6-2015

Russian Military Intervention in the Caucasus

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in the Department of political science and Russian language

UNION COLLEGE
March 2015

Abstract

MICKEL, CHELSEA Study of Russian foreign policy in the Former Soviet Union, specifically the Caucasus region. Departments of Political Science and Russian Language, March 2015

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My research focuses on Russia's foreign policy interests and actions in the context of the post-soviet space and its relations with western nations and organizations. I used three case studies: the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict, the Russo-Georgian War, and the Crimean Crisis. The Russian government has pursued intervention in these areas for various reasons. The most prominent of these reasons are ethnicity, religion, irredentism, great power politics, and economics.

The Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict centers on the Eastern Orthodox Armenian enclave in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, a nation otherwise consisting of a majority of Turkic Sunni Muslims. The Russo-Georgian War was fought in the separatist regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Ethnic issues were a part of the outbreak in fighting, but fighting also erupted due to Georgia becoming a transport state for oil and natural gas through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline. Russia sees Georgia as a competitor and so aided separatist rebels. The Crimea Crisis was studied in the context of current events and the history of the marginalized Muslim Tatars in the region. I analyze Russia's motivations for intervention, the type of intervention it pursued, international mediation, and the outcomes of the conflicts.

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Russia's Post Soviet Foreign Policy

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Security is the largest priority of Russia, which is an immense and diverse nation. According to Buzan, "Security means the ability of states and societies to maintain their independent identity and their functional integrity" (Buzan 1991). Russia's foreign policy towards the Former Soviet Union encompasses geopolitics, neo-imperialism, and military interventionism. The Russian government deems this space the "near abroad" and considers the region within the primary sphere of Russian influence. One of the sole examples of Russia's use of soft power since the 1990's is its creation of the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States), an organization symbolic of regional cooperation between Russian and the former Soviet Union, and the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization). The CSTO is a synthesis of Russia's cooperation with and power over its former dominion. Belarus, Armenia, and the Central Asian states are a part of this organization (Oldberg p.37). The Russian government believes that the former Soviet Republics need Russian directives to form effective governing bodies, and believes that the organizations previously stated add much-needed structure to the region while enabling Russian predominance in the Former Soviet Union. In the early 1990's, nationalism was largely undeveloped, and key regional leaders had not come forward to form efficient governments.

It is true that even today, states part of the former Soviet Union have trouble replacing the autocratic, state controlled, crony system deeply embedded from

Soviet times. Russia maintains its control over the region mainly through military means, justified by the elites as protecting Russian minorities in post-Soviet states. “The [Russian] administration frequently exploited concerns about institutionalized discrimination against the diaspora to apply crude pressure on FSU (Former Soviet Union) governments” (Lo p.78).

The most recent example of this is in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea, but also notably in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, once a part of Georgia, now separated and regarded as sovereign regions by the Russian government. Russia intervened upon claims that Georgia was planning a mass genocide on ethnic Russians in these regions. The Russian government believes that it is the primary cultural and political facilitator in the region. As a result of this conviction, Russia is bitterly against NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) membership expansion into Eastern and Central European states as well as states within the Caucasus. Russia views NATO as a remnant of the Cold War that the west uses to propagate the idea of Russia as ‘other’.

The Russian government is also concerned about post soviet states becoming members of the EU (European Union). The Baltic republics; Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are already member states. The Baltic States formed nationalist tendencies far earlier and vigorously than their Eurasian counterparts, and this has allowed them to integrate with Westernized nations in a way that Russia feels is threatening to its interests as primary regional actor and world power. In summation, Russia’s foreign policy in regards to post soviet space can be characterized as Russia’s New “Monroe Doctrine”. This concept stems from United

States President James Monroe, who believed that the entirety of the Americas should be exclusively under U.S. influence. Russia uses this idea to justify its claims in Eastern and Central Europe, and the rest of the former U.S.S.R. (Skak p.139). The Baltic States are an exception to the rule in terms of integration because they are not as heavily dependent economically and politically on 'big brother' Russia as most other post soviet states, especially those in Central Asia. The states that comprise the former Soviet Union vary in their importance to Moscow, and so it is erroneous to say that the CIS *as a whole* is the top priority of Russian politicians. Rather there are certain states that are a part of the CIS that are imperative to Russian foreign policy, and there are others that factor less into Russia's primary interests as a global power (Lo p.79).

Russia sees Ukraine as its most important Slavic brother country, and *the* vital asset in the CIS. As such, Russia has fomented separatism in the eastern regions where ethnic Russians reside. Leading up to the current situation in Ukraine, Russia distributed passports widely to those in Crimea, where there is a Russian military base in Sevastopol. This influence largely contributed to former Ukrainian President Yanukovich's renunciation of the aim of NATO membership, which his predecessor former President Yushchenko saw as an important step to integration with the west (Oldberg p.43). Former President Yanukovich was recently ousted by the highly publicized "Euromaidan" protests by pro-European leaning activists. His leadership led Ukraine to the brink of a civil war, pitting European-leaning Ukrainians in Kiev and the West against Russian-leaning Ukrainians in the Eastern provinces (Washington Post).

Ukraine is seen as the buffer zone between Russia and the west with its sizable population and large territory. Ukraine owes Russia over a billion US dollars and this is also a cause of Russian concern and gives the Russian elite leverage in Ukrainian decision making. It is a conduit for Russian natural gas and crude oil to Europe, its largest importer, and is culturally significant. Russian ties with Ukraine go back further than any other Soviet republic, Kiev being the ancient capitol for the Duchy of Rus' founded in the 800's. Russia holds strong economic, political, and historical ties, having been united with Ukraine for 300 years. Ukraine is by many considered part of Russia and has supplied many Russian leaders, including Khrushchev and Brezhnev.

Belarus is an ideological and cultural integration concern for Russia. The Russian and Belarusian governments share some ideological similarities. Authoritarian, cult-like leaders lead both Belarus and Russia: President Lukashenko and President Vladimir Putin respectively. Both governments have been talking of a union since the breakup of the USSR and support soviet-era policies that enact state control over major economic industries. The talks of integration are disappointing to some, as not much fruition has come of discussions on the subject. President Lukashenko is an autocratic, egoistic leader in his own right who has an agenda that sometimes contrasts with Putin. Belarusians accuse Russia of pursuing the idea of unity with Belarus merely to secure domestic popularity. Russian politicians themselves have said that there is no rush to unite with Belarus, as it will always be there when unification does come to the forefront. This assumption has led to tense ties between the two countries.

During the Soviet Era, each republic focused its economy on producing a specific good needed to sustain Soviet citizens and boost economic production. Each state in the former Soviet Union had to meet production quotas of certain goods that the nation's environment or infrastructure was suited for. Since their economies often only produced goods in one sector of the economy (cotton, textiles, nuclear power, etc.), the post-soviet governments were not able to expand to other sectors efficiently. To this day Russia uses Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Georgia as conduits for oil and gas pipelines to sends its biofuels to Europe, its primary buyer. The effects of this system can still be seen in the present day. This does more to help the Russian economy than the other nations, which are struggling make profit. Therefore, the economies of the former U.S.S.R., especially the Caucasus and Central Asia are heavily dependent on Russia for trade and resources.

Both of these regions are seen as those that could threaten the stability of the CIS. In the Caucasus, the Russo-Georgian war, the war in Chechnya, and the longstanding conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan disrupted the flow of goods from Russia to Europe and other post soviet states, which created a major concern for Russia. The Russo-Georgian war in particular led the West to heavily criticize Russia and question its intentions as a democratic and modernizing government. This conflict led to the strained relations with the West that have recently become even more stained with the illegal annexation of Crimea and rebel uprisings in Eastern Ukraine.

Russia views Central Asia as an Islamic extremist threat spread from Afghanistan. It is important to mention that Russia has at times considered the

practice of Islam itself, extremism. Currently, the majority of Central Asia, though viewing itself as ethnically Turkic and culturally Muslim, is secularized from soviet practice. Russia views the majority Muslim nations as a possible threat because of the fear of pan-Islamism and pan-Turkism tendencies that could strengthen this region's ties with the Middle East and thus threaten the Former Soviet space, especially the integrity of the CIS.

The structure of the governments of the post soviet space is shaped by the ideological socialization known as strategic culture. According to David R. Jones, there are three levels of social influence that combine to create strategic culture. The *Macro-level,* (founding of the people) encompasses geography, history and ethnology. The *Meso-Level,* (modern day circumstances) consists of the current political, economic, social and ideological structure of the society. The *Micro-Level,* includes military institutions and civil military relations (Jones p.35). Simply put, the three levels of influence are the society's history, culture, and military.

For Russia, the political culture (Meso-level), as demonstrated by President Putin establishes policies of authoritarianism, state strength, capitalism, and great power status. The consequence for the post soviet space is Russia's use of its military strength, environmental resources, lack of natural barriers, and large population to exert cultural and political influence on the countries that used to be part of its union (Skak p.141). In order to maintain this influence, Russia offers its goods at prices that compete with Chinese goods and "gives generous loans to governments, provides credit for large development projects, takes part in constructing hydroelectric stations, mines, pipelines, and so on" (Rukavishnikov

p.82). In the eyes of its former republics, Russia is an "energy super-power" as it supplies electricity, gas, and crude oil to its neighbors and Europe. Dmitry Medvedev said himself in 2008 that it views the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as a "zone of Russian responsibility and interests"(Rukavishnikov p.83).

The CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) is a major means for Russia to assert its influence in the post soviet space, and has been considered a critical pillar of Russian foreign policy for the maintenance of the world's notion of Russia as a super power (Lo p.22). The attitudes of some elites contradict this however. In the international arena the government wishes to be viewed primarily as European, as opposed to Slavic or Eurasian, meaning that the interests of the CIS states are subordinate to those of EU states. Russia has a conflicting and ill-defined policy when it comes to regional interests because the government wants to appear obeisant to EU demands, however the majority of the governmental body is merely grudgingly western-centric (Lo p.22). Closer ties with Western Europe would give Russia more legitimacy and provide political and economic security and advantages, which the government seeks, but elites are not dedicated to honestly cultivating this relationship. President Putin and Prime Minister Medvedev have pursued policies that attempt to placate the United States and Western Europe, but the former Soviet space is where Russia allocates most of its resources, both economic and military.

European Union: To Modernize or to Westernize?

