naval combatants capable of deploying outside their home base. This set of deployments may well represent the maximum simultaneous out of area deployment capability of the Russian navy at the present time.

Despite talk of a substantial expansion of naval construction, including plans for a new class of aircraft carriers to be built in the next 15 years, the capabilities of the Russian navy in general and the Black Sea Fleet specifically are likely to decline for at least two decades. Grandiose plans for building aircraft carriers and other as yet unspecified combat ships are unlikely to come to fruition, partly as a result of the decline in Russia's financial situation in the months after their announcement, and partly because the Russian military industrial complex is in poor condition and is not capable of building such large ships at the pace called for in the plans. Smaller ships will be built but will not be able to fully replace the capabilities possessed by the Black Sea Fleet's aging cruisers and destroyers.

In the meantime, the extensive array of cooperative activities between Western navies and the BSF is likely to be maintained at more or less the level that existed prior to the war. There have not been any announcements about curtailing Russian participation in BlackSeaFor and Black Sea Harmony, and Russian participation in Active Endeavor is likely to be resumed sometime within the next two or three years.

THE SOUTH CAUCASUS CORRIDOR AFTER THE RUSSIAN-GEORGIAN WAR

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 49

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The "five-day war" between Russia and Georgia in August 2008 has many dimensions. For those trying to discern its strategic implications, perhaps the most important is its impact on alternative oil and gas export routes said to alleviate Europe's energy dependence on Moscow. According to some, by recognizing South Ossetia and Abkhazia and deploying troops there, Russia has taken a giant step forward in controlling the alternative export routes running through Georgia and consolidating control over Europe's energy supply. Ironically, this argument has been made by both those who see it as a threat and hard-line nationalists in Russia who hail it as a "strategic advance." The discourse vividly recalls past suspicions that by invading Afghanistan in 1979, the Soviet Union was aiming to control the Persian Gulf and its oil deposits.

This memo develops a different assessment that argues:

1) Russia has always had the capacity to break the flow of oil through the South Caucasus from Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan;

2) The Russia-Georgia war has not altered the situation of energy transit in the region;

3) Alternative supply routes will remain reasonably safe from outside

interference despite Russian displeasure, provided there is no war in the region.

Simply put, Russia is unlikely to use its military preponderance in the region to disrupt or threaten energy supplies, but these can still become collateral damage. While Russia will not start a war to undermine alternative export routes, pipelines can fall victim to a conflict begun for different reasons. In this sense, the distance between Russian troops and the pipelines is of little consequence; oil and/or gas will continue to flow regardless of whether troops are 50 or 500 kilometers away. Russia will continue to use all political and economic instruments available to it to disrupt existing and planned alternative energy supply routes, but it will stop short of using, or even threatening to use, force.

Furthermore, as witnessed during the "five-day war," Russia will carefully avoid bombing pipelines in a limited conflict, not because it is indifferent to them but because Moscow wants to avoid a direct clash with the West (mainly the European Union) for as long as possible. Any action perceived as an attempt to strangle Europe will be regarded as one of utmost hostility, on par with an overt declaration of war. Moscow acknowledges that energy supply is an extremely sensitive issue and that, while Europe might be persuaded to ignore its actions in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russian-European relations would be irreparably damaged should Russia directly threaten Europe's energy supply. Indeed, for almost two decades now, Russia has struggled to build a reputation as a reliable supplier of energy, an image occasionally tarnished by gas disputes with neighboring Ukraine.

Geographic Challenges

A cursory look at the map reveals much about the challenges in accessing Azerbaijani and Central Asian hydrocarbons and transit of those fuels by circumventing Russia. The only feasible route for direct delivery of these resources to the international market is through the so-called South Caucasus corridor. To the north lies Russia and to the south Iran, in many ways even less reliable (or at least less predictable) than Russia. In normal circumstances, three major conflicts in the region since the breakup of the Soviet Union—one between Armenia and Azerbaijan and two between Georgia and its separatist regions—would have ruled out the South Caucasus route from the start. However, the alternatives are even more unfavorable, and thus the lesser hazard of the South Caucasus corridor remains the only choice for the foreseeable future.

Russian troops have never been far from this corridor. In this sense, the alternative Caucasus route has always been vulnerable. Russian forces were "busy" during the war in Chechnya, but after the situation in the breakaway republic calmed, they became highly relevant to the situation in Georgia and the pipelines that cross it.

The Russian military's presence in the region is substantial. The 58th Army has about 70,000 troops (according to some sources, more than 100,000), more than 600 tanks, about 2,000 armored vehicles, and is approximately twice the size of the entire Georgian army. The 58th Army is also one of the most combat-ready elements of the Russian armed forces.

However, this army is set to undergo major restructuring in the near future; according to public statements by the Russian Ministry of Defense, the number of officers will be reduced by about two-thirds and the army will be transformed into an "operational group" of eleven brigades. Despite these changes, it will still remain capable of shutting down all pipelines traversing the South Caucasus (if the Russian government ever decided to use force to do so).

There is also the 102nd military base in Armenia, home to approximately 4,000 Russian troops (3,000, according to some sources) equipped with 80 to 100 tanks as well as armored vehicles and combat aircraft. The military relevance of that base with regard to existing and projected pipelines is generally very limited (the level of combat readiness is low and it depends on transit through Georgia and/or Azerbaijan for supplies), yet it is not insignificant.

Another, less publicized, element of the Russian military presence in the region is the Caspian flotilla. According to public sources, the flotilla consists of 12 combat vessels, most of which are fairly old gunships—between 11 and 26 years old. Three ships, though, are new, including the flagship "Tatarstan" (*Gepard*, or *Cheetah*, class), which entered service in 2002, and two *Buyan*-class gunships, the latest of which joined the flotilla in 2006. A new *Cheetah*-class ship, "Dagestan," is expected to be commissioned soon. The flotilla also includes several diesel-powered submarines and a marine brigade.

There have been no public reports of possible missions for the Caspian flotilla beyond guarding borders and combating terrorism. All recent exercises in the Caspian have emphasized the interception of terrorist groups, including several landings of the Marines in the last few years. In principle, though, the fleet could threaten the extraction and transit of oil and gas in the Caspian Sea region.

The reinforcement of the Caspian flotilla began under former Russian president Boris Yeltsin in the late 1990s, before attention was paid to the rest of the Russian navy. The desire to strengthen Russia's hand in the continuing dispute between the Caspian Sea littoral states over the delineation of its waters and seabed seemed to drive this choice. That decision quickly resulted in the commissioning of "Tatarstan," originally intended for the Indian navy, and the construction of *Buyan*-class gunships. The Caspian flotilla remains a reasonably high priority for the navy; it is set to receive new ships in the coming years, and its bases and arsenals have either been reconstructed or built from scratch to replace those that remained outside Russia in 1991.

The longstanding dispute among the Caspian Sea states has not been

resolved. Only Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Russia signed the 2003 agreement meant to divide the seabed. Iran and Turkmenistan continue to object to the principles adopted by the other three. At the moment, international regimes cover only 64 percent of the Caspian seabed and some of that (in the Azerbaijani sector) still remains contested by Iran and Turkmenistan.

The Russian armed presence in the region cannot be called overwhelming, but it is impressive and certainly capable of derailing any alternative pipeline projects. Yet in the last ten years, Russia has not attempted (or threatened) to use its armed forces to do so. Paradoxically, almost all scenarios of a Russian use of force for that purpose have originated either in the South Caucasus (especially in Georgia) or in the West, as an acknowledgment of the potential vulnerability of pipelines. Russian hardliners have been more modest; they mostly posit that significant military force in the Caucasus should give Russia *de facto* control over developments in the region, as well as specifically over the pipelines.

In spite of the Russian military presence, two pipelines – Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) and Baku-Supsa – have operated quite peacefully. Not only has Russia abstained from threatening to use force to interrupt deliveries, it also refrained from bombing them during the "five-day war." However, Azerbaijan's decision to temporarily halt the pumping of oil through the Baku-Supsa line during the conflict demonstrates that the expectation of Russian military action can influence decisionmakers. The BTC was not operational at the time due to an explosion that had disrupted its Turkish leg.

One can conclude that the traditional propensity to equate power with influence simply does not apply in this region. The paradigm informing the analysis of the future of the South Caucasian corridor should be changed.

Pipelines: An Island of Calm in a Sea of Instability

Russia's rather delicate attitude toward pipelines, even those which it does not like and which could undermine its plans for economic development, demonstrates that other forces are at work and that the vulnerability of alternative energy routes has been seriously overestimated.

Instead of attempting to leverage military power, Russia strives to build and maintain an image as a reliable supplier and honest business partner (to the extent that the oil and gas business can be honest). Russian policy in the last decade seems to be informed by the logic of interdependence in its most straightforward, and perhaps primitive, form. Adherence to that logic is hardly surprising given that the formative years of the current generation of Russian leaders falls in the late 1970–80s, the time when the theory was developed and gained prominence. According to their view, mutual, if asymmetric, dependence creates stability, security, and influence. Given Russia's multifaceted dependence on the West (particularly the EU) for credits, consumer products, assembly plant

parts, and so forth, Europe's dependence on Russian oil and gas gives the relationship a necessary degree of balance. If Europe acquires independent access to oil and gas, the relationship becomes one of dependence, which is seen in Russia as a dangerous and even direct threat.

On the other hand, Russian leverage over alternative pipelines is severely limited, more than conventional wisdom would suggest. Central to Russian thinking about this dilemma (the desire to preserve European dependence against the fear of disrupting alternative routes) is the experience of Ukrainian-Russian gas crises. In January 2006, when Moscow cut gas deliveries to Ukraine because they could not agree on a new contract, Ukraine drew upon gas intended for Europe, which suffered a drop in deliveries as a result. Although the disruption was really Kyiv's fault (Ukraine did not admit to siphoning off gas until after the crisis had been resolved), Russia's reputation and relationship with Europe were damaged. An even more serious crisis, which disrupted deliveries to Europe for almost three weeks in January 2009, was more or less blamed equally on Moscow and Kyiv; nevertheless, it strengthened the EU's resolve to construct the Nabucco gas pipeline through the same South Caucasus corridor.