Russian relations with the European Union focus on two main objectives. These are economic integration and modernization, and political democratization and westernization. The general perspective of scholars coincides with what Dmitry Trenin outlines in a speech regarding a recently published book on Russian foreign policy. He says, "Russian foreign policy should focus not on enhancing Russia's status as a great power but on tapping external resources to facilitate the country's modernization. This means relying on instruments of "soft power" and seeking to integrate with the European Union (EU)" (Trenin p.8). Academics believe that Russia, particularly under Putin's administration, has resorted back to cold war tactics in its approach to foreign policy. Russian leadership is adamant in fortifying itself as a global superpower through its interactions with the "near abroad" and its positions in international organizations, particularly the Security Council of the UN (United Nations).

After the "thaw" during the Gorbachev era, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union and warming global ties with the west under former President Yeltsin, President Putin's rise to power led to a return to strained relations between Russia and the United States due to his military aggression. President Putin proved to be a powerful egoistic leader who was able to create a sense of stability and economic recovery. President Putin's promise to restore Russia to prominence through hard power politics is popular at home because it distracts the citizens from focusing on the existing domestic issues. These include corruption, inflation, persecution,

sanctions, lack of economic diversity, a dated infrastructure, and human rights violations (Congressional Research Service: *Russian Political, Economic, and Security Issues and U.S. Interests,* pg. 13-35). The Sochi Olympics is a grand example of Putin's effort to build up a golden-age image of Russia to show off to the west. Russia's ambition to gain parity with the west lies in its dependence on hard power and regional eminence.

As previously mentioned, the sincerity of the Russian elite towards warm relations with the west is legitimately questionable. Russians faced frustration that their country was not able to recover from the soviet period as well as expected. With the gift of hindsight, researchers are able to see that the difficulties Russia faced after the USSR disintegrated were immense. Russia's outdated infrastructure, endemic corruption, extreme poverty, and lack of outlets for the citizens to communicate effectively with their government, meant that there was no way Russia would be able to quickly reemerge as the once great super-power it had previously been.

Despite disagreements between Russia and Europe, Russia sees itself as a European nation that has played an integral part in many major turning points in history. Be it the defeat of the Napoleonic Empire, forming the Entente alliance in WWI, or the defeat of the Nazi regime in WWII, Russia has played a large part in forming Europe into what we know it as today (Ivanov p.93). Russia views itself as a fundamental actor in pan-European security and cooperation. According to Former Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, Russia seeks to integrate and conform to a market economy modeled after nations in the European Union, as well as

building a democratic government that conforms to European ideals of fair election, public trials and human rights (Ivanov pg.103).

Russia believes that Europe's intentions to unify itself into a super-power and integrate Russia without allowing its entrance into the European Union and the expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe and the rest of the Former Soviet Union will isolate Russia, and creates fault lines that could lead to divisions in Europe that would harm its security (Romanova p.75). Russia was never seriously considered as a possible member of NATO because of its authoritarian government and the vastness of its terrain. NATO itself would not be willing to step into a conflict that could extend to the Russo-Chinese border. The fact that other states that comprised the Soviet Union were considered or invited is an open sore for the Russian elite. Russia seeks to uphold its security through international organizations, which include the CSTO, CIS, and OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe), with which Russia competes with NATO and the EU.

Medvedev tried to create new security organizations that incorporated Russia with Europe with his own "Fourteen Points" proposal in 2008, which led to a series of discussions in 2009 that incorporated analysts, politicians, officials, and Eurasian specialists (Lomagin p.181). Ultimately, the nature of the proposition heavily reinforced Russian power and dominance. European officials read the Russian rhetoric as potentially threatening to their national interests, and so the initiatives were not readily adopted (Lomagin p.181). Russia's intervention in Georgia, Chechnya, Ukraine, and the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict are all examples of its ambition to keep itself and the lands it views as its 'near abroad' secure.

Russia's concern for its diaspora may be the publically stated intention for its intervention, but behind this statement lie other concerns. Russia wants the world to view its former republics as stable, and feels an obligation to intervene in the areas with which it was once unified, especially where economic interests are involved, as it was in the cases mentioned.

The question posed at the beginning of this section asks if Russia should spend its efforts attempting to westernize its government and economy or find another model to modernize. Russia itself faces an identity crisis that it tries to assuage through increased communications and economic integration with Europe while maintaining friendly ties with China. Should Russia attempt to attach itself to a western fate, or should it aim to be among the rising Asian super powers? The authoritarian style government of Russia means that it shares values and ideals with Asian powerhouse China, but Russia has always sought to be viewed as European, which it sees as the ultimate 'culture'.

In order to mediate relations with the European Union and strengthen ties with Europe, Russia must gain full recognition for its market economy by western states. In order to do this, the Russian government must work with the EU. Europe must make its market more accessible to Russian goods and services and reconstruct trade policies that look more favorably upon Russia. This will be a difficult, lengthy transition, but it is possible if the Russian elites align themselves with EU policies in the Middle East and strive for a more democratic government (Ivanov p.147). However, the likelihood of the Russian government amending its structure and becoming more democratic in the near future is chiefly a pipe dream.

Russia needs to expand political dialogue with the EU and work together with the organization to develop a pan-European structure for cooperation. Economic legislation and technical standards in Russia lag behind those of the EU, and closing this gap as well as increasing cooperation with the EU regarding science and technology would benefit both regions (Ivanov p.103).

Wiegand elucidates the difficulties in the Russian-EU relationship, saying; "Relations between the EU and Russia are going through a particularly complex phase at present. As the EU expands closer to the Russian heartland, the paradoxes that characterize the EU-Russian relationship become more pronounced" (Wiegand p.9). He expands on this by explaining that investment and trade in Russia are burgeoning industries, and although the EU wishes to capitalize on and integrate itself with this development, its western orientation propagates its concerns with democracy and human rights issues in Russia. Europe is enthusiastic about Russia acting as a partner to help resolve international conflict, however, makes known its concern for the rhetoric and direction of Russia's foreign policy. Russia was always skeptical of EU enlargement but is now professedly adamantly against it (Wiegand p.9). The EU and the Russian Federation are both relatively new actors in the global sphere and are still developing their foreign policy objectives and personalities. Neither body has fully conceptualized their relationship. Henceforth, it is in state of complexity brought on by economic exchange and ideological differences (Debardeleben p.418). It remains to be seen which direction Russia will follow with its relations with the EU and Europe, but great power politics is sure to come into play. Russia has a variety of economic, political, and cultural reasons for wishing to

further integrate with Europe, but in order for this to happen, compromise and honest dialogue will be necessary on both sides.

United States: Not Enemy, Not Ally, Not Equal

Russian relations with the United States feature ideological, geopolitical, and economic competition. Negotiations between the two countries have always had a powerful impact on world events. During the Soviet period Russia and the US were traditional enemies, pitting communism against capitalism. This ideological clash illustrates the ancient conflict between east and west. Both nations have a great power ideology and nationalistic impulses. When the USSR dissolved in the early 1990's, the United States extended friendly relations towards Russia and the other former republics in hopes of expanding democracy and market economies eastward. This would have meant a stronger European alliance and would have signaled that the west 'won' the Cold War, that communism failed, and that democracy would seize the day.

The United States and Russian governments expanded dialogue and sought to integrate and modernize the Russian economy to the standards of Western Europe and reconstruct the crony authoritarian government. The first step that made this possible was former Russian President Brezhnev's policies of Glasnost and Perestroika in the 1980's right before the fall of the Soviet Union. These policies initiated openness and economic restructuring that allowed for more contact with the west (Bruno, *U.S.-Russia Arms Control*). Western integration became a goal under

the leadership of Russian President Yeltsin after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990's. These were ambitious hopes, and in the 2000's leaders from Russia and the United States started to resent each other as a result of the wars in Chechnya and Georgia, and the competition for oil and natural gas reserves in Central Asia.

The U.S. believed that Russia was headed down its traditional path of military force, resource exploitation, and regional dominance to keep hold of the former soviet republics instead of preoccupying itself with settling domestic disputes. Russia felt threatened by the United States competing politically and economically in Russia's traditional sphere of influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia, which Russia deems its 'near abroad' (Kanet p. 213). Russian leaders were offended that US policy towards Russia was that of a victor of the cold war. The Russians view American investment in natural resources in Central Asia and the Caucasus as coercive, imposing, and exploitative of the former soviet republics (Kanet p.213). President Putin claims that "The United States has overstepped its borders in all spheres – economic, political, and humanitarian – and has imposed itself on others…One-sided illegitimate action hasn't solved a single problem and has become a generator of many human tragedies, a source of tension" (Putin, Munich 2007). The challenge to Russian profit from pipelines, overpriced goods and exorbitant fees causes great concern for the incumbent government. Russia finds the American perception of U.S. importance and primacy in these regions as insulting, as these areas were traditionally dominated by Russian culture and politics (Ivanov p.112).

Defense policy and security is an important means of bilateral relations between the two countries. Both the United States and Russia have a history of a

strong military, and defense and national security are both countries' top priorities in foreign policy. In order for these efforts to lead to mutual support, careful rhetoric and constant dialogue must be maintained in order to curtail the possible continuation of enmity between east and west (Hydeprice p.185). Russia and the U.S. agree upon the importance of nuclear nonproliferation, having both signed the Limited Test Ban Treaty, Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty, Anti Ballistics Missile Treaty, and numerous others (Bruno, *U.S.-Russia Arms Control*). The nuclear capabilities of both countries have been reduced after the end of the cold war made such large and destructive arsenals anachronistic. Both countries are concerned with conflict in the Middle East and potential chemical and other dangerous and inhumane weapons that extremist groups use to maneuver their power in the region. Although Russia and the United States took different sides in the Syrian conflict, with the US siding with the rebels and the Russians favoring the incumbent government, both countries are passionate about defeating terrorism and extremism in any capacity in the Middle East, Europe, Asia, and their home countries respectively.

The main differences in their policies lie in strategy. Whereas "The United States stresses values and a commitment to democratic development as a key dimension of relations with Russia and its neighbors. Russia opposes making this an important element in the relationship and, in general, a justification for active intervention anywhere"(Legvold p.103).

Since 2008, relations between the United States and Russia began to sour. This coincided with Russia's invasion of Georgia and later recognition of Abkhazia

and South Ossetia as sovereign nations. Russia claimed it was to protect ethnic Russians in the region but the US and the rest of the west viewed it as a return to Russian imperialism and authoritarianism. The United States government believed that Russia's recognition of the separatist regions and its military aggression in Georgia was pursued in order to reinstate Russia's super-power status. The United States pushed military intervention in Yugoslavia, a missile defense system in Central Europe, and manipulation of oil and gas resources in Central Asia, all to contain Russian influence in areas it had previously dominated, causing the Russian government to feel threatened (kanet p.205).