To Moscow, these events underscored two important lessons. First, security of energy supply is of primary importance to Europe, and any direct action affecting it will provoke serious reprisals. Effectively, this aspect of European politics and policy is non-negotiable. Second, Russia is likely to be blamed for any supply disruptions, regardless of their cause. No amount of damage containment efforts can fully rectify the situation.

This is not a matter of fairness, but rather the hard facts of life. In energy politics, some methods are acceptable while others are not. Moscow can use any "normal" instruments of competition in its attempts to undermine alternative oil and gas supply routes. It can develop new routes of its own, such as the North Stream and South Stream projects. It can argue that alternative routes through the South Caucasus are economically inefficient, or it can cut prices to undermine them. It can even engage in all kinds of political intrigues to deny transit (Serbia has recently emerged as a major battleground). However, Moscow will not use raw power to consolidate all transit in its hands because that kind of action would certainly be seen by the West as a hostile act, if not an outright declaration of war.

At a certain level, Russian policy toward alternative pipelines is inconsistent: it regards them as a threat, yet it does not dare touch them. This type of inconsistency is fairly common, however, and is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

Thus, the old adage that "a bad peace is better than a good war" rings true. As long as the region does not erupt into armed conflict, the pipelines are reasonably safe. In this sense, one can disregard the presence of Russian troops in

the vicinity. Business can continue as usual even with the dramatic changes in landscape that followed the Russian-Georgian war.

The special status of pipelines has its limitations, however. Western thinking about the South Caucasus, which often concentrates on oil and gas pipelines at the expense of other variables, is myopic. The existing and potential conflicts in the region are highly complex and are not limited to energy pipeline security. Pipelines themselves may be immune to direct attack, but they can become collateral damage in a war caused by other factors. In the "five-day war" Russia refrained from damaging or taking control of the pipelines, but a larger-scale war could disrupt the delicate arrangement. When tanks begin rolling, oil and gas might have to stop.

Furthermore, relative immunity of pipelines does not offer serious protection to the host country. The presence of pipelines in Georgia and the risk that they might be damaged in a conflict did not stop Russia from interfering. The same situation could be repeated. Simply put, there can be real or perceived challenges to Moscow's interests that would be too serious to disregard. In the case of a larger-scale war, Russia might even see the situation as a pretext to damage pipelines in the South Caucasus "accidentally."

The existing situation has the potential to create a rift between U.S. and European interests. Washington would likely support democracies and states seeking to remain beyond Russia's sphere of influence, even if it results in an increased level of conflict in the region. Conversely, Europe, which depends on oil and gas deliveries through that corridor, might see more benefits from peace, no matter how unstable and precarious. Experience has shown that the South Caucasus can teeter for a long time without tipping into war.

A panacea for the numerous conflicts in the region is hardly realistic, but preventing a new conflagration is in itself a worthy goal. Given Russia's desire to avoid even the appearance of a threat to alternative pipelines, it seems possible to freeze the current situation, no matter how unpleasant. Paradoxically, the maintenance of an uneasy status quo opens doors to outside players; recently, France and the EU have emerged as key players in the region because they are mutually acceptable to the states of the South Caucasus and to Moscow. Unfortunately, the United States does not seem to have much of a chance to moderate. It may be a favorable, even desirable, player to Georgia and Azerbaijan (and perhaps also to Armenia), but not to Russia, Abkhazia, or South Ossetia (or perhaps Nagorno Karabakh).

If the situation in the South Caucasus is judged strictly from the perspective of energy security, the future looks positive. The overwhelming Russian presence in the region can be disregarded. Russia is likely to carefully avoid damaging alternative oil and gas routes through the overt use of force. The main threat to Europe's energy supplies instead comes from the possibility that lingering

conflicts might erupt once again, as the Russian-Georgian war has recently demonstrated, and then pipelines could become collateral damage. Policymakers would thus be advised to treat the situation with extreme caution; where energy security is at stake, "bad peace" will likely remain preferable to "good war."

WAR IN GEORGIA AND THE "RUSSIAN CARD" IN UKRAINIAN POLITICS

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Escalation of the South Ossetian conflict into a Russian-Georgian war immediately changed the security climate in the post-Soviet space. For the first time since 1991, the Russian Federation officially rejected internationally recognized borders. The territorial integrity of post-Soviet states was among the fundamental principles of the "peaceful divorce" that gave rise to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). It took six years of Ukrainian independence before Russia agreed to include this principle in a Treaty on Friendship, Partnership, and Cooperation and formally renounce its territorial claims on Crimea and Sevastopol.

After the war in Georgia, it is a question whether Russia will continue to respect the obligations and promises it made in the 1990s. For now, it is clear that Russia will not tolerate independent and pro-Western foreign policies in its former "fraternal" republics, so long as it can exploit domestic vulnerabilities in these states. Being the closest and most strategically important country for Russia, Ukraine has had to adapt to the changing security environment since August 2008 and resist external and internal challenges.

War and Ukrainian Reaction

Since the early 1990s, Ukraine has supported Georgia's efforts to restore and further preserve its territorial integrity. Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as Moldovan Transdniestria, are cases in which Russian interference and military support of separatists was evident, and they served as warnings to Ukrainian politicians to establish a cautious but firm policy toward separatist-like political movements in Crimea. They also pushed Ukrainian authorities to seek international security guarantees.

In the spirit of solidarity, and to create safeguards against Russian revisionism of the Belovezhsky Accords that created the CIS, Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk and Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze signed a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance in April 1993. While the treaty did not include provisions for military assistance, it clearly stated that the "two High Parties of agreement must not permit use of their territories for preparing and exercising aggression or other acts of force against each other. In case one Party becomes an object of aggression, the other party shall not provide military assistance or any other favor for the aggressor." After fifteen years, this obligation played an important role in shaping Ukraine's position when the Russian Black Sea Fleet (BSF), based in Sevastopol, participated in the war in Georgia. Under the next Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma, other important relevant legal documents were signed, including an Agreement between the Ministries of Defense of Ukraine and Georgia (January 1995) and an Agreement on Military-Technical Cooperation between Ukraine and Georgia (November 1996). These agreements established, respectively, a framework for cooperation between the armed forces of the two states and for arms sales to Tbilisi.

This cooperation intensified after the Orange Revolution. In January 2005, Ukrainian President-elect Viktor Yushchenko and Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili signed the "Carpathian Declaration," which proclaimed support for democratic transition in both countries. The next year the two presidents expressed ideas for creating a "military dimension" to the regional organization GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova).

From this perspective, the Ukrainian reaction to the war in Georgia was foreseeable. However, it did not emerge fully-formed. It evolved from appeals to stop violence in the lead-up to and immediate outbreak of war (a classic diplomatic response to armed conflict similar to the position later developed by the European Union) to a politically demanding statement against Russian interference, calling for withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgia and urging "separatists" to return to negotiations with Tbilisi. After a few days, when the Russian army had advanced deeply into Georgian territory, President Yushchenko along with the presidents of Poland, Estonia, and Lithuania, appeared at a rally in Tbilisi to show political support for President Saakashvili. A presidential decree of August 9 also gave orders to the Cabinet of Ministers to provide humanitarian aid to Georgian refugees and victims of the conflict.

As a next step, President Yushchenko endorsed a Ministry of Foreign Affairs decision to implement new regulations for the movement in Ukrainian waters of the Black Sea Fleet, especially while engaged in military action. The decree was issued after it became clear that a number of BSF warships had cruised near Georgian ports, and it was clearly motivated by the president's desire to demonstratively support Georgia at a critical time. That said, two months earlier the President and the Cabinet of Ministers had already discussed new regulations for the Black Sea Fleet, which the government was instructed to implement. The delay can be attributed to Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko's intention to develop regulations after consultations with Russia (to smooth negotiations over gas supply).

Although the decree exerted little effect on the outcome of the conflict, the action was of great political value for Yushchenko. He demonstrated to his Western partners, especially

in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, that the Russian Fleet in Sevastopol is trouble – a source of instability and a threat to Ukraine's territorial integrity. His message was heard in Washington and on August 16, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice called Yushchenko and expressed strong support for Ukraine's "steps" to stop the conflict. Later, President Yushchenko repeated his concerns about Russia's new aggressive approach toward its neighbors in influential Western press outlets such as *The Times* of London and the *Washington Post*, as well as in discussions during U.S. Vice President Richard Cheney's visit to Kyiv and an EU-Ukraine summit in early September 2008.

The Russian Response and Parliamentary Crisis in Ukraine

From the start, Russia's military intervention in Georgia was accompanied by heavy propagandistic media coverage in neighboring states. The Russian interpretation of events dominated most Ukrainian broadcast and print media in August. On August 4, "preemptive" Russian allegations of Ukraine's involvement in the conflict were aired; these included an accusation by South Ossetia's *de facto* president Eduard Kokoity that Ukraine was selling heavy arms to Georgia. Such claims soon evolved into accusations by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that President Yushchenko was involved in the "ethnic cleansing" and "genocide" of South Ossetians and the killing of Russian peacekeepers. After the ceasefire, the Russian military blamed the interception of Russian bombers on Ukrainian anti-aircraft systems supplied to Georgia and operated, allegedly, by Ukrainian military officers. In early September, Russian government sources started disseminating information about probable economic sanctions against Ukraine.

At the same time, on August 30, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin denied any Russian intentions to take Crimea or Sevastopol back by force. Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov followed suit, noting that Russia would not break the Treaty of Friendship, Partnership, and Cooperation with Ukraine – as long as the BSF Agreement remained untouched and Ukraine did not accede to a NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP). Through this mixture of harsh and "pragmatic" messages, Russia intended to depict Yushchenko as an "irresponsible nationalist" and promote the idea that Ukrainian authorities were adhering to a policy that fatally misperceived their country's security interests.

Debates over the Russian-Georgian war became a tool in Ukrainian domestic politics, in particular as a pretext for the long-awaited breakup of the pro-government majority in parliament. The presidential secretariat first blamed Prime Minister Tymoshenko for "betraying" national interests because she did not give her immediate support to Georgia in order to broaden her political support during the 2009 presidential campaign (instead of aligning with Yushchenko, Tymoshenko adopted the more cautious EU approach). While clearly supporting the presidential line, Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs Volodymyr Ohryzko (himself appointed by the president) diplomatically observed that the prime minister did not make official statements about Georgia because foreign policy lay in the exclusive sphere of the president. Despite this explanation, the presidential secretariat continued to accuse Tymoshenko of colluding with the Kremlin and even passed alleged "proof" of her activities to the security service for investigation. In November, the Prosecutor General's Office cleared Tymoshenko from suspicion of treason, finding no

evidence of crime.

To some extent, this new political scandal reminded people of the "corruption scandal" of 2005, when Tymoshenko blasted Yushchenko's "crony decisionmaking," an act which resulted in the dissolution of the first Orange Coalition. This time, it was Tymoshenko who was the target of attack, and she reacted in the same manner Yushchenko had three years before. She agreed to form a tactical anti-presidential parliamentary majority with the Party of Regions, either to limit the president's power or force him to retreat from his policy of attacks against the government.

As always, the opposition benefited from rivalry in the "Orange" camp. In September, the Party of Regions accused the president of covering up an illegal arms trade with Georgia. With the help of the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc (BYT), it founded a special parliamentary commission to investigate. This commission served as a platform for disseminating controversial and unproven allegations to the media about Yushchenko's involvement in the Caucasian war that echoed Russian propagandistic claims. Simultaneously, the leader of the Party of Regions, Viktor Yanukovych, called for recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This maneuver promised to position the Party of Regions in the eyes of the Kremlin and Ukraine's own pro-Russian electorate as the only political force meeting Russian requirements of a "true ally." However, it caused a stormy reaction in Ukraine, and the party was forced to downplay its leader's statement.

For his part, President Yushchenko made an effort to try and seize pro-Western voters from Tymoshenko. He described the cooperation between Tymoshenko and Yanukovych as a tool of "Russian imperial influence" and a scenario for "destroying the gains of the Orange Revolution." The pro-presidential party, Our Ukraine, quit the ruling coalition, triggering a process of early parliamentary elections (the president has the constitutional right to call early elections if factions fail to form a new government within 30 days after the collapse of a ruling coalition).

Negotiations for a new coalition failed in this atmosphere of distrust and mutual accusations. Yushchenko, Tymoshenko, and Yanukovych not only refused to work on a compromise for developing a common attitude toward the Russian-Georgian war but also used the issue in their political campaigns. Furthermore, Russia redoubled its efforts to sow divisions among Ukrainian politicians. Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and President Dmitry Medvedev directly named Yushchenko as an "accomplice" of Saakashvili's "crimes," while holding friendly meetings with Tymoshenko and Yanukovych. All this played into the hands of the presidential secretariat's theory of a conspiracy between the Kremlin and the prime minister and contributed to the president's decision in early October to dissolve parliament and schedule early elections for December 2008. For its part, the Prime Minister's camp interpreted Yushchenko's actions as a plan to remove Tymoshenko from office and create a coalition with the "pragmatic wing" of the Party of Regions, re-positioning Yushchenko on the eve of the 2009 presidential campaign. The BYT thus did everything possible to disrupt the schedule and prevent pre-term elections. To date, their efforts have been successful. On December 9, despite opposition from the presidential secretariat, the previous coalition was restored with the participation of a third

party, the Lytvyn Bloc, in exchange for its leader, Volodymyr Lytvyn, being re-elected to his old post as parliamentary speaker. Due to this struggle, Ukraine entered the current financial and gas crisis in political disarray, and with the prospect of early elections not yet eliminated (due to the coalition's fragility).

President Yushchenko was warned by Western diplomats that the dissolution of the Rada would erase even the slightest of chances to receive a MAP from NATO in December. In addition, sociological surveys by the National Institute for Strategic Studies, commissioned by the presidential secretariat, revealed that Tymoshenko's position of not supporting the Russian or the Georgian side was more appealing to voters than the polarized views of either Yushchenko or Yanukovych. Although Yushchenko was able to increase his own rating by several percentage points (at the expense of Tymoshenko), less than 10 percent of those polled believed that the prime minister had committed treason. At the same time, the political crisis which began in September, and the inability of elites to agree about basic issues, decreased the level of public trust in state institutions to its lowest point since 2004.

Conclusions

Although concerns about a potential threat to Ukraine's territorial integrity from Russia increased after the war in Georgia, Ukraine also faced other more familiar and formidable hazards of Russian political interference: the breeding of internal civil disarray, interference in domestic politics, and the exploitation of issues such as gas pricing, the Russian language, the Moscow Patriarchate, and opposition to NATO integration.

Different reactions to the war in Georgia became one of the factors in the subsequent parliamentary crisis which helped Russia pursue its own objectives and which damaged Ukraine's image and position in its relations with NATO and the EU. The war in Georgia exposed significant weaknesses in Ukrainian political and security institutions, as well as the rigidity of the stances of political forces in power and in opposition. It also revealed the absence of sufficient instruments to influence and shape public opinion in order to shield it from Russian propaganda campaigns, a fact which Ukrainian decisionmakers ought to take into account.

At the end of 2008, during the gas crisis with Russia, Yushchenko and Tymoshenko issued a joint statement defending Ukrainian interests. It remains to be seen whether this demonstration of unity will be translated into real progress.

RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN RELATIONS AFTER THE GEORGIAN WAR

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 51

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There is little doubt that the August 2008 crisis in Georgia affected relations between Russia and Ukraine. At the time, a number of analysts voiced serious concerns that Ukraine would be the next addressee of Russia's growing neo-imperialist assertiveness. These concerns now look even more justified. Since the beginning of autumn (and *de facto* for far longer) Ukraine has been in a state of political crisis and lacking an effective and responsible system of governance. It indeed appears to be a lucrative target for outside influence.

Surely, Moscow is tempted to exploit the weakness of its neighbor and take revenge for the Orange Revolution, the biggest foreign policy debacle that Vladimir Putin has experienced throughout his years in power. Yet, many factors place constraints on Russian behavior. The real situation, and consequently the decisionmaking process, is far more debatable than alarmist accounts about "Ukraine being next" are comfortable to admit.

However, "debatable" does not mean unpredictable. It can be argued that the continuation of the status quo -- a process of muddling through -- is more likely in the immediate future of Russian-Ukrainian relations than a revision resulting from Russian actions. This status quo is far from the "strategic partnership" rhetoric that parties still occasionally use to describe their mutual relationship, but it is even further away from open confrontation, notwithstanding the wide range of economic and political issues that are constantly surfacing.

Changing Context: Emotions

So what has changed since August 2008? It is impossible not to notice the worsening emotional atmosphere, a result of the desire of Ukraine's president, Viktor Yushchenko, and circles around him to express solidarity with Georgia, combined with the Russian belief (justified or not) that armaments Ukraine supplied to Georgia were used to kill Russian citizens. Stories about Ukrainian air defense systems and their crews have a stronger power of persuasion today than analogous stories about female snipers from the time of the first Chechen War. In the 1990s, the "brotherhood" paradigm was still alive and well; adversarial behavior was considered an exception, an initiative of individuals. Today, such tales fit well with the image of a generally unfriendly Ukrainian state.

The general atmosphere of nervousness, along with the uncertainty in Ukraine's domestic political situation, likely dictated a number of Ukrainian actions that are hard to consider well-calculated unless their purpose was to provoke Moscow. In August, President Yushchenko attempted to decree a new regime for the ships of the Black Sea Fleet to enter and depart Ukraine's territorial waters that was much more restrictive than before. Ukraine's requested level of "transparency" would make missions almost pointless militarily, as the ships would have to report their plans in advance. Short of naval conflict, this regime cannot be enforced, as it was not agreed upon bilaterally. The very attempt to introduce it, however, had an obvious political impact.

Subsequently, Ukrainian authorities tried to stop the broadcast of Russian television channels by national cable operators, prompting Russian protests. While the rationale behind this decision might be understandable – Russian broadcast media could be considered a channel for spreading unwelcome political influences -- the timing of the action is not: if Russian television has failed to undermine Ukrainian statehood in seventeen years of independence, why has it suddenly become so dangerous?

Finally, in November, Viktor Yushchenko stated that Russian president Dmitry Medvedev's refusal to come to Kyiv to participate in a commemoration of the victims of the Holodomor (the 1930s famine) "insults the memory of the dead." This was a statement that went far beyond diplomatic protocol.

Changing Context: Rational Choices

Russian-Georgian relations in this decade demonstrate only too well the role of emotions and sensitivities in Russian policymaking. This may still have implications for Ukraine as well. If emotions are put aside, however, one can conclude that the situation does not warrant any urgent countermeasures on Russia's part.

To begin with, the turmoil in Ukraine is also a problem for Russia. It is very difficult to exercise structural influence in a country where no internal political deal can hold longer than several months, and where the ability of a chosen ally to keep a promise is limited by the unreliability of its temporary political companions. Furthermore, today's Kyiv is so different from both contemporary Russia and the pre-Orange Ukraine that Moscow once knew that even a proper understanding of the dynamic situation, let alone a timely reaction to the changes, is difficult.