The most recent example of this took place in Kiev, Ukraine where the Євромайдан ("Euro-square") protests brought down the leadership of pro-Russian president Victor Yanukovych. Citizens had grown increasingly weary of his leadership, and after he pursued a policy that distanced Ukraine from Europe and the people's ambitions to eventually join the European Union, mass protest developed into a full-blown revolution in February 2014. In May of 2014, the people of Ukraine voted for and elected Petro Poroshenko as president on a platform of pro-European Union leanings.

In response, Russia illegally annexed Crimea and supported uprisings in eastern regions of Ukraine such as Donetsk, where rebels seized control of some cities, carrying out military agendas from government buildings. President Putin said that there were sizable Russian populations in Eastern Ukraine that carried out the protests without his directive. Indeed there are many Russians in Eastern Ukraine; however, President Putin previously fueled separatist behavior in South

Ossetia, Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh. In light of this fact, it should come as no surprise that he again wrought unrest in an area that many Russians consider part of their homeland. The move to make Crimea part of Russia and urge pro-Russian sentiment in the rest of Ukraine is popular at home, and as such means that although Putin is increasingly seen as notoriously volatile by the west, domestically, he is sustaining and even growing in popularity. The United States and the rest of the west fear that Crimea is just one step towards Putin's larger plan to recapture territory lost after the break-up of the USSR and build up Russia once again to an antagonist superpower. It does not seem that relations will improve in the near future if Russia keeps pursuing an aggressive, hard-power foreign policy, but the two nations do and will continue to work together in international organizations, namely the UN to fight discord and terrorism.

China: The Feared Ally

Russian foreign policy towards China incorporates appeasement and admiration. After decades of poor relations during the Soviet Era due to a border dispute, unrest in the Xinjiang province, and communist competitiveness, Russia and China signed the Sino-Russian Treaty on Good-Neighborliness, Friendship, and Cooperation on July 16, 2001 (Wishnick, p.797). This was the beginning of a turn-around towards a positive and mutually beneficial partnership, which western politicians seem to treat with indifference, which, considering China has overtaken the United States as the largest economy in the world may not be a wise decision.

Some researchers "noted that common opposition to American policies on national missile defense (NMD), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) expansion, and intervention in the Kosovo conflict served to shore up Sino-Russian strategic coordination and military cooperation, despite the partnership's weakness in other areas" (Dobriansky p.8).

The two governments are both authoritarian and thus tend to agree ideologically on most issues despite major cultural differences. Russia realizes that China realizes that Central Asia is in need of cheap goods due to its philandering economy and dependence on a Russia that benefits from selling goods at heightened prices to its dependents. China views Central Asia as an alternative avenue for oil and gas pipelines. A project was introduced in 2003 for the Kazakhstan-China Gas Pipeline, and was formally announced in 2007, which Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan also signed (BBC Monitoring Central Asia: *Turkmen Gas Deal Extends Chinese Influence*). The first section was completed in Kazakhstan in 2009, the second section in 2010, and the third is supposed to be finished by the end of 2014 (Jabri). The income generated by the project has led to investment in infrastructure and technological improvement with the help and funding of the Chinese government. The Russian response has been to "hug China close…Putin has given very clear priority both to visiting and staying in touch with the Chinese leadership. [Russians] see China as an important counterbalance to their estrangement from the West, a fast-growing trade partner, and their friendship as diminishing the likelihood of challenge to Russian sovereignty in the Far East" (Brenton p.231). Some Russian

elites believe that "China is also an attractive model of 'authoritarian modernization' with lessons to teach Russia" (Brenton p.231).

Russia also understands that China is a much stronger state with the world's largest economy, and that it is unwise to make enemies of the Chinese. Instead, the Russian government attempts to work with China on energy and technology initiatives, and maintain friendly relations with its financially superior neighbor. Asian states in general were quick to adapt to modern trends (Lo p.121). The Chinese economy has developed at an unprecedented rate since the economic reforms in 1978 while also preserving regional security though the maintenance of a the largest army in the world and the world's second largest defense budget (*Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China).*

Russia seeks to ensure the security of its eastern border with China, and has settled disputes with China over the legitimacy of the current border. Both Russia and China fear extremism and separatist movements in regions of their interest. In Central Asia, they have both supported oppressive regimes in order to secure an orderly government that would support their policies and strike down religious fervor through secular ideals (Bellacqua p.235). "Beijing constantly reiterates its opposition to the three forces (often called the "three evils") of terrorism, separatism, and extremism. Although China is developing more global interests, regional concerns still take precedence. China seeks stability along its periphery to maximize conditions for internal economic growth" (Bellacqua p.235).

Russia and China are less concerned with the quality of life for the people of the region, as both governments are preoccupied with how they can exploit the natural resources of Central Asia for their own profit. Corruption in Central Asia means that China and Russia can receive large payments of money from proposals to build up infrastructure and technology without assuring that the projects will be completed.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is another means for Russia and China to work together as principal authorities in the Asian region. The SCO is a Eurasian regional organization that includes, alongside Russia and China, the leaders of the Central Asian nations as well. The organization discusses political, security, and economic issues relevant to the member nations, such as trade and counterterrorism (Scheineson). The Russian government recognizes the economic and political strength and superiority of China in comparison with Russia, who is currently falling into a recession due to economic sanction put in place by the Obama administration. Russia faces many domestic issues, including endemic corruption and a weak, although centralized government that keeps its economy from growing at a pace necessary to gain back the superpower legacy it once had. Russia and China work together to match United States hegemony. Russia is more than aware that China is the next world superpower, and is aligning itself prudently, as Italy aligned with the Nazi regime in WWII. Brenton says, "that there is one fundamental issue on which China and Russia are as one. They are both ethnically heterogeneous, hard to govern, ex-empires with a history of domestic collapse and the loss of vulnerable border provinces (as with the collapse of the USSR, and China's 'century of humiliation'). Maintenance of domestic control and territorial

integrity is a shared core obsession" (Brenton). As such China and Russia share some core anxieties that threaten the stability of their respective countries and regions, and this brings them together, despite a long fraught border conflict throughout the 1950's and 1960's that was resolved in 2008 (Xinhua).

Conclusion

Russian relations with the EU, US, China, and the former Soviet Union are complex and often incorporate conflicting and confusing policies. The government is in the process of discovering its identity and abilities in the post-Soviet period. Russia seeks to integrate with Europe economically and politically, but its actions in former Soviet republics, especially Georgia and Ukraine, are contradictory with this notion. Russia uses hard power in a region it still views as its primary sphere of influence, and this form of muscle flexing is concerning and off-putting for the EU and the United States. The US and Russia have a tense relationship that warmed briefly in the decade after the collapse of the USSR, but grew cold once again after the Russo-Georgian war. Both countries compete for influence and resources in Central Asia and the Caucasus, and Russia sees the United States as a threat to its interests in the CIS.

The states of the Former Soviet Union are largely heavily reliant of Russia for trade and policymaking, and culturally are still developing their own identity. The states vary in their importance to Russia for political, economic and historical reasons. Ukraine is Russia's foremost concern, followed by states with vast amounts

of natural resources or strong cultural ties to Russia. Central Asia is consequential to Russia because it is a borderland with China, which it sees as an ally and country whose fiscal and economic policies Russia should emulate. Russia and China both have authoritarian regimes, which means they share similar ideologies and outlooks on world issues. The two countries had a strained relationship during the Soviet period, but have since become strategic partners, incorporating their economic and technological interests.

Nagorno-Karabakh: Russian Influence in an Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict

The case study on Nagorno-Karabakh will outline the reasons that led to Russia's military involvement alongside of the Armenians and its significance in the negotiations concerning the conflict. These include economic security, undermining western investment, and exhibiting hard power to maintain its political prominence in the Caucasus. The chapter starts with a discussion about the nature of Russian involvement in the conflict and a historical overview that give the reader a premise of how to interpret Russia's foreign policy motives in Nagorno-Karabakh. The significance of ethnic-religious differences between the Muslim Azerbaijani's and Eastern Orthodox Armenians and Russians will be discussed as a relevant reason for Russian aid to the weaker Armenian state. Russian interests and international negotiations will be then be discussed in detail. The conclusion will focus on the ineffective handling of the peace negotiations and Russia's view of Azerbaijan as a regional economic competitor and what this means for Azerbaijan's future and the future of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Russian Involvement in Azerbaijan

Not long before the collapse of the Soviet Union "On the night of January 19, 1990, 26,000 Soviet troops invaded the capital city of Baku and surrounding areas. By the end of the next day, more than 130 people had died, 611 were injured, 841 were arrested and 5 were missing" (Bordallo p.90). This event became known as "Black January," and has left a permanent mark of dislike and distrust of Russia on

the part of Azerbaijani citizens. Azerbaijan views this event as a precursor to Russian involvement in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, in which it took the side of ethnic Armenians.

Although a significant amount of Russia's involvement in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was diplomatic, mainly facilitating and procrastinating negotiations via the Minsk Group. Many analysts, including Human Rights Watch, believe there is evidence that Russian ground forces participated in the conflict on the side of ethnic Armenians. The Azerbaijani government has accused Russia of using local troops in the 366th Motorized Rifle Regiment to assist in the Khojaly massacre, which killed hundreds of ethnic Azerbaijanis, as well as fueling allegations of Russian troops volunteering to aid the Armenians or supplementing them as mercenaries (Smolowe p.38). Russian troops were also active in the major battles of Shusha, Stepanakert, and Kelbajar (Croissant p.87).

Russia and the West both view Azerbaijan as a beacon of natural resources that can be exploited for their own benefit. As a neighbor to Georgia and lying just south of the volatile Dagestan region in the Northern Caucasus, Azerbaijan is no stranger to conflict. Azerbaijan is comprised of a majority of Turkic Muslims, which has been a source of estrangement and tension between the natives of the region and the Russian incumbents that controlled Azerbaijan during the Soviet Era. With significant minorities of ethnic Russians and Orthodox Armenians, both Russia and Armenia have claims on the land to protect their ethnic brethren. Russian interest in Azerbaijan is mainly focused on its interests in the oil and natural gas sector. Russia itself is a large producer of these natural resources and sees Azerbaijan as a

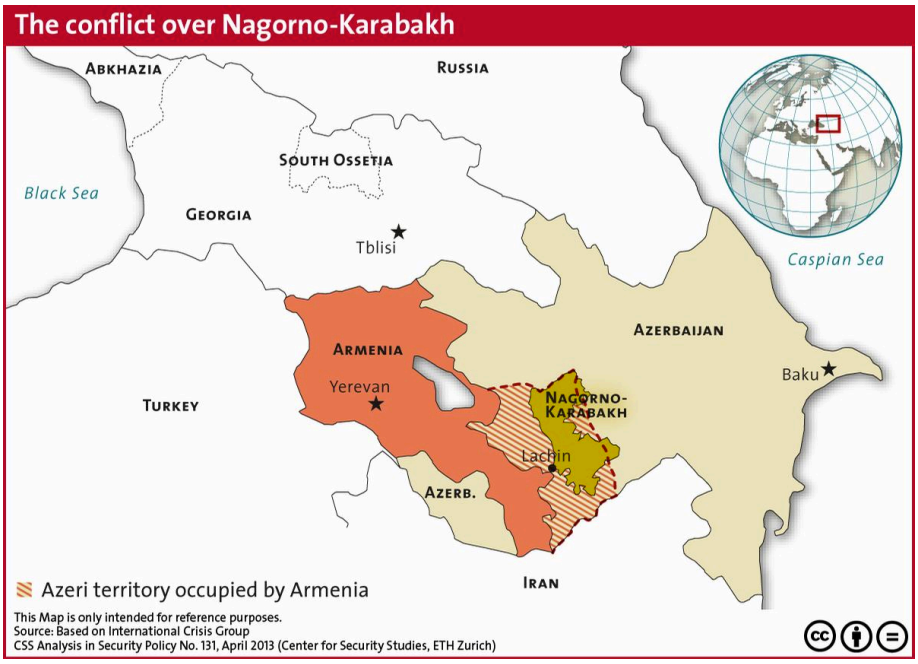
threatening competitor for economic profit. Azerbaijan borders the Caspian Sea and has ample reserves of natural resources on its coastline. Naturally, the Russian government aims to turn this Azerbaijan's advantage into its own gain through controlling trade, regulating oil and gas prices, and emanating its political clout in the region.

Various Azerbaijani leaders have attempted to balance the scales of its foreign policy; appeasing Russia's aggressive resource interests with the potentially beneficial interest of Western oil companies who promise aid and investment. Azerbaijan's geographic location places it directly at an east-west corridor that allows for cultural and economical exchange. Its geographic and economic remunerations make it an attractive investment prospect for Western nations, which Russia sees Western involvement as a threat to its interests. When President Aliyev came into power for the second time1993, after a former stint in the presidency during the Soviet era from 1969-1982, he opted for closer ties with Russia. In doing so he joined the Commonwealth of Independent States and allowed Lukoil to pursue projects in the Caspian at the offshore oil fields Chirag and Guneshli, which caused speculation and reserve among western nations (Cornell p.350). Many analysts believe that Russia was not merely a geopolitical player in the conflict but an active participant. The Russian government provided weapons for both sides, and corruption meant that many officials sold these weapons privately for profit. This was part of Russia's aim to make both Armenia and Azerbaijan dependent on the Russian government during the conflict in order to ensure Russia's superiority in the region (Ismailzade p. 105).

Historical Overview

To provide context for the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, an examination of the region must be presented. Nagorno-Karabakh is a mountainous region in Azerbaijan that is predominantly inhabited by ethnic Armenians of Orthodox beliefs, contrasting greatly with the Turkic Muslim majority in the rest of Azerbaijan. It is believed that "Gorbachev's reformist policies were transformed into the ethnic politics of 'national self-determination and democratization'. These policies provided opportunities for the mobilization of nationalism amongst the already antagonistic Armenian and Azerbaijani communities.(Geukjian, p.130). The "Armenia-Azerbaijan quarrel of 1988 was the first stone in the avalanche of ethno-territorial disputes that swept away the Soviet empire" (de Waal pg. 9). As the Soviet Union collapsed, the inhabitants of Nagorno-Karabakh sought to leave the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) and merge with Armenian SSR. Tension came to a head in 1988 when violence broke out and culminated into a war between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The conflict involved informal militias, as well as two newly formed and ill-trained national armies, and the remnants of the Soviet military (Vicken). The fighting ended in 1994 due to an uneasy ceasefire that left 17,000 dead and over a million internally displaced citizens. The region was ethnically cleansed. Nearly 40,000 Azeri's lived in the region prior to the conflict and now their numbers are null. Armenian forces occupy approximately 14% of Azerbaijan's territory, including the Lachin corridor, which connects Nagorno-Karabakh with mainland Armenia (de Waal p. 285). Nagorno-Karabakh had

declared independence in 1991 and was recognized by Armenia in 1998 (International Crisis Group).



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Ethnicity and Religion: Schism versus Brotherhood

Ethnicity plays a much larger part in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict than it did in the Russo-Georgian war because of the religious differences between the two antagonists. Armenia shares a kinship with Russia despite a different ethnic background because of their sharing an eastern Orthodox faith. Russia as always

seen Islam as an extremist threat and as most Azeri citizens are Muslim, Azerbaijan feels that Russia favors Armenia and its intervention and mediation were meant to tame Azerbaijan's ambition for a diversified foreign policy. Azerbaijan believes that "there is a worldwide hostility against the Turks and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is seen as proof of this. Azerbaijanis argue that the great powers are trying to weaken Turkey and Azerbaijan through this conflict" (Ibid).

The very name Nagorno-Karabakh echoes the Russian, Turkic, and Persian influence in the region. "Nagorno or nagorny means "mountainous" in Russian, kara means "black" in Turkish, and bagh denotes a "garden" in Persian. Armenians call this region Artsakh, while Azeris call it Yuqari or Daghliq Karabakh"(Oganesyan p. 6). The fact that even the name Nagorno-Karabakh was heavily influenced by the various cultures that converged in the region shows the importance various ethnicities and cultures in how the conflict played out. Azerbaijani citizens "define themselves as the victims in the Caucasus not only because they are Muslims, but also because they are Turks" (Tokluoglu p.1225).

Throughout history, Russia and Armenia have maintained intimate ties. In tsarist Russia during the 1800's, "thousands of Armenian families were resettled from the territory of the Ottoman Empire to the Caucasus to increase Russia's security along the border with Turkey. It was clear that Russia trusted in the loyalty of its fellow Christians. Thus, Armenia became a loyal bastion of Russia in the South Caucasus, something that Moscow was not willing to give up" (Ismailzade). Azerbaijan, a Turkic Muslim nation, despite its secularity, was seen as a threat due to its linguistic and cultural ties with Turkey, a NATO member which has a onerous

and virulent history with Russia. Hence, from the beginning, many Azerbaijani citizens were convinced that "towards the mid-1990s, it was clear that Russia supported the position of Armenia and was doing its best to empower its small South Caucasian ally as much as possible" (Ismailzade).

The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh "polarizes the regional powers, with Russian support for Armenia and Turkey's strategic partnership with Azerbaijan dividing the wider Caucasus region into two opposing blocs. These close alliances may provide security for the two South Caucasus states, but they ultimately undermine security across the region as they hamper resolution of the conflict, often exacerbating existing tensions and mistrust rather than boosting the security of either the states involved or actors across the wider region" (German p. 222). These alliances can be seen as antagonistic relations between Eastern Orthodoxy and Turkic Muslims. Armenia sees Turkey as a threat, due to the Armenian genocide, and Turkish support of Azerbaijan "allows Yerevan to perceive a military threat from Turkey and thus increase its reliance on Russia, fuelling further instability" (German p. 222). Unless Turkey and Armenia normalize relations "there will be no lasting solution to the conflict, which is the most pressing obstacle to stability and co-operation in the South Caucasus" (Ibid).

The region of Nagorno-Karabakh has a history of conflict between the two inhabiting ethnic groups. The most notable major clashes between Armenians and Azerbaijanis first occurred between 1905-1907 in what was called the "Armeno-Tatar Wars" (Oganesyan p. 6). Unrest continued and conflict re-emerged along with deportation in 1918-1920 following the collapse of imperialist Russia. Azerbaijan

and Armenia became independent for a short period before their incorporation in the Soviet Union as Soviet Socialist Republics. The two republics argued over the control of enclaves Nakhichevan, Zangezur and Nagorno-Karabakh (Oganesyan p. 6). The boundaries that currently encompass Nagorno-Karabakh trace their existence to 1920 upon incorporation into the Soviet Union (Ibid). The region was first assigned to the Armenian republic but was later given over to Azerbaijani control (Ibid). The Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast was formed in 1923, and although Armenia repeatedly tried to regain control over the region diplomatically, conflict only started to occur in the late 1980's(Oganesyan p. 7). In 1989, when the conflict brewed, ethnic Armenians made comprised approximately 77% of Nagorno-Karabakh population (International Crisis Group). As a result of the war and the dominance of Armenian forces in the region, Azeri's were forcibly displaced and in 2001 the census estimated that the population of Nagorno-Karabakh was 95% Armenian (de Waal p. 284). This allowed for the Armenian majority to control the political situation in the region with support from mainland Armenia. It is highly unlikely that Nagorno-Karabakh will rejoin Azerbaijan as doing so would put the region under Azerbaijani control, perhaps forcibly re-inhabiting the area with Azeri counterparts, which would renew the conflict.

Russian Interests

While the intensity of Russia's influence and power in the region has waned and resurged, "Russian policies in the Caucasus have been remarkably consistent

since the early 1990s. Once the Russian state became consolidated, Moscow sought to sustain its preeminent influence in the region, jealously guarding its interests there and overtly seeking to establish an acceptance— not only regionally but internationally— that the Caucasus was within Russia‘s sphere of influence" (Cornell p.339). Russia's imperialist thinking "was elevated to the highest state hierarchies with the arrival to power of Vladimir Putin in 1999" (Cornell p.339).

The Russian government is never shy in pursuing its foreign policy interests, and its involvement in the Caucasus has made a tremendous example of this. Russia has developed and expended a "variety of mainly coercive strategies, ranging from fomenting ethnic conflict and supporting separatist forces to using economic leverage and outright military force, to ensure that the region does not slip from its control" (Cornell p. 338). Russia's belief that it should maintain economic, political and cultural superiority in the self proclaimed 'near abroad' mean that Russia believes that it has special responsibilities in the region (Croissant p.63). Russia aims to restore its international status as world superpower, and a 'hard power' military doctrine enacted by its involvement in the post soviet space is a key factor in reaching these goals (Ibid). The military doctrine, adopted in 1993, stated that military force would not only be used to deter belligerence against Russia itself but also to protect the "vital interests of Russia"(Rogov). With such formidable perseverance on the part of Moscow, Azerbaijan‘s foreign policy and economic goals forever face extortion and intimidation from their larger and more powerful neighbor to the north. Baku's relationship with Moscow naturally is the most influential and important for Azerbaijan when it considers both its domestic and

international interests. Moscow has shown that it is both competent and enthusiastic in commanding leverage in the region and remains the largest threat to Azerbaijan in both the regional and global realm (Cornell, pg. 338).