On a day-to-day level, this explains the fluctuations between Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko and opposition leader Viktor Yanukovych as Moscow's major potential ally. Yanukovych would seem to the preferred choice: he is a proven partner and, unlike Tymoshenko, has never published an article in a prominent Western journal called "Containing Russia." However, Ukraine's political crisis has brought back a strategic debate from the 1990s on whether an effort to wield post-imperial influence in neighboring states is useful to Russia or only imports instability. Interestingly, the latter position is now argued by Modest Kolerov, formerly the head of the department in the presidential administration dealing with compatriots abroad and an individual whose views are normally far from benevolent toward Ukraine.

Second, unfortunate as it is for the country, Ukraine for the time being will be left in the grey zone of European security. Unsurprisingly, a European Union-Ukraine summit in September failed to offer anything that would resemble a membership perspective to Ukraine. In December, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization also did not grant Ukraine a Membership Action Plan (MAP). The weakening of the challenge of NATO enlargement to Ukraine means that Moscow can approach the situation far more calmly. There is no need to immediately undertake measures of direct pressure.

Third, Russia does not seek open confrontation with the West, in general, or Europe, in particular. After the Georgian crisis, Moscow made a considerable effort to demonstrate that its actions vis-à-vis Georgia represented a special case and were not part of a trend toward reinstating imperial predominance in the entire region of the Western post-Soviet states. Although Moscow had to be satisfied with the fact that its uncompromising stance on the issue of South Ossetian and Abkhazian independence ended with Europe returning to "business-almost-as-usual," Brussels will not give Russia unlimited leeway. A major crisis in Russian-Ukrainian relations, should it occur, could provoke a stronger response by a united Europe, given Ukraine's size and its role in European energy security.

Fourth, Ukraine is not like Georgia in a key way. Like the latter, Ukraine has an emerging political nation which, regardless of its ethnic composition, has demonstrated the ability to rally around the flag and resist outside pressure —

recall the tension surrounding the Tuzla island boundary dispute in 2003. However, if one were to think the "unthinkable" (according to Putin, a military conflict between Ukraine and Russia), Ukraine has a conventional military capability that would allow it to inflict upon an invader far greater damage than Georgia did during its war with Russia (and Russian casualties were large enough even then). In November, Ukrainian Defense Minister Yuri Yekhanurov signaled Kyiv's readiness to protect the country's military security interests by announcing an intention to redeploy troops closer to Ukraine's southern and southeastern borders (even if the plan ultimately does not materialize due to a lack of funds). As for energy, Russia knows very well the degree it depends on Ukrainian transit routes and storage capacity for its gas export to Europe, and that any protracted conflict in the field will have a price tag.

This conclusion bridges the gap to the last, but not least, point. An economization of relations between Russia and Ukraine has taken place. Russia has a huge economic interest in Ukraine, even if murky and non-transparent, and an aggressive policy might be very damaging for Russia's various economic actors, especially in a time of global recession.

Inertial Policy

Russian decisionmakers may well assess the situation differently. Russian policymaking is a black box, and it is very difficult to trace the connection between inputs and outputs. However, the policy outcomes that appeared in the fall suggest that the choices made are of a status quo rather than revisionist type.

First and foremost, despite a number of loud statements to the contrary, Russia did not seek to withdraw from the 1997 Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership. Instead, the treaty was extended. This was an act of primary significance, as with this treaty Russia recognizes the territorial integrity of Ukraine within its current borders. Even though this does not rule out the possibility of future actions to mobilize pro-Russian and even secessionist sentiment in Crimea, irredentist claims will continue to lack a formal point of reference.

Second, none other than Russian Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov, known for his rather hawkish attitudes on many issues, said in October that if the lease agreement for the Black Sea Fleet was not extended after 2017, he could imagine it leaving Sevastopol. Admittedly, this statement ran contrary to many other, no less official, ones which asserted that Russia was interested in doing its utmost to make sure the Fleet will keep its basing rights. Yet it leaves hope that interstate negotiations could indeed focus on the details of the troops' withdrawal.

Third, 2009 is unlikely to begin with energy drama, despite the chronic gas controversy concerning future prices and current debts which repeats itself at

least almost every autumn. According to media reports, Ukraine has more than average gas reserves due to a warm autumn, whereas recession-related consumption decreases in Europe will only raise Russian exporters' dependence on Ukraine's storage capacity. In this situation, cutting supplies of gas to Ukraine would create more problems for Russia than it would solve, whereas reaching an overarching compromise would be in both countries' mutual interest. Indeed, in October, Prime Ministers Tymoshenko and Putin signed a memorandum that stipulates direct contracts between Russian Gazprom and Ukraine's Naftogaz, eliminating the institute of intermediaries, as well as a transitional period of three years for Ukraine to start paying market prices for gas. Ukrainian authorities also said they had reached an understanding with Gazprom concerning supply and transit contracts until 2019.

Finally, Moscow will continue to react in its usual rhetorical way when it disagrees with Ukraine's policies in the humanitarian sphere, whether in regards to Russian media or differing views of historical events. This approach, however, contains nothing new.

Conclusions

Ukraine's current foreign policy difficulties are primarily a result of the power ambitions of its elite and, particularly, the failure of the Orange forces to create an effective, honest, and truly reformist government. This is the major reason why Ukraine has not received a NATO MAP. Supporters of the idea have lacked a convincing argument as to why a country whose politicians cannot find a common language at home should be given a seat at a table where crucial security decisions will be made.

This has also been the major source of trouble in Ukraine's relations with Russia. After the Orange Revolution, it seemed that Russia had lost the role of kingmaker in Ukraine's domestic politics and a veto on its foreign policy choices. If there are now reasons to believe that Russia is regaining its position, it is because it feels invited to exploit the emerging rifts within Ukraine.

In this situation, the West should be primarily interested in restoring a credible system of governance in Ukraine, based on principles of electoral democracy, political responsibility, and accountability before the people, and in fostering new political elites, rather than in bringing the country into Western security alliances.

Making Ukraine a success story for its own citizens would have a positive effect on Russia as well as on Russian-Ukrainian relations. Western priorities should be geared toward helping Ukraine address its economic problems, which will worsen amid the global crisis, as well as on issues of energy efficiency. The current period of lower energy prices is an opportune moment for adapting to the market system, but during a recession preventing the temptation to return to

special deals will not be an easy task.

AZERBAIJAN AFTER THE RUSSIA-GEORGIAN WAR

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 52

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The five-day war between Russia and Georgia dramatically changed the situation in the region while significantly impacting the domestic and foreign policies of the states of the South Caucasus. Despite the fact that Azerbaijan was not directly involved in the conflict, the war forced it to re-evaluate its priorities and long-term strategies. The inability of Western countries, in particular the United States, to respond adequately to Russia's actions led to gross disappointment among the public.

Change of Perceptions

The war put Baku in a very delicate position. Abstaining from supporting an ally would have negatively impacted Azerbaijan's image abroad and in the public eye. On the other hand, active support of Georgia would have infuriated Russia and could have led to a deterioration of relations. In the end, Azerbaijan chose a strategy of "soft" support for Georgia, which included refraining from harsh statements against Russia. The day after Georgian operations began in South Ossetia, Khazar Ibrahim, Press Secretary for the Foreign Ministry, stated that Azerbaijan favored a solution to the South Ossetia conflict based on the maintenance of Georgia's territorial integrity and Georgian adherence to international law.

The results of the war were assessed in different ways in Baku. If Georgia had succeeded in its attempt to bring South Ossetia back into the state, Azerbaijan would have had a strong argument to settle the Karabakh conflict using

Georgian actions as a precedent. It would have given the Azerbaijani side *carte blanche* in its negotiations with Armenia. However, the Azerbaijani government would have also been placed in an uneasy position. It would have been difficult to explain to the public, including hundreds of thousands of refugees, why Azerbaijan was delaying the launch of military operations in Karabakh. Meanwhile, Russia's bold actions and the Western inability to check Russia brought back old fears of a "mighty Russia" returning to the Caucasus. The hope that the Karabakh conflict could be solved without Russian involvement has faded, paving the way for resurgence of the old belief that the key to the conflict's resolution lies in Moscow.

Unlike in Ukraine, there was no split in Azerbaijani society regarding Georgian actions in South Ossetia. Although no public polls were conducted, the majority of Azerbaijani newspapers and news agencies – independent, opposition, and even some pro-government – were supportive of Georgia. Several protests were held in front of the Russian embassy, but they were quickly dispersed by police.

The weak response of the West, however, had negative consequences on its image in Azerbaijan. The public previously accused the West of applying double standards in its relations with the states of the South Caucasus. This was particularly true with regard to the public perception of the Karabakh war and Western support of Armenia. The Georgian conflict, which demonstrated the West's inability to protect a young and emerging democracy, will further harden this perception. An average Azerbaijani could legitimately ask: "if the West did not support Christian Georgia, will it ever come to the aid of Muslim Azerbaijan?" After such developments, it will be extremely difficult for the Azerbaijani public to continue to believe in Euro-Atlantic integration and NATO membership. Instead, it is likely that Azerbaijan will try to further soften its approach and work to maintain good relations with Moscow.

Russia and the Karabakh Conflict after the Georgian War

Russia perfectly understands that the continuing deterioration of relations between Moscow and Tbilisi seriously hurts its ally, Armenia. Five days of war demonstrated the vulnerability of the Armenian economy to external shocks. Russia must do something to save its ally from economic collapse and further isolation. The worsening economic and political situation could force Armenia to draw closer to the West, leading to a situation in which the solution to the Karabakh conflict does not at all depend on Russia. Thus, while there may be no sign of normalization of relations between Russia and Georgia, Moscow does seek normalization of Azerbaijani and Turkish relations with Armenia. This would provide Moscow with a transport link to Armenia through Azerbaijan and help Armenia fare better economically.