Azerbaijan realized its fragility in the face of Russian interests and pursued an "assertiveness in selecting domestic and foreign policies … [which] for [Azerbaijan] was … a matter of growing up and walking on [its] feet rather than being held by the hand by 'big brother' Russia", a means of "shaking off political dependencies and establishing full sovereignty" (Pourchot 2008, 8). As seen in the previous chapter, "The 2008 conflict between Russia and Georgia demonstrated Moscow's willingness to resort to military force in support of its allies and enabled it to develop a considerable military presence in the South Caucasus, reinforcing its diplomatic and economic levers" (German p. 216). Henceforth "Armenia feels its position…to be strengthened in the knowledge that Moscow will not shy away from using force to protect its interests and allies…Azerbaijan may be less likely to resort to military force to regain control of Nagorno-Karabakh, unwilling to risk a full-scale military confrontation with Russia and the possible loss of further territory" (German p. 216). This quote exemplifies Russia's strategy in the region. Although Russia sees Armenia as a temporal ally due to their shared Christian faith and the latter's heavy dependence on the former for economic security, Russia has a great interest in fomenting instability in the region. Russia greatly fears the prospect of Islamic extremism on its southern flank, and henceforth sees Azerbaijan as a threat to Russian stability, as it lies just below that volatile Dagestan region of the northern

Caucasus, and this is a major factor in Russia's involvement in the region (Croissant p.65).

Following the color revolution in Georgia in 2003 and Ukraine in 2004, "Russia's policies toward its neighbors grew considerably more aggressive. Indeed, in addition to geopolitical competition, an ideological element entered Eurasian politics. Moscow now fervently sought to prevent the spread of democratically minded governments on its borders, viewing them as a threat not only to Russia's influence but to its own system of government" (Cornell, p.341-2). Upon Putin's ascension to power, where his main goals were to bolster Russia's international recognition and increase power in the 'near abroad', Moscow articulated a strategy with five strategic objectives in order to undermine the spread of democracy in the Former Soviet Union: "insulate, redefine, bolster, subvert, and coordinate" (Ambrosio). Former Soviet Republics, especially in the Caucasus, were the target of this policy. Russia realized that its control over the 'near abroad' is the only way to stave off western investment and influence in the FSU. Moscow conceived three demands that served as the driving force in the *Reconquista* of the Caucasus: CIS membership, the concession of Russian troops on the nation's borders, and the allowance of Russian military bases inside the nation's territory. "These requirements would become an important part of Russia's sphere of influence military doctrine, issued the following year" (Cornell p.343). Azerbaijan is a member of the CIS, and troops forcibly entered Azerbaijan during Black January and aided the Armenian enclave, but there are no Russian military Bases in Azerbaijan. Russia

forces its influence on Azerbaijan and the other former Soviet Republics in order to achieve its political and economic supremacy in the region.

NATO, one of the most prominent and influential western organizations, is a major concern for the Russian government, as numerous former Soviet republics seek to join its ranks. The "expansion of NATO into eastern Europe has roused Russian fears of hostile encirclement" (Ismailzade p.110). The Russian government imagines that "NATO and the United States have not abandoned hopes of weakening Russia and limiting its global influence; one way of accomplishing that would be to expand NATO by incorporating the former East Bloc countries, leaving Russia isolated" (Ibid).

International Negotiations

The primary difficulties in establishing a lasting settlement between Armenia and Azerbaijan are; "Armenian distaste for Azeri rule, Azeri dislike of Karabakhi independence, and an inability on either side to commit themselves to sustaining difficult concessions over time. There is, therefore, a need for a third party to intervene, but it is hard to find anyone to play this role" (Graham). The difficulty of the situation s aptly explained by Muhammad Asif Noor, who states that the

"Armenians are not willing to withdraw troops from Azeri territories until Nagorno-Karabakh is recognized as independent; Azerbaijan insists on its complete territorial integrity and demands the withdrawal of Armenian troops before it will discuss any other matters, including the eventual status of Nagorno-Karabakh. The locking of positions of both states has made a stalemate and lead of continue suffering of humanity of the region" (Noor p.10).

The Goble plan was introduced in 1992. The idea was that Azerbaijan would relinquish its claim to Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia would henceforth withdraw from other occupied territories in Azerbaijan and establish a traversable corridor between the enclave of Nakhichevan and mainland Azerbaijan (Graham). This plan was abandoned, as it was clear that neither nation was willing to make such drastic concessions in return for a peaceful resolution in Nagorno-Karabakh: the pride and territorial integrity of both nations was on the line. Gamaghelyan articulates that,

"There are a large number of stakeholders whose interests require lasting peace, yet these interests are rarely understood and articulated, and their potential for resolving the conflict is underutilized. In addition to politics, there are other factors that influence the conflict. Specifically, the conflict has a strong identity component that manifests itself in deep mutual mistrust rooted in hostile historical memories. The identity needs of Armenians and Azerbaijanis, however, are neglected in the current official Nagorno-Karabakh peace process" (Gamaghelyan p.34).

If attention is not paid to identity, then the antagonistic parties will only become more polarized and the prospect of resolution will become more remote. In 1992, the OSCE generated the "Minsk Group to encourage a peaceful negotiated resolution to the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh. The group consists of a co-chairmanship (France, Russia, and the United States) along with Belarus, Germany, Italy, Portugal, the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland,

Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan" (Graham). "The Minsk Group of the OSCE is widely regarded as ineffective, unable to achieve any progress towards a Nagorno-Karabakh solution because of the competing interests and goals of its co-chairs - the United States, Russia and France"(Ismailzade p.106). Azerbaijan and Armenia, exasperated with the ineffectual negotiations, leading them to heavily criticize mediators for a lack of a satisfactory outcome, and "has stressed the mounting frustration, disappointment and calls for war among the Azeri public. The Minsk Group co-chairs, in their turn, blame everything on the Azeri and Armenian presidents, and consider themselves to be facilitators only, not negotiators"(Ismailzade p.106). The involvement of think tanks and regional NGO's, media and educators could be helpful in resolving this frozen conflict. More direct conversation with international mediators is necessary, as non-biased third parties who are willing to involve themselves in workshops and observe conferences on the topic of the conflict could be extremely helpful. Overall, there are not many organizations involved in the negotiations and sincere interest could help move ideas from proposals to actual initiatives (Gamaghelyan p.54).

However unproductive the negotiations due to the opposing and antagonistic views of the United States and Russia and the uninterested neutrality of the other member state, the Azerbaijani government as well as global analysts view Russia "as perhaps the single greatest impediment to a resolution of the conflict" (Cornell p.353-4). Alstadt fittingly says, "even while fanning the flames, Russia touts itself as 'peacekeeper'" (Alstadt p.240). Alstadt means that although Russia is an active participant in peace negotiations, government instability in Azerbaijan allows

Russia to have greater political and economic control on the region. In taking Armenia's side, instead of remaining neutral, Russia's actions ensure that a rivalry will remain constant between Azerbaijan and Armenia, making effective mediation impossible. All nations involved in the negotiation process realize "Russia's centrality to any solution. Azerbaijani representatives even lamented Russia's position as co-chair of the Minsk Group, perhaps understanding the necessity of bringing in Russia but simultaneously pointing out the absurdity of a mediator that was also in a military alliance with one of the parties to the conflict" (Cornell p.354). Essentially this means that Russia cannot be an unbiased mediator regarding the conflict because it supports the Armenians, and thus will seek out negotiations that would benefit Armenia and have a negative effect on Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijani analysts have observed, "When relations between Moscow and Washington improve, there is progress in the Nagorno-Karabakh negotiations, with some signs of hope for a lasting solution. When US-Russian relations deteriorate, the peace process runs into complete deadlock" (Ismailzade p.111). An example of this was during the 1990's under Yeltsin before Putin had taken office. The west still had high hopes for Russia and cooperated with them on a large scale. During this time the Minsk group was created as well as the Goble Plans and the Prague Process. Through these organizations, numerous conferences and campaigns were created to create lasting peace in the region. However, after Putin became president in 2000, he created a more aggressive foreign policy that was and still is less cooperative with the west. Russian-western relations have since greatly deteriorated, in large part due to the Russo-Georgian war, the annexations of Crimea, and unrest in

Eastern Ukraine. Negotiations have mostly come to a standstill during the 2000's. Since Armenia is backed by Russia and Azerbaijan by the United States, the main lesson to draw from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is that geopolitics is a major player in the ineffectiveness of negotiations. Armenia and Azerbaijan are blamed by the international community for their unwillingness to make concessions. However, other major influences in the region such as Russia and the United States have a large impact on the proceedings. "It is no coincidence that Azerbaijanis believe the keys to a solution are to be found in Moscow and Washington. At the moment, the status quo is likely to continue" (Ismailzade p.111). It is believed that the situation will improve only if Russo-American relations drastically recover.

In 2004 a different process for negotiations was introduced. This is known as The Prague Process. The main mediators are France, Russia, and the United States. If a consensus is reached, Armenia and Azerbaijan have agreed that the five of the seven districts adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh occupied by Armenian forces would be returned to Azerbaijan control along with the deployment of international peacekeepers (Graham p.56). The part of the negotiation that has proved most difficult is the status of Lachin and Kelbajar, which border Armenia (Graham p.54). The Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh would like a corridor that linked them to mainland Armenia as well as the demilitarization of Kelbajar. Azerbaijan, conversely, demands that Armenians withdraw from these two territories, allowing Azeri citizens to return. This 'right to return' is a large point of contention in the negotiations that have brought discussion to a stand still. A referendum on a vote would create the decision, and thus both Armenians and Azerbaijanis are concerned

with who will be allowed to vote. At the moment it seems that negotiations are going to stall for the near future (Graham p.54).

Conclusion

In conclusion, Russia's main interest in the region, and Azerbaijan in particular, is to maintain instability through ethnic conflict so that it can assert its influence and preeminence in the face of western investment in hopes of restoring and protecting its territorial integrity (Croissant p.62). Azerbaijan's natural resources have led the leadership to pursue a multi-vector foreign policy that Russia sees as threatening to its interests. Russia is a main source of natural gas and oil and sees Azerbaijan as a competitor. The United States and Europe have pushed for the creation of pipelines that originate in Azerbaijan, run through Georgia, and bypass Russia. The loss of this economic opportunity and access control point led Russia to intervene in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Since the main third party negotiators are Russia and the United States, discussion has come to an ideological standstill, and the OCSE funded Minsk Group has made little progress in defusing the frozen conflict. Whereas Russia is apt to defend its Christian brethren, Armenia, a weaker state that is more dependent on the former, the United States and the West supports Azerbaijan, who aims for democracy and has an affluence of natural resources. It is unlikely that a resolution will take place anytime soon, but hopefully violence does not have to break out once more in order for the conflict to be taken seriously and concluded.

Russo-Georgian War: The Case for Russian Intervention in Abkhazia and South Ossetia

The case study on the Russo-Georgian War will outline the reasons that led to Russia's military involvement alongside the South Ossetian and Abkhaz separatists. These include generating unrest in Georgia to weaken the government, placating ethnic populations in Russian territory that correspond with separatist ethnic groups in Georgia, and exhibiting military power to maintain its political reputation in the Caucasus. The chapter begins by discussing the nature of Russian involvement in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and a historical overview to show the reader how to interpret Russia's foreign policy motives in Georgia. Russian interests will be discussed and the importance of international negotiations will be examined. The conclusion will focus on Russia's attempt to enhance its territorial integrity and indicate the outcomes of the Russo-Georgian War on Russian relations with the US and EU.

The West perceives Georgia as one of the weakest yet most independently minded nations in the CIS. Upon independence it voiced its ambition to create closer ties with Europe while its relations with Russia have deteriorated. The Georgian government has continued its goal of distancing itself from the influence of Moscow and its economic and security domination in the region. Georgia defiantly stood by its attempt to develop relations with the West while pursuing friendly relations with Russia to appease any feelings that Georgia was becoming a threat (Kakachia pg. 87). Georgia has a lack of natural resources, however it serves as a conduit point for

oil and natural gas lines progressing from Central Asia to Europe. Georgia, being Orthodox Christian, is seen as part of the Caucasian buffer zone between Turkey and Iran, as well as positioned directly below the volatile regions of North Ossetia, Dagestan, and Chechnya in the southern tail of Russia (Nygren, pg. 101). Russian interests in Georgia and the rest of the South Caucasus focus on the belief that it serves as a bastion of pro-Russian states that protect it from Western influence (Kakachia pg. 87).

Russian Intervention in Georgia's Separatist States

Russia has a lengthy history of intervention in the northern Caucasus due to conflict with the Muslim majority in this region, having waged a violent war with Chechnya that left its capital Grozny in deep disrepair. The separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are not Muslim (a religion that Russia often persecutes and shows violence against). Many celebrate Orthodoxy or native religions, and because of this, Russia does not fear Muslim extremism and instead aids these rebel territories (Enteen). The problems Georgia faced that helped facilitate an atmosphere where war was considered an option were (1) the division and personal rivalries among political elites; (2) their willingness to go to great lengths to achieve their ambitions, even bringing them to the edge of civil war; and (3) "intense Russian interest and involvement in Georgia because of its immediate proximity to the Northern Caucasus and the Black Sea, which makes it of particular significance to Russia's own security and the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation" (Hunter pg. 110).

Russia is largely dependent on its natural resources for stimulating its otherwise suffering economy in the Post-Soviet Era. The crony government, headed by President Putin with the aid of Prime Minister Medvedev, lacks the will and experience necessary to grow independent business and a diversified economy. Georgia and other nations once part of the USSR feel a sense of pressure from the Russian government to allow the former's influence to go uninterrupted in the region, as American or European interest is seen as a cultural and economic threat to Russia. As the countries of the Trans Caucasus region evolve, "the legacy of the Soviet era is the most important influence to which the region has been subjected. In fact, in many respects, the current politics, social structure, and economic infrastructure of the Trans Caucasus are products of Soviet era nation-building and socialist development" (Hunter pg. 13).

The former republics of the USSR, especially Georgia, are still highly influenced by Soviet ideology and mythology, meaning that many of the ethnic conflicts present post-independence can trace their 'heir to the thrown' to the Soviet Era and ethno nationalism (Kelleher pg. 337). Kelleher also mentions that how the ethnic conflicts are managed "will have a direct and crucial impact on the economic and political development of the new states…[and] the ability and willingness of international organizations, under the leadership of the West, to resolve and mediate ethnic disputes will determine whether democratization grows or withers in the face of radical politics and authoritarianism" (Kelleher pg. 337). This statement proves prophetic in its understanding of how the intervention of the West shapes the post-Soviet world. Turning specifically to the case of Georgia, the issue of

resource control played a major part in Russia's interest in asserting its power over Georgia and welcoming the self-proclaimed independent regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Kelleher pg. 340).

Historical Overview

Although the Russo-Georgian Conflict that took place in the summer of 2008 is widely known, tension between Georgia and its minority populations has plagued the nation since the Soviet Era. Despite economic growth and industrialization in the 1970's due to a booming agricultural sector, Georgia was vulnerable to the centralized economy of the USSR. The Georgian government suffered from inefficiency, corruption, and the development of mafias. The 1980's were a time of major transition for Georgia. In 1985, longtime Georgian leader Eduard Shevardnadze ended his leadership after thirteen years of management. His jurisdiction lasted for such an extensive amount of time that his men occupied all of the highest bureaucratic posts (Hunter pg. 114). The onset of glasnost and perestroika under Gorbachev in the 1980's led to economic deterioration because of Gorbachev's anti-alcohol campaign: Georgia's agriculture centered on grape production (Hunter pg. 114). This, along with a 20% decrease in production, and an alarming rate of unemployment, led to widespread discontent among the populace (Ibid). The unemployment rate was about 500,000 of the total 5.5 million population of Georgia. It was during this time period that nationalist groups developed and academia developed text with nationalistic undertones. In October 1987, under the principles of "Language, Religion, and Fatherland" a group named

the Chavchavadze Society was formed (Fuller). One of the original founders was Zviad Gamsakhurdia, who later became the first president of independent Georgia (Aves pg. 159). As Georgian nationalism developed, ethnic minorities, namely the Abkhaz and South Ossetians, also gained self-awareness. This led to a multitude of conflicting political and ethnic loyalties that has "proven to be an effective tool for intervention by...foreign powers to take advantage of Georgia's ethnic and territorial fragmentation" (Souleimanov pg. 72).

In the late 1980's, the Abkhaz and ethnic Georgians disputed Georgia's pursuit of independence from the Soviet Union. In 1989 clashes between Georgians and the Abkhaz took place that served as the first opportunity for Russia to establish troops in the area. When Abkhazia declared independence from Georgia in 1990 and elected it own president, unrest broke out in Tbilisi and Russian forces again intervened (Nygren pg. 101). After the collapse of the USSR, relations between these two distinct groups continued to deteriorate. In 1992, war broke out in Abkhazia, which led to the massacre and ethnic cleansing of Georgians in the separatist region by the Abkhaz and Russians (Jafalian). Also in 1992, President Zviad Gamsakhurdia, a nationalist, with an anti-Russian policy was ousted in a coup d'état and replaced by none other than Eduard Shevardnadze, an elite with pro-Russian leanings (Jafalian). Analysts believe Russian troops aided the rebels in the coup d'état. In 1993, Gamsakhurdia died. Many believe that Gamsakhurdia was assassinated because of a bullet wound to the head, but on one is sure who killed him. The Georgian armed forces were defeated and thereby Abkhazia celebrated its independence from Georgia. In 2008, when most international interest in Russia

focused on the conflict in South Ossetia, Abkhaz fighters shot at Georgian forces in the Kodori gorge. Russia sent in troops to help the Abkhaz defeat the Georgian forces. Georgian forces were overwhelmed and Georgian civilians were forced to flee Abkhazia. Russia acknowledged Abkhazia's independence in 2008. The Abkhaz parliament authorized a bill in 2009 to construct a Russian military base in Abkhazia (Nowak). In 2014 strengthened ties when President Putin signed an agreement for a 'joint defense and security space' with Abkhaz President Raul Khadzhimb (Baczynska).

Although Russia expected his regime to be loyal to Moscow, his policies continued Georgia's objectives of nationalism and sovereignty (Jafalian). President Putin may not have expected the backlash from the West that occurred in 2008, as, in the 1990's, the West, particularly the George Bush Sr. administration, looked on the situation with indifference, still viewing the area within Russia's sphere of influence (Jafalian). After the War in Abkhazia ended in 1993, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrei Kozyrev, told the UN General Assembly that "Russia realizes that no international organization or group of states can replace our peacekeeping efforts in this specific post-Soviet space"(Fedarko). This served as a convincing gesture that "Russia's priority was again, after some period of hesitation, to restore its hegemony in the post-Soviet space" (Jafalian). In the wars in the 1990's the unprepared Georgian forces were defeated, and the state so weakened that it nearly collapsed and was forced to accept peace agreements with Russia, entering the CIS on October 21st 1993 (Ibid). Yeltsin and Shevardnadze signed a treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in 2004. This treaty forced Georgia to allow Russia to

keep military bases in Vaziani, Akhalkalaki, Batumi, and Gudauta. Russia also kept its headquarters of the Transcaucasian Military District in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi. This allowed Russian troops to engage peacekeeping forces in Abkhazia (Jafalian).

The pinnacle of political tension in Georgia culminated in 2003 with the Rose Revolution, where masses of Georgian civilians held protests against disputed parliamentary elections that Shevardnadze may have doctored. Shevardnadze did this in order to keep his political party Citizens' Union of Georgia or the CUG in power, despite an extremely low approval rating (Welt). The protests in Tbilisi that ultimately ended with Shevardnadze resigning and the election of Saakashvili as president (Welt pg. 67). Russian leaders were not tremendously upset by the transition, as they were relieved that Shevardnadze was out of office. However, relations between the two countries worsened greatly when upon election President Saakashvili stated his intention to restore the territorial integrity of Georgia by taking back control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Nygren pg. 105). Although Russia at first helped Georgia in its reacquisition of Ajaria along Georgia's border with Turkey in 2007, this action was offset by Russian participation in the illegal election that took place in 2004 in Abkhazia. Georgia introduced failed attempts in 2005-6 to repatriate Abkhazia under Georgian political control.

The Russian "wine ban" as well as the ban on Georgian mineral water resulted in a trade and culture war between Russia and Georgia in 2006 that further strained relations (Nygren pg. 107). As Russia was applying for membership to the World Trade Organization (WTO), Georgia was able to manipulate Russia into

canceling trade restrictions (Ibid). Not long after this, Russia issued Russian passports to the Abkhaz, which established an aura of permanence among the distrust and tension between the two countries (Nygren pg. 105). Russia then accused Georgia of using the "Pankisi valley as a transit country for global Islamist networks heading towards Chechnya and of supplying weapons to Chechen rebels against Russia" (Jafalian). This accusation was likely fueled by Georgia's refusal to let the Russian army use Georgian territory to fight the Chechen rebels. As a matter of fact, constant Russian claims that Al Qaida and the Taliban were hiding in the region (a ridiculous notion) backfired, and led to a security initiative between Georgia and an attentive United States that allowed for American military presence in the Pankisi valley, ironically Russia's worst nightmare in terms of national security (Ibid).

Russian Interests

The Russian Government does not see a distinction between the North Caucasus (Chechnya, Ingushetia and North Ossetia), which is Russian territory, and the Southern Caucasus (Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia). The government believes that this territory remains as a whole under Russian regulation. This means that Georgia is seen as a key location in the region, especially because of its South Ossetian separatist region that corresponds to the North Ossetian population in Russia. Part of Russia's belief of its control over Georgia is partially due to the many Soviet military bases that were built in Georgia (Kakachia pg. 88). Russian foreign policy always concerns one issue above all others, and that is national security and

territorial integrity. Therefore "in [the] Kremlin's strategic thinking if you have Georgia under your control, you have the appropriate military infrastructure to control the whole Southern Caucasus. Furthermore, in order to achieve full control of the region, a policy of divide-and-conquer is being implemented: the creation of microstates and zones of instability enables Russia to remain the dominant regional actor" (Kakachia pg. 88). Russia fears Georgia's independent and democratic ambitions because it threatens Russia's sphere of influence. "Among the political tools Russia has deployed to pursue its interests, energy resources are one of the most fundamental. At present, Russia is responsible for a significant share of the delivery of oil and gas delivery to the EU and the CIS itself" (Pochkhua pg. 83).

Russia's recognition of the de facto states Abkhazia and South Ossetia has supported a form of territorial gerrymandering that weakens Georgian influence and strengthens its own, while also asserting its dominance in the region and demanding acknowledgment as a world power (Hunter pg. 13). Russia uses this strategy of weakening states in its 'near abroad' to maintain political and economic dominance in the Former Soviet Union. This idea is not new to Russia. It has been practiced since imperial Russia by the Czar's conquests and the idea was radically employed by Stalin during his rule, most notably in the Central Asian region. Nonetheless, the practice continues, to the detriment of Georgia and the other comparatively newly minted Former Soviet Republics. The Soviets systematically manipulated ethnic groups by dissociating them from their peers in order to make them easier to rule by repressing any nationalist tendencies. The Abkhaz minority is a clear example of this: the native population was split between North Ossetia and

Georgia, thereby complicating a territory dispute that had developed in Soviet times (Hunter pg. 14).

The Ossetians faced a similar fate that undoubtedly led to the unrest in Georgia after independence. Another factor that contributed to the de facto states of Abkhazia and South Ossetia was also an aspect of the Soviet legacy. Historical revisionism was frequently used by the Soviets. This relays the belief that history can be rewritten; they used the concept to promote socialist values and repress ethnic expression (Hunter pg. 14). Ultimately, as communism failed, various groups started to re-identify with their ethnic origins, leading to conflict and backlash after nations gained independence upon the dissolution of the USSR. The disputed Regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia that have broken away from Georgia border Southern Russia's Northern Caucasus. Abkhazia borders the Black Sea, which is seen as an additional advantage for Russia, which has long sought warm-water seaports.

http://sidomi.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/10_Abkhazia-and-South-Ossetia.jpg

Russian Interests

The Russian government viewed Georgia's ambition to join NATO as "an unacceptable flouting of Russia's claim to a privileged sphere of influence in the post-Soviet region" (Light, pg. 1580). Among the factors that made it possible for the Kremlin to pursue a hard liner policy, the most influential are the growing importance of Russia as a supplier of oil and natural gas in international markets (particularly in Europe), as well as the "severe divisions within NATO created by the US war in Iraq" (Light, pg. 1580). The lack of cohesive decision-making in NATO "gave Russia increased room for diplomatic and ultimately military action" (Light, pg. 1580). When the United States and European nations decided to recognize Kosovo as an independent nation earlier in 2008, in opposition to Serbia, a Russian ally, the government felt that it was time to act. In February 2008, President Putin

and President Saakashvili of Georgia met, with President Putin reportedly having said 'you know we have to answer the West on Kosovo. And we are very sorry but you are going to be part of that answer' (Asmus pg. 106). Some of the major mistakes of the Georgian government that preceded the war and led to its manifestation include "the nationalistic and centralizing policies that Georgian leaders pursued in the early 1990s, which alienated many Abkhazians and South Ossetians and helped lead to the two regions' *de facto* secession from Georgia" (Light, pg. 1581).

Russia's territorial integrity was in question because of the continued violence in the North Caucasus and the Middle East. The Russian government felt its security was threatened because its sphere of influence was interrupted by Western intervention. Georgia no longer wished to pursue intimate relations with Russia. Russia, accustomed to dominance in its immediate territorial neighborhood, felt it needed to conduct a military campaign to prove its own strength after the Soviet collapse in order to still be regarded as a world power. Pochkhua notes that although "the generally accepted line of thinking would dictate that economic and social pressure would be sufficient…the clashes that took place in 2008 between Russia and Georgia tend to refute this claim, showing that direct military involvement may after all guarantee the implementation of the goals of powerful states, or at least maintain the status quo ante" (Pochkhua pg. 82).

President Putin's strong leadership facilitated Russia's ascent out of the post Soviet chaos of the 1990's under former President Yeltsin. Putin has been using his rotating responsibilities as president and prime minister over the past decade to

assert Russian influence and convince the West that the world is no longer unipolar (Pochkhua pg. 82). As seen in many circumstances since President Putin's ascension to power, the use of military force and hard power are key in Russia's strategy to boost its world recognition. Russian supremacy in the Caucasus "deepened the rift between the region's Muslim and non-Muslim inhabitants. It even exacerbated interethnic rivalry among the Christians, because the Russian overlords tended to shift their favors from one group to another" (Hunter pg. 12). Thus, it is not so surprising that the South Ossetians and Abkhaz resented and sought independence from Georgia. Prior to August of the 2008 war, the "Region of Tskhinvali was under the de facto control of separatists; this region was populated both by Georgians and Ossetians. Villages were mixed in a chessboard order that actually favored the Georgian side, and were under the official control of the Georgian government in Tbilisi" (Pochkhua). When Ossetian separatists had fired at OSCE peace observers, using illegal weaponry, Russia responded to the incident by proclaiming to protect South Ossetians from Georgian aggression by any means possible (Hunter pg. 12). The likely reason behind Russia's desire to back separatists in Georgia was "the fact [that] it did not want to set the precedent that territorial problems in its own neighborhood would be allowed to progress without Moscow's mediation…[and] was also likely driven by the desire to openly punish a once friendly and now rather problematic neighbor, thus ensuring for itself the status of supreme power in the region" (Pochkhua).

Even before the war in 2008, Russia's primary concern was to debilitate Georgia's ability to protect itself and have a functioning economy. Russia aimed to

damage Georgia's infrastructure and refused to negotiate with President Saakashvili, hoping to indict him for war crimes (Blank pg. 379). It is clear that "Moscow intends to create a Georgia that will be a Russian satellite ready to renounce its Westernizing ambitions" (Ibid). The Baku-Tbilisi Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline, which bypasses Russia, is seen as a threat. In the early 2000's there was still hope that through destabilizing Georgia and other states in the Caucasus, Russia could deter investment for the pipeline. This would allow Russia to be the key provider for Caspian oil and gas, therefore monopolizing the European resource market (Blank pg. 379). Thus, it is in Russian interests to invade and deteriorate territory in the Caucasus to create unrest. When the Georgian government became unstable, this allowed Russia to maintain supremacy in the region and made the Georgian economy dependent on Russia for resources. Russian aircraft even launched surface-to-air missiles in August 2007 that failed to detonate. The reasoning behind this was to provoke NATO and to deter Georgia from proceeding with its aim for closer ties with the organization (Blank pg. 384). A quote from Stephen Blank's analysis of Russia's motivation to wage war in Georgia states that

"Moscow repeatedly tried to overthrow the Georgian government, supported assassination attempts against Shevardnadze, launched over flights and bombing raids, instituted repeated energy cutoffs and trade sanctions, gave Abkhazian and South Ossetian residents Russian passports, blockaded Georgia, deported Georgians in Russia, and bombed Georgian villages" (Blank pg. 384)

What Blank claims with this statement is that Russia provoked Georgia into a conflict, and did everything in its power to weaken the Georgian government before doing so, ensuring a win by the separatists. Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008 and its recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia was a message to NATO to heavily consider the dangers of expanding its missions and membership into the Former Soviet Union (Kakachia pg. 88). Concerned with the United States-Georgian military and security partnership, the potential to gain military footholds in Georgia via Abkhazia and South Ossetia was a reassurance to Russia that its sphere of influence was not being completely taken over by the West (Giorgi). Exactly who started the war is still highly contested. Both Georgia and Russia accuse each other of the initial offensive and both claim defensive stances (Nygren pg. 108). The Russian government hopes to create an international status quo where Moscow is once again a major world power, and the Putin administration has chosen hard power to do so. Through the European Union's Eastern Partnership (EaP) program, the EU hoped to integrate the former soviet republics in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus with the organization by "improving human rights, easing visa regulations, and ensuring energy security" (Kakachia pg. 88). Although Russia realizes the economic benefits it could gain from pursuing these closer relations with the EU, the government's pride and view of the organization as a rival in its traditional sphere of influence prohibits Russia from following these interests.