At the same time, Moscow realizes that since the war, Russia has a more

negative image around the world, including in Azerbaijan. By siding with separatist regimes, Moscow has risked alienating Azerbaijan due to the parallels that could be drawn with Karabakh.

As a result of these considerations, President Dmitry Medvedev seized on the opportunity to mediate between Armenia and Azerbaijan and reinvigorate the negotiation process. On November 2, the presidents of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Russia met in Moscow to discuss ways to solve the Karabakh conflict. After the meeting, the presidents of the three states signed a joint declaration. In it, Azerbaijani and Armenian presidents Ilham Aliyev and Serzh Sarkisyan agreed to intensify their efforts to find a political settlement. "They will facilitate the improvement of the situation in the South Caucasus and establishment of stability and security in the region through a political settlement of the conflict based on the principles and norms of international law and the decisions and documents adopted in this framework," said Russian President Dmitry Medvedev.

Turkey and the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform

At the height of the Russian-Georgian war, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan proposed the formation of the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform, envisioning a number of new methods for crisis management and conflict resolution. The Platform would primarily focus on security, stability, and development with the participation of the South Caucasus, the Russian Federation, and Western countries. The main areas of concern for this pact include the restructuring of the Caucasian states' economies, ensuring development and regional cooperation, fostering free trade, supporting the private sector, ensuring environmental protection, putting to use existing and future energy and transportation lines extending from east to west, ensuring administrative transparency, and tackling refugee issues.

The fact that the Azerbaijani government did not rush to endorse the new Turkish initiative raised suspicions that Baku was unaware of Erdogan's plans. This was surprising considering the long-term united positions of both states toward regional pacts, unions, and agreements. It was also clear that the Turkish government's initiative was prepared in haste and is not genuine. It simply revitalizes previously proposed plans – by the United States in 1999 for the Caucasus Cooperation Forum; Heydar Aliyev's 1999 Security and Cooperation Pact for the South Caucasus; and Turkish president Demirel's Pact of Stability for the South Caucasus proposed in 2000.

The Turkish plan was met in Baku without much enthusiasm. Knowing the fate of previous agreements and given the contradicting interests and ongoing conflicts in the region, Azerbaijan is not optimistic that the Platform can make a

significant breakthrough. Baku, however, became worried about several tendencies in Turkish foreign policy in the region. Turkish president Abdullah Gul's visit to Yerevan in September 2008 and his meetings with President Sarkisyan have caused Baku to think that Turkey and Armenia might be heading toward reconciliation and a potential re-opening of the border. Baku fears that such negotiations are being conducted without taking Azerbaijani interests into consideration. If the Turkish-Armenian border were re-opened, Azerbaijan would lose one of the strongest levers in talks with Armenia on Karabakh. Gul's visit to Baku a week later did not clarify the situation. The Azerbaijani public, unaware of the ongoing talks, remained skeptical about a breakthrough in the Caucasus in terms of peace and security.

Meanwhile, rapid Russian-Turkish rapprochement, Turkey's muted criticism of Russian actions in Georgia, and the further deepening of relations between the two countries have made Baku uncomfortable. Analysts even began to talk of a pact between the two powers, similar to the Treaty of Kars, signed between the Bolsheviks and Kemalist Turkey in 1923, that left the Caucasus in Soviet hands. Of course, nobody believes in the real possibility of such events occurring again. Regardless, the absence of the United States in the Platform raises questions about the plan's viability.

Azerbaijan and GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova)

While initially hailed and supported by the United States and the EU, GUAM later lost its attractiveness to the West. The absence of visible actions from the member-states made this organization more like a club of countries dissatisfied with Russia than a practical transnational institution. The anti-Russian rhetoric and direction of the organization were not enough to cement the weak military, economic, and political ties between countries. The last attempt to revive GUAM was made in Batumi in July 2008, when the presidents of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Ukraine urged the organization to become more active in resolving the so-called "frozen conflicts" existing in three member countries (Georgia, Azerbaijan and Moldova) and adversely affecting the fourth member, Ukraine.

The Russian invasion of Georgia became the first real test for the organization since its founding. While Georgia and Ukraine took firm stands against the Russian invasion, Azerbaijan (together with Moldova) did not rush to support its Caucasian ally. There are a few explanations for this relatively muted response. Baku perfectly understood from the beginning that the West was not going to intervene. It would have been naïve to believe that the West would provide assistance after the Russian army captured Gori and other Georgian territories. Siding with Georgia could have inflicted Russia's wrath toward Azerbaijan. Of course it would not have led to an invasion, but it could have resulted in border closures, persecution of Azerbaijani migrants, and the provoking of anti-

Azerbaijani hysteria in Russia, as well as siding with Armenia in the resolution of the Karabakh conflict. All these consequences were correctly assessed by the Azerbaijani government. Siding with Georgia as Ukraine and other Eastern European countries did would not help Georgia but could harm Azerbaijan in many ways. As a consequence, Azerbaijan chose instead to support Georgia economically and on the basis of bilateral relations rather than within the GUAM framework.

It is likely that GUAM as an organization will be dormant for a certain period of time. With the political crisis in Ukraine and continued Russian occupation of Georgia's territory, a possible solution to the Karabakh conflict in Azerbaijan's favor and a solution to the Transdniestrian conflict in Moldova's favor would make it difficult, if not impossible, to strengthen relations within GUAM. Azerbaijan and Moldova will try to divert the anti-Russian direction of organization and make it more neutral. However, even this can change in the near future. It is easy to see that membership in GUAM as well as Azerbaijani aspirations to join NATO are used by Azerbaijan as leverage in its relations with Moscow. If Azerbaijan could successfully "sell" these factors to Russia for a favorable outcome on the Karabakh conflict, then Baku would ignore GUAM and continue a soft policy toward Russia.

Energy Projects

The war in Georgia brought back longstanding fears and concerns that Russia would attempt to seize control of the pipelines running through Georgia. Sober analyses from Baku, however, suggest that Russia has already acquiesced to the existence of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil and Baku-Erzurum gas pipelines. Russia does not see these pipelines as a threat to either of its positions of energy or political dominance in the region. The fact that Kazakhstan started to export its oil to the West through the BTC pipeline after the war, even while Astana was keen to support Russia's actions in Georgia, shows that Russia does not object to oil transportation to the West by its allies. Neither the BTC nor the Baku-Erzurum pipelines can challenge Russia's role as a major player in the energy market.

Conversely, the Nabucco project which starts in Turkey and ends in Austria could diminish Russia's energy role in Eastern Europe. The gas for the Nabucco pipeline is supposed to be supplied in the first stage from Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. Intended from the start to be a tool to provide energy independence from Russia to Eastern and Central European countries, Nabucco could challenge Russian power in these states. Currently, Russia is able to meet at most only 30 percent of European gas demand. However, Eastern Europe and Turkey, in particular, are heavily dependent on Russian gas. Russia is desperately seeking ways to return to Eastern Europe, and the monopolization of the energy supply is one of its options. Being a monopolist in the Eastern

European gas supply, Russia could easily manipulate public opinion and even governments in these countries. As one old saying goes "if oil is money, gas is power." The fact that the Russians did not attack the BTC pipeline shows that Russia did not intend to disrupt the flow of oil to the West. That is not the aim of Medvedev's government. Russia's goal is to stop new projects including the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline and Nabucco from being implemented by demonstrating the vulnerability of such projects.

For its part, Baku already receives millions of dollars from its oil sales and has no need to sell gas to obtain additional revenue. What Azerbaijan *does* need is strategic integration with the EU—otherwise, it could just as well sell its gas to Russia at a negotiated price. If Azerbaijan can obtain promises of strategic integration from the EU, then its gas will flow westward and Europe will have diversification. If not, then the gas will go to Russia, Gazprom's pressure on Central Asian producers will increase, and, subsequently, westward movement of all gas from Central Asia will take place exclusively through Russian-controlled transit networks—ensuring a complete lack of diversification. It is not surprising that a few months before the war, Russian President Medvedev visited Baku and offered to buy all gas allocated for the Nabucco project at "market" prices. From an economic perspective such an argument would be highly favorable. Azerbaijan would be able to secure the sale of its gas without incurring the additional cost of building a new gas pipeline. As in the case of GUAM or NATO membership, the Nabucco project is another important tool of leverage for Azerbaijan in its relations with Russia. Nabucco does not provide any added value to Azerbaijan in terms of political importance or economic benefits. The project is mostly beneficial for Eastern Europe. If Russia were to agree with Azerbaijan on a solution to the Karabakh conflict, Baku could sacrifice the Nabucco project to Russian ambitions.

Conclusion

The strike on Georgia could be considered a serious warning to Western policymakers to forgo building a network of alternative energy transport routes in the Black Sea-Caspian sea region. The ability of the Russian army to disrupt oil flow from the Caspian region to Europe shows that Russian interests in the region should not be ignored. The conflict demonstrated that in the absence of any visible support for Georgia from the West, Azerbaijan should be very cautious not to irritate Russia. It must try to convince Moscow that the conflicts in the Caucasus, including in Karabakh, work against Russian interests. The Azerbaijani government should also work closely with Georgia and Russia to prevent possible future conflicts that could once and forever close the gates of opportunity for the whole region.

HEMSHIN, HOMSHETSI, OR HEMSHINLI?

ARMENIAN SPEAKING MUSLIM PEOPLE OF THE BLACK SEA REGION

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This memo is based primarily on field research material gathered in the areas of Hemshil settlements, including the villages of Vpered, Erik, Kim, Kalinin, and Kubanskaya, all of which are in the Apsheronsk district, Krasnodar Territory, Russian Federation, and the villages of Sarpi, Akhalsopeli, Kakhaberi, Gonio, Dzharnali, Feriya, and Urekhi in the Khelvachauri district, Adjara, Georgia. The memo is about identity transformation affected by social context and political background/pressure.

Hemshils (they call themselves *Homshetsi*) are normally considered to be Armenian-speaking Turks possessing what has been referred to as an "imprecise" or "migrating" ethnic identity. The majority of researchers believe that Hemshils are the descendants of Armenians from the Hamshen region on the Eastern Anatolian coast of the Black Sea who were subjected to forced Islamization.

Factors that Promote Marginalisation of the Hemshils

The Hemshils simultaneously bear more than one identity. Which factors can be considered to have influenced this process? Ethnic identity has frequently (one might say, cyclically) played a fateful role in the history of the Hemshils. National concepts, both among modern-day Hemshils and their forebearers, emerged from difficult personal experiences in contemporary cultures, in which national identities have led to disastrous situations that constitute a threat to physical existence. Complex turning points in the history of the Hemshils appear to have a direct correlation to the fact that

they resided in frontier areas (Turkey, Georgia, the border with the USSR). That is, they were marginal by definition. In fact, it is the Hemshils' location on the border and their close personal ties to Turkey that provided, as Alexander Nekrich pointed out, the ostensible reasons for their internal deportation in 1944, under the so-called "preventive measure during wartime that rendered essential the 'desirability' and 'loyalty' of the border populations."

Having been left within the borders of the USSR, the Hemshils theoretically could have counted on relative stability, insofar as "ethnic identity was, in practice, of little significance." Under the "leveling" Soviet model of socialization, nationality formed part of the background of general daily Soviet culture. However, this concerned everyone except the Hemshils and other "undesirable" peoples (including Germans, Greeks, Kurds, Georgian Muslims, Turks, Chechens, Ingush, Karachai, and Crimean Tatars) who were exiled by Soviet authorities during World War II. In this instance, the Hemshils' Turkish identity played a critical role (in contrast with the reality of the Pontic-Anatolian context) because of the threat posed by poor political relations with Turkey during the war.

To this, one can add the political and economic interests of the higher administration and ordinary inhabitants of Adjara (in the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic) at the time. These factors were not decisive, but they did dictate strategies that ultimately had a negative effect upon the Hemshils' return to their former residences and their receipt of compensation for loss of property. Of particular interest is the local population (Georgians, Laz) who secretly had an interest both in ethnic "cleansing" (the Georgian administration), and in acquiring the property of the hardworking and usually prosperous Hemshils (some ordinary citizens). According to informant testimony, however, the process of settling direct neighbors in the Hemshils' homes was not an easy one. The local inhabitants, bound to the newly-exiled Hemshils by ties of friendship and neighborliness, often refused to move into the Hemshils' empty houses. The Georgian government was forced to disseminate propaganda and invite young families from the mountainous village of Khulo, though they too were not completely willing to be taken from their large patriarchal families. On November 25, 1944, in accordance with decree No. 6279 of the Committee of State Security (KGB) of the USSR, several hundred families of Hemshils were deported to Central Asia as an ethnic group.

Having lived through the "Special Settlement" regime, the Hemshils began to recover after the 1956 rehabilitation that granted them equal rights and removed the stigma of "traitors to the homeland." However, they faced new destructive problems linked with the so-called "parade of sovereignty," such as the disintegration of the USSR and ethnic conflicts in the independent states on the periphery of Russia. Under pressure from nationalist bandit groups in Kyrgyzstan, the Hemshils were again forced to abandon their homes and move to Krasnodar Territory.

Paradigms of Hemshil Identity

Since the beginning ("as far as we ourselves can remember"), the Hemshils have been carriers of a dual identity -- Turkish (based on religion) and Hemshil (based on language). Hemshils speak two domestic languages, Turkish and Hemshil, although,

thanks to their knowledge of Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Kazakh, and Russian, the group is multilingual. Also noteworthy is the hypertrophied (Sunni) Muslim identity of many Hemshils, especially among older people. The reinforcement of their faith can most likely be attributed to contact with the Muslim cultures of Central Asia during the period of exile from 1944 to 1989. During that the same time, unsuccessful attempts were made to establish contact with Armenia to facilitate the removal of several groups of Hemshil intellectuals from Kyrgyzstan. Turkish identity is fairly robust and tends to be in the foreground, especially in social situations. In field research conducted by V. Kurylev, two young Hemshils (both born in 1960) introduced themselves as Turks, and only later added that according to their passports they were Hemshils.

With regard to the 1980s migration to Krasnodar Territory, this group's sense of identity is even more complex, revealing nomadic forms of identification. This is primarily linked to the fact that after many centuries the Hemshils again found themselves intertwined with their original historic context. To the great surprise of Hemshils themselves, they discovered that their "original" language, which they called Hemshin (*homshesma*), was completely comprehensible and used by the neighboring "*hamshen*" Armenians. However, as confessional identity among the Hemshils is strong, there is a tendency among ordinary Hemshils to strengthen a robust Turkish (Muslim) identity and to distance themselves from their Armenian neighbors. It is likely that the Hemshils experience all the paradoxicality of the phenomenon of an "Armenian Muslim," given the connotations of Armenian history relayed by their neighbors in the course of everyday life. Nevertheless, sources also expressed themselves as follows: "Our native tongue is *homshesma*, we were Armenians but became Muslims, but I have no idea how that came about," and, "Our native tongue is Hemshil, it's like Armenian." Turkish identity and the degree to which it is fixed depend, according to interview data, upon profession and upon the intensity of people's links to the Turkish economy and other Turks. However, several issues arise: "In Turkey, people often say we are not real Turks and ask who we are. I usually answer: by nationality, I am a Turk, my people are the Hemshils. I am a Muslim and so is everyone there, and that's that!" "I do business with Turkey. My colleague [in Turkey] says 'you aren't a Turk.' I answer that I am an Ottoman, so there!"

Muslim spirituality and religious practices fill the daily life of the older generation in many families - prayer five times a day (*namaz*), frequent washing (*abdest*), and annual observance of the month-long fast (*ramazan*). These rituals imbue every sphere of daily life, and in particular the wedding cycle, including the wedding itself (the compulsory *nikah* or *nikoh* ritual that is the Muslim equivalent of the Christian wedding ceremony) and sexual practices (the compulsory *ghusur*, ablutions "from the ends of the hair to the heel" immediately after intercourse). Young Hemshils are either completely indifferent to religion or observe the laws of Islam as a formality. Greater adherence to the "rules" of identity, however, arises under beneficial circumstances. For example, a Hemshil woman who wishes to protect her son from the dangers of service in the Russian army invests the maximum effort to send him to Turkey to study to become a mullah. Some Hemshils react negatively to the least allusion to their former Christian or Armenian origins. As a rule, these are usually those who derive some advantage from articulating

one identity rather than another.

A degree of marginalization is often reflected by informants. A Hemshil woman from Batumi complained that a jealous Muslim Hemshil in Kemal-Pasha was still called Ziya Gyavur (*gyavur* means faithless, an infidel). "We belong nowhere, that's what is so awful. In Russia we are Muslims, in Turkey *gyavurs*." Often it is precisely these spontaneous reflexes, thinking aloud, that reveal the direct process of constructing ethnic identity:

> "What is a homeland? Where you are born and grow up. But we don't have that. In this century we are migrants, from Turkey to Batumi, from Batumi to Kyrgyzstan, Central Asia, and here. A homeland is somewhere where people accept you, where they know you, respect you, value you. We don't have that here. […] Already we can't seek our past because our past is in different places. Some say that our homeland is where we were born, let's go there. Fine, but what about our children? They already speak a different language, they have been brought up differently."

Thus, the formulation of Hemshil identity, the Hemshil ethnic code, is based on an all-embracing marginalization, the community's exclusion from social networks in the host culture. These divisions have a huge social significance at the micro-level. People need to be able to present themselves in society, and this influences what sort of niche they can occupy in that society or whether they can occupy one at all. Formulating this code has a direct relation to real history, which is specifically constructed on "fate," mobilizing collective identity on the principle that "if they don't accept us in the new society we will create our own internal solidarity." The result is a closed community. In this sense, the choice is predetermined. Social development in the host society is made exceedingly difficult, while social life outside of one's own community is almost non-existent.

Marking of a New Marginalization

The ambiguous situation of the Hemshils of Krasnodar has driven the Hemshils to confusion and misunderstandings with the local population and, especially, with local official structures that cannot distinguish who is who. In this multi-ethnic context, in which there is a multiplicity of self-identities, people find that they no longer understand who they are. The Hemshil leaders appear impotent and unable to make a choice that would bring their community, in the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's words, "the optimal economic, symbolic, and cultural capital." They vacillate tortuously over their final choice and the legitimization of their ethnic status, which would provide their community with stability and prosperity. Consequently, there has still been no indication of unified opinion among rank-and-file Hemshils. The scales tilt one moment toward strengthening Turkish identity and uniting forces with the similarly "punished" Meskhetian Turks with the aim of survival, the next moment toward insistence upon the unique nature of Hemshil cultural roots, and the next moment toward the reconstruction and the renaissance of a "lost" Armenian identity. However, they are

extremely careful about adopting, much less institutionalizing, an Armenian identity. It is possible that this is because, were they to adopt this identity, the Hemshil guilt complex of being potential traitors to the faith would increase. The stamp of confessional inconsistency and "disloyalty" would be added to the experience of deportation as "undesirables" and "enemies of the people." Recognizing oneself as Armenian would mean accepting that one's ancestors "betrayed" Christianity and, later, Soviet ideals. Moreover, a Christian past is hard to reconcile with the Islamic discourse that dominates their daily lives.