International Negotiations

The EU "acted as a peace mediator during the Russo-Georgian War in August 2008" (Forsberg & Seppo pg. 121). The EU worked also with the United Nations

(UN) and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to develop a "monitoring mission to Georgia and to launch an international fact-finding mission to investigate the origins and course of the conflict" (Forsberg & Seppo pg. 121). The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) met on August 9th during the Beijing Olympics after the initial offensives by Georgia and Russia on August 7th and 8th respectively. Multiple meetings were held by the UNSC, but a solution was not found due to Russia's reluctance to a joint resolution with the UNSC (Forsberg & Seppo pg. 125). Talks between Sarkozy, Russian diplomats and EU representatives resulted in an agreement on September 8th to withdraw Russian troops from Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The Council of the EU was then able to establish a civilian European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) (Forsberg & Seppo pg. 127). After the conflict, the EU also sponsored a rule of law mission (THEMIS) and a border support mission (EUSR BST) (Ibid.) Overall, the EU served as the primary source of impartial mediation in the conflict.

The Russian government hoped to depict the Georgian government as undependable and erratic. Russia hoped to show the West the Georgia was not mature enough to be a part of the organizations it so ardently strived for and used it as a warning to Ukraine to step away from its ambitious relationships with the European Union and NATO (Konoplyov). "The war was not only with Georgia — it also was a proxy war with the United States. Russia sent a clear signal that it believed that the United States had crossed the line in its support of Saakashvili and should back off"(Konoplyov). According to Stephen Blank, the Russian military gave the separatists weaponry and "gave passports to the citizens living in the provinces

so that it could claim with no justification that they were Russian citizens whom Moscow was obligated to defend. Russian forces in the provinces were hardly peacekeepers" (Blank pg. 385). Pavel Felgengauer predicted that the Russian provocation in the separatist regions was planned in advance. Still the Russian government was cautious to avoid any serious conflict until it became clear that Georgia would not be given a Membership Action Plan by NATO (Sakwa pg. 592). To Russia, this meant that it could attack Georgia without serious repercussions from the West (Whitmore). Below is a quote in Russian from an article Pavel Felgengauer wrote for the politics section of the "Новая Газета" with a translation of my own underneath.

"В апреле на саммите НАТО в Бухаресте, в котором Путин принимал личное участие, стало ясно, что присоединение Грузии и Украины к альянсу, хоть пока решение отложено, неизбежно. Российские гражданские и военные начальники честно предупреждали как Запад, так и власти в Тбилиси и в Киеве, что попытки «затягивания в НАТО» (по словам наших дипломатов) стран, которые в Москве считают традиционной вотчиной, приведет к кризису. Было объявлено, что Россия «любыми средствами» не допустит вступления Грузии в НАТО, но на Михаила Саакашвили это не подействовало. Тогда события стали развиваться с нарастающей скоростью"(Felgengauer).

"At the NATO Summit in Bucharest April of 2008, which Putin Attended, it was stated that the decision of whether Georgia or Ukraine would be invited to join the organization was postponed. At this summit, Russian military and government officials warned the West, Kiev and Tbilisi that tightening relations with NATO, a traditional enemy, would lead to a crisis. Russia stated that it would intervene "by any means" to

prevent Georgian membership in the NATO, but Mikhail Saakashvili did not back away. From then on, events moved at a quick speed."

Translated by Chelsea Mickel

Russia fears it will lose control of the Caucasus and other Former Soviet Republics. This fear is generated from the belief that if Russia is able to continue political dominance in the FSU, the Russian imperial dream will live on. This dream that Russia will return to greatness allows President Putin to have a hard line foreign policy, which he uses to assert control over nations that have been sovereign since the 1990's (Blank pg. 387). In the New York Times, James Traub commented that Russia appears to act like a 19th century empire that seeks to expand its borders through military means. Russia is not afraid to manipulate nations in its sphere of influence into doing its bidding. It has readily been seen in the past that Ukraine faced oil and gas shortages that led many to die of hypothermia when in opposition with Russia, while Armenia was rewarded for its compliant behavior towards Russian policy (Traub).

Georgia's embrace of the West threatens Russia's influence in the Caucasus, however, Georgia's aspiration to join NATO was seen as the last straw; Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov "threatened that Georgia's ambition to join NATO 'will lead to renewed bloodshed,' adding, as if that weren't enough, 'we will do anything not to allow Georgia and Ukraine to join NATO'" (Traub). Preceding the war in August, Russia staged a large military exercise and the Russian Fleet in the Black Sea was ready to support and deploy armed troops. Russian troops had rebuilt and repaired railway lines between Sukhumi and Ochamchira as well as the coastal

railways so that Russian forces could be transported into Abkhazia if needed (Sakwa pg. 594). On the 16th of April 2008, only a few months before the war, President Putin "strengthened diplomatic and aid links with Abkhazia and South Ossetia; later that month Russia deployed over a thousand heavily armed additional troops to its part of the Joint Peacekeeping Forces without seeking Georgia's consent" (Sakwa pg. 594).

Conclusion

With all of this evidence it is clear that Russia had many reasons for its intervention in the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Fearing for its territorial and influential integrity in the region, Russia saw the opportunity to demolish Georgian infrastructure and government so as to render it an inert threat. Georgia's ambition to strengthen ties with the West and its accredited organizations led Russian officials to threaten Georgia with violence. Although these threats were seen as minimal by the West, they ultimately were realized. Russia arguably achieved its goals in the conflict. Russia's management and military presence in Abkhazia secures a large portion of the Black Sea Coast for Russia and allowed for a secure border for the Sochi Olympics (just north of Abkhazia) held in 2014 (Kakachia). However, if Russia's ultimate goal was to regain control of the entirety of Georgia, it was not successful, as Georgia still pursues relations with the West and is unlikely to recognize the 20% of its territory that lies in Russian and separatist hands.

Russia did not expect the media backlash it received in 2008, as the previous wars in Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the early 1990's had garnered little attention from Europe and the U.S. but the Russo-Georgian war was a clear turning point in relations between Russia and the West. The latter saw the former as a continuation of its Cold War policies and objectives; not willing to forgo previous land holdings and influence to secure a peaceful world. Since 2008, relations have soured to the point where effective communication between Russia and the West in null. It is not clear what the future will bring to Russian foreign policy, but with President Putin and Prime Minister Medvedev in incumbent leadership positions, its aspirations are sure not to deviate significantly from the present.

Crimea: Sovereign or Stalemate

Recently, Ukraine has undergone a major political upheaval. The deposition of the formerly pro-Russian government with a nationalist, western oriented one has led to violent protest in eastern Ukraine and the subsequent annexation by Russia of Crimea. Putin newly claimed that the annexation was planned weeks in advance of the referendum of self-determination in Crimea; right after former President Victor Yanukovych was ousted (BBC News). The referendum succeeded due to the large Russian population there. The Ukrainian and Tatar populations in Crimea as well as many western nations are deeply concerned with this radical move of military aggression in the Former Soviet Union, fearing what it means for the future.

This case study will outline the major factors that led to Russia's decision to annex Crimea. These include military security, punishment for Ukrainian pro-western ideology, and methodology to regain geo-political importance. Russian involvement and a historical overview set the scene in order to interpret Russia's foreign policy motives in Crimea. The significance of ethnic-religious differences between the native Tatars and Russians/Ukrainians will be discussed to examine Russian bias against Turkic Muslims and show the diverse nature of the peninsula. To round off the discussion, Russian interests and international negotiations will be discussed, featuring worldwide condemnation of Russia's actions. These aspects conclude that the Crimean Crisis is a warning to the western world of Russia's capabilities and regained status as a world power.

Russian Involvement

Russia has pursued extensive involvement in Crimea since the 1700's when it conquered the region. Although Crimea briefly gained independence after the October Revolution, the peninsula, along with many of the other acquired territories of Russia, were quickly incorporated into the USSR after the communist party ascended to power. Russia values Crimea because of its fertile land and geographic position on the Black Sea coast. Although Russians view Crimea as part of the motherland, Crimea is far from homogenous. There are significant numbers of not only Ukrainians, but also Turkic Muslim minorities, most notably the Tatars, who consider Crimea their homeland. Before its annexation by Russia, Crimea was known as the Crimean Khanate, ruled as a successor state to the Golden Horde. The region then came under Ottoman control until it was liberated by the Russo-Turkish treaty in 1774 and later annexed by Russia in 1783 (Spencer).

The city of Sevastopol serves as a major seaport and the Black Sea offered Russia warm-water access for its Navy, which continued to be stationed there after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Black Sea lies near Russia's southern border. "It provides Russia, since the end of the eighteenth century, with a 'window' on the warm Mediterranean waters, and beyond, it is the closest access to the world ocean for the Russian Navy and Russia's merchant fleet" (Delanoe p.370).

President Putin claims that the collapse of the USSR was " the biggest geo-political catastrophe of the century" (Khalifa-Zadeh). After Putin was elected 2000, his mission has been to try "to recover for Russia political and geostrategic assets

that were lost by the USSR in 1991. Putin is attempting to renew Russia's status and influence in both regional and global politics, while claiming for the Russian Federation the same great power once wielded by the USSR" (Khalifa-Zadeh). Crimea has come into the limelight in the past year following the massive Euromaidan protests that swept Ukraine and deposed the pro-Russian Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovych and replaced him with a western leaning government under the leadership of Petro Poroshenko.

Historical Overview

Crimea remains one of the most contentious and sought after pieces of land in history. Its ideal placement on the Black Sea and proximity to Russia has led the latter to claim ownership multiple times over the centuries. The ancient Greeks and Romans invaded its coasts, while the Ottomans, Mongolians, Bulgars, and finally, Russians conquered the landmass (Taylor). The eponymous "*Crimea* seems to have come from the language of the Crimean Tatars, a Turkic ethnic group that emerged during the Crimean Khanate. The Tatars called the peninsula *Qırım*" (Taylor). The Russian Empire annexed the region in 1783, and attempted to rename it Taurica, however, the name Crimea was widely used and became official in 1917 (Taylor).

In 1917 after the collapse of the Russian Empire following the October revolution, Crimea became an autonomous nation for a short period until it was caught up in the Russian civil war as a stronghold for the White Army. Crimea was incorporated into the USSR as an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in 1921.

During World War II, Crimea was caught up in the fighting and suffered traumatically. It was occupied by Nazi Germany and Sevastopol was greatly diminished due to heavy fighting and artillery. The Russian army regained Crimea in 1944 and heavily punished the Tatar population, stating that they had collaborated with the Nazis. "Following the liberation of Crimea from German invasion, the Soviet government embarked on an ambitious project to cleanse the area of non-Slavic communities and therefore deported the Crimean Tatars" (Yesilot p.169). Nearly half of the Tatars deported died en route to Central Asia due to terrible conditions. The Tatar population was allowed to return only after the collapse of the USSR