Public Discourse and Phobias

The Hemshils, as well as Meskhetian Turks, Kurds, and other ethnic groups in Krasnodar, are among the most disenfranchised population groups. They are excluded from refugee status and from the social protection mechanisms that derive from this status, and they are also deprived of residency registration. The issue of residency registration and citizenship is pivotal. Resolving this issue would inevitably resolve many of their other problems. However, Krasnodar authorities, true to an essentialist paradigm, unambiguously refuse to legalize deprived groups (including the Hemshils). Hemshils, like Meskhetian Turks and other ethnic groups, are considered by regional officials as a "destabilizing factor" based on ideological myths and spy-mania. The regional governor and his supporters even threaten deportation camps that will be the basis for "expelling migrants."

An infamous racist speech by the governor of Krasnodar, Alexander Tkachev, agitated local ethnic minorities, in particular Hemshils and Meskhetian Turks, because they bear the family names that end with the syllables pronounced as "outside the law." Family names, in the context of contemporary public discourse, create a particularly blatant marker of formal "ethnic" status. The spiritual leader of the Hemshils stated, "I am changing my family name and dropping the '-ogly'. I went to the public records office and made an application to Kyrgyzstan on behalf of my children, I have already received the response…" In daily interaction, one's family name, external appearance, accent, and other markers give rise to and reinforce inequality. Changing one's family name means ridding oneself of the stigma, at least for locally-born children, who are already impossible to identify based on differences in intonation and turns of phrase borrowed from a "household" language. Marginalization and a rich experience of social inequality create a need to artificially correct one's identity.

Xenophobia and explosions of racism in public discourse have made the problem of Hemshil identity a contemporary one, forcing them to more clearly define their self-identity. In 2002, the Hemshil leaders initiated a written request to the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology for a historical certificate defining the status of their ethnic group:

> "We, the representatives of the Hemshil people (who call themselves [K]homshetsi) are requesting that you assist us in obtaining a historical certificate which will confirm our ethnic origin as a separate Hemshil nation. At the moment, for various subjective and objective reasons, our people are designated in a

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range of official documents Hemshils, Turks, Georgians, and so on. The same situation exists with our family names. Some have Turkish endings -ogly, some Georgian -dze, some Russian -ov, -ev, and so on. The historical certificate is essential to protect our ethnic identity and for submitting, when required, to various state bodies."

Of course, the very appeal itself, to an authoritative academic society, is proof of the current social reality in Krasnodar Territory. The response, signed by S.A. Arutiunov from the Caucasus Department of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology was as follows:

"The Hemshils, who originated in the Black Sea districts of Asia Minor, in particular Trebizond, must be seen as a distinct people, ethnically close to the Armenians, who converted to Islam in the Middle Ages. They speak their own form of the Hamshen dialect of the Armenian language.… According to international legal norms the Russian Federation is obliged to recognize the right of the Hemshils to Russian citizenship, to live in any part of Russia, and to receive legal and social protection from the Russian federal authorities. …Hemshil family names may have a range of suffixes (-ogly, -dze, -ev, -ian and so on) depending on the traditions and history of each concrete family."

In the political situation that prevails in Krasnodar Territory, being an Armenian (or for that matter, a Meskhetian Turk) is "unprofitable" and dangerous, as evidenced by the destruction of Armenian tombstones throughout Krasnodar and the unpunished destruction of commercial buildings belonging mainly to ethnic Armenians in Slaviansk-na-Kubani. In an attempt to resolve their ethnic identity, the Hemshil leaders originally chose a strategy of "independence." It is very likely that continuing political practices have laid the groundwork for, or perhaps created, a new fully-fledged Ethnos.

However, subsequent developments have revealed a powerful thrust toward Turkish identity. This is linked with the U.S. Department of State's development of a program under which the Meskhetian Turks of Krasnodar Territory could be received as refugees. Confronted by this situation, the Hemshils have again designated themselves as a sub-group of the Meskhetian Turks, "Hemshil-Turks." This tactic could result in the keen interest of international human rights organizations that have taken up the Meskhetian Turk question. Hemshils have clearly taken this initiative in the hope of quickly receiving refugee status within or outside the Russian Federation, based on the calculation that it will have maximum resonance in the international community. This situation clearly demonstrates how the discriminatory discourse and policies of the Krasnodar authorities, by setting the interests of different ethnic groups against each other, becomes a significant factor in forming an ethnic identity, including the Hemshil identity, that is "unstable" or "nomadic."

The metamorphoses in Hemshil identity appear to have peaked, but the process is

not yet at an end. This research vividly demonstrates the extreme flexibility of ethnic identity, continually reacting to social change and particularly to social disruption that threatens disaster for the ethnic community. The research supports the theses of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann that "identity changes when for some reason it becomes a problem. …Radical changes in the social structure can be a factor when accompanied by changes in the prevailing psychological reality." It is precisely these processes that have been at play and that continue to prevail in the case of the Hemshils.

CIRCASSIAN WORLD

RESPONSES TO THE NEW CHALLENGES

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 54

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Every tourist who comes to Nalchik, the capital of Kabardino-Balkaria, visits a famous gift shop called "Adyga Una" ("The Circassian House"). The owner of this gift shop is a well-known Circassian businessman who was born in Turkey and moved back to the Caucasus, the homeland of his ancestors. He is a living example of the Circassian dream. Three quarters of the Circassian population do not live in their historic homeland and very few of them believe they will return. Some of them try, but cannot get through the process, and very few are able to obtain citizenship and adjust to their new life. This man, however, used the first opportunity he had after the end of the Cold War to attain his dream and managed to overcome many obstacles – even divorcing his wife in Turkey, who did not believe in coming back. He then obtained Russian citizenship, built a new family, and made his own successful business in Nalchik.

Small nations do not always have to be the victims of conflict between larger nations; they can sometimes solve their problems during hard times if they are able to clearly understand their own interests and have defined goals. The Circassians have as many grievances about their past, as much of a sense of cultural commonality, and as many resources as other more mobilized groups in the region, such as Chechens or Tatars. This has always raised the question - why has the Circassian issue not been politically more important up to this point? This paper focuses on the problem of how the great geopolitical changes of the 1990s have affected the Circassians – a small nation of the Caucasus, most of whose population is dispersed all over the world, and how Circassians, in turn, have responded to the main events of our times that concern them.

Formation of the Circassian World and Its Ideology

The contemporary Circassian world was formed amidst great geopolitical events, such as the constant conflict between the Russian and Ottoman Empires in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Bolshevik Revolution, the fall of the Ottoman Empire, World War Two, the Palestinian conflict, and others.

Only ten percent of the Circassian population remained on its native soil in the Caucasus by the end of the nineteenth century. Circassian lands were divided in the Stalinist period into several small administrative units of different statuses (autonomous republics, oblasts, and regions). These areas did not border each other, and the Circassian populations were grouped together with non-related nations. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, the lands traditionally inhabited by Circassians formed three republics: Kabardino-Balkaria, Adygeya, and Karachaevo-Cherkesia.

Figure 1

Circassian population in Russia

	Population	Percentage of the population
Kabardians	519,958	Kabardino-Balkaria – 52.5
Adygeyans	12, 528	Adygeya – 25.2
Cherkesses	60,517	Karachaevo-Cherkesia – 11.2
Total	709,003	

According to the 2002 census, there are over 700,000 Circassians currently in Russia (Figure 1). Most of the Circassian population emigrated from its homeland in a mass exodus after the Russo-Caucasian war from 1763 to 1864. The flow from the Caucasus to the Ottoman Empire continued from the 1860s to the beginning of the twentieth century. The number of Circassian settlers in Turkey reached an estimated total of 1.5 million, and their numbers doubled before the turn of the twenty-first century. Today Circassians live in 897 villages and towns in Turkey.

After the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, Circassians found themselves scattered throughout several newly formed states, including Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Serbia, and Palestine. As an ethnoreligious minority in Kosovo (Serbia), they started to migrate to Turkey after the Balkan wars (1912-1913) and continued migrating for almost a century. In 1998, there were reportedly 174 Circassians in Kosovo - quite a drop from the 6,500 in 1900.

The Russian Civil War (1918-1922) forced many anti-Bolshevik families to leave the Caucasus and settle in different Western cities such as Paris, Lyon, Berlin, Warsaw, Prague, and New York. Another wave of Circassian emigration to Western countries,

mainly a work migration, started in the 1950s, with migrants heading mostly to Germany from Turkey and to the United States from the Middle East. After the Arab-Israeli war in 1967, more than 18,000 Circassians were deported from the Golan Heights and settled in Syria and Jordan. Two big Circassian villages, Kfar-Kame and Rehania, remained in Israel. Representatives of Circassians live outside the Caucasus in 50 countries.

Figure 2

Circassian Diaspora

	Quantity
Turkey	3,000,000
Syria	80,000
Jordan	65,000
Israel	3,595
United States	9,000
Kosovo (in 1998)	174
Germany	40,000
Netherlands	500

In the early 1990s, the Circassians had two main geopolitical problems to solve: the unification of the Circassian world and the repatriation of the expelled population to the homeland. A clear understanding of these two problems has emerged over the last two decades as the result of a broad international movement, which has been marked by seven International Circassian Congresses (Nalchik 1991, Maykop 1993, Cherkessk 1996, Krasnodar 1998, Nalchik 2000 and 2003, and Istanbul 2006).

The realization of their ideology and an understanding of their problems brought two main tendencies into the Circassian movement. First, the Circassian world started to respond to world events from its own national position, trying to achieve its own interests. Second, the movement realized that the resolution of both the Circassians' geopolitical problems depends on their relationship to Russia—a situation understood perfectly well by the Circassian regions of Russia and by the diaspora.

The Circassian Unification Movement

The unification movement started after the breakup of the Soviet Union and the end of Cold War. In 1991, the International Circassian Association (ICA) was established in Munich. Its first president was a prominent Circassian, Yuri Kalmykov, who was appointed Russia's Minister of Justice two years later. The ICA not only united the activities of Circassians all around the world but also raised the Circassian movement to

an international level. It became a member of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) in 1994. The fifth General Assembly of UNPO (July 15-19, 1997) issued a Resolution on the Situation of the Circassian Nation, in which it called upon the Russian Federation and the international community "to acknowledge the genocide of the Circassian nation that took place in the nineteenth century and to grant the Circassian people status of an exile nation; to grant the Circassian people dual citizenship, both that of Russia and of their respective countries; [and] to ensure the Circassian people of the possibility to return to their historical land." The Circassian International Academy of Sciences was founded in 1993 in Nalchik with branches in Krasnodar, Maykop, Abkhazia, Israel, and Jordan.

The break up of the Soviet Union and the formation of three republics within the Russian Federation – Kabardino-Balkaria, Adygeya, and Karachaevo-Cherkesia – greatly accelerated the process of Circassian state building. Each republic was given its own president, government, parliament, and constitution; the Circassian language became an official language in the three republics. The first constitutions of these republics even came into conflict with federal law because they were based on the ethnopolitical interests of the republics. In the republic of Adygeya, the Circassian national identity was so prominent that the parliament was renamed the *Khasa* (in the old Circassian style), and the old Circassian flag with 12 stars and three crossed arrows on a green background became the republic's official flag.

Another modern tendency among the Circassians of Russia was a form of irredentism – a movement for the reunification of Circassians according to ethnic and linguistic principles. Steps were taken to bring Kabardino-Balkaria, Adygeya, and Karachevo-Cherkesia closer. In 1992, the republics signed a Treaty of Friendship and Partnership. The most significant achievement was the establishment of an Interparliamentary Counsel of Kabardino-Balkaria, Adygeya and Karachaevo-Cherkesia in 1997. Recently, the question of uniting Circassian territories was brought up in public at the Circassian Congress in Cherkessk, on November 25, 2008. The recognition of the independence of Abkhazia by Russia inspired the delegates of the Congress, and they considered sending an appeal to the Russian government to unite the Circassian republics into one unit within the Russian Federation.

Response to the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict

Abkhazia is considered to be part of the Circassian world (the Abkhaz language belongs to another branch of Abkhaz-Circassian languages alongside Abazin, spoken in the North Caucasus). For that reason, the Circassians of Russia responded dramatically to the Georgian-Abkhazian war (1992-1993). Groups gathered in Nalchik, Maykop, and Cherkessk to protest the war, and some blocked federal roads. All Circassian NGOs in Russia raised their voices against the war, including committees of women, journalists, and writers. In August 1992, Russian President Boris Yeltsin stated that Russia supports the principle of Georgia's territorial integrity and pointed to the dangerous actions of those who summoned volunteers to fight for Abkhazia. This was negatively received by

Circassians in Russia and led to further meetings.

Due to the fear of disorder in the republic, military troops were deployed to Kabardino-Balkaria. The leader of the Confederation of Caucasian Nations, Musa Shanib, was arrested in Nalchik for declaring war on Georgia. In response, people blocked the roads to the airport in Nalchik and started a permanent protest from September 24 to October 4, 1992 in front of the Republican Government building. This led to a clash with the army and police, leaving many people wounded. Another demonstration took place in Nalchik from September 20–27, 1993. The Cabinet of Ministers and the Supreme Soviet of Kabardino-Balkaria made decisions to send humanitarian aid to Abkhazia.

The first group of volunteers arrived in Abkhazia on the third day of the war under the leadership of a Nalchik-born retired Soviet colonel, Sultan Sosnaliev, who later became the commander of all Abkhaz forces and was appointed Minister of Defense of Abkhazia. Over 1,500 volunteers from Nalchik participated in the war. Indeed, a regiment from Nalchik captured the pro-Georgian government in Sukhum(i) on September 27, 1993, and raised the Circassian flag on top of the government building.

The Circassian diaspora was very active since the first days of the war. Circassians in Turkey organized several meetings and sent appeals to the governments of Turkey and other countries. A delegation from Circassian NGOs met in September 1992 with the prime minister of Turkey, Süleyman Demirel, who agreed to cooperate to stop the conflict, although his government later supported Georgia. More than 350 volunteers went to Abkhazia from Turkey. The Circassian Benevolent Association (CBA) of Syria established a fund to help Abkhazia. The CBA of Jordan visited and appealed to the government of Jordan and embassies of the United States, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. On January 5, 1993, a freight carrier from the Jordanian Air Force landed at the Nalchik airport with 17 tons of humanitarian aid from the CBA and Jordanian Prince Hassan.

The Circassian world continued to support Abkhazia after the war as well. The International Circassian Congress in 1993 was mainly devoted to the war, and all following congresses raised the question of Abkhazia's independence. Circassian NGOs spoke many times against the economic blockade of Abkhazia after the war. The Union of Abkhazian Volunteers was established in Nalchik and remains very active, recently celebrating the 15th anniversary of the Abkhaz victory. Abkhazia has its own ambassador in Nalchik (who was the brother of the president of Abkhazia until the last election). Recognizing the important role of the Circassian diaspora in the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergei Lavrov, held a discussion with the Circassian leaders of the Caucasian Association (Kaf-Der) in Turkey on June 31, 2008. Circassian NGOs responded to the five-day war in August 2008 with statements in support of Abkhazia and South Ossetia; leaders of the Union of Abkhazian volunteers and the Union of Afghanistan Veterans from Nalchik were in Sukhum(i) and Tskhinvali. A meeting took place on Abkhaz Square in Nalchik on the

day of recognition of Abkhaz independence. Delegations from all parts of the Circassian world met up in Sukhum(i) to celebrate the Russian recognition of Abkhaz independence in August 2008.

Circassian Repatriation

Expelled Circassians did not have a chance to immigrate to the Caucasus until the early 1990s. In 1990, Soviet authorities officially rejected an appeal by the Circassian Benevolent Association of Syria to let 234 Circassian families return to the Caucasus and obtain Soviet citizenship.

The end of the Cold War started a wave of Circassian immigration to the Caucasus. In 1993, about 3,000 Circassians returned to Nalchik and 1,000 to Maykop. Indeed, some scholars compare the beginning of this process to the lesser numbers of the first *Aliyah* of Jewish emigration to Israel. However, this initial wave of migration did not herald the beginning of a larger movement. The post-Soviet realities of Russia, the instability of the Caucasus after the beginning of the war in Chechnya in 1994, and other factors slowed down the process. Another problem was the complicated process of obtaining temporary residency and Russian citizenship. Up through 2000, authorities in Kabardino-Balkaria and Adygeya only issued 1,711 temporary residency permits and granted only 610 requests for citizenship, mainly for returnees from Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Israel, and Yugoslavia, but also from the United States and other European states.

The best time to return was when it was possible to obtain Russian citizenship without giving up one's previous citizenship. However, most returning emigrants obtained citizenship according to a November 1991 law that had three conditions making it harder to obtain Russian citizenship: an applicant had to reject the citizenship of his or her country of origin, live five years in Russia, and know the Russian language. After a new law was passed in November 2003 on the legal status of foreign citizens in the Russian Federation, it became almost impossible to obtain citizenship. Only five passports were issued after that in Nalchik. A survey of 400 Circassian immigrants in Adygeya and Kabardino-Balkaria in 2006 by the Institute of Humanitarian Studies of Kabardino-Balkaria showed that their main problem, overwhelmingly, was the process of obtaining citizenship (unemployment was the next biggest problem for respondents in Kabardino-Balkaria, while in Adygeya it was adapting to local traditions).

"Return movements" are unique events in world history. Only a few of them have succeeded. It seems that almost every social force in existence acts against diasporic returns and that they succeed perhaps only when there are utterly extraordinary conditions (like the genocides of Jews, Armenians, and Circassians).

The political aspect of Circassian repatriation culminated in the case of Kosovo. The International Circassian Association brought up the question at three sessions of the United Nations. Ultimately, the president of the Adygeya Republic, Aslan Dzharimov, appealed to the government of the Russian Federation to grant Kosovar Circassians the right to resettle in Adygeya. Between 1998 and 1999, a total of 174 did so. A new village,

Mafakhabl, was built for repatriates. The president of the International Circassian Association, Boris Akbashev, stated in a speech at the International Circassian Congress in Nalchik in 2000 the significance of the Kosovar Circassian repatriation, noting that "this was the first time Russia not only admitted their right to return, but made practical, political, diplomatic, and economic steps for their moving home and settling here."

Conclusion

The end of the Cold War opened up a significant new era for the Circassian world. Most importantly, Circassians united their activities on the international level and started to respond to world events from the position of their ethnic interests. The ideology of this new era brought up two strategic interests of the Circassian world – unification of the Circassian world and repatriation of the expelled population back to its homeland.

Circassians had to wander for a long time, so why have the Circassians remained relatively quiescent? For various reasons, one could suggest that this period of quiet is coming to an end. Significant achievements have been made in the building of an international Circassian network: the development of state structures on Circassian territories, the beginning of the repatriation of Circassians, and most of all, the recognition of independence of Abkhazia by Russia. All these events will have important implications for the Circassian world. One of the main conditions for the development of the Circassian world is its relationship with Russia, and it is obvious that Russia's attitude toward the Circassian world has been generally positive and helpful. It is apparent, though, that these strategic problems are far from being solved. From the responses of the Circassian world to the challenges of our time, one can see what the future might hold in terms of Circassian mobilization and identity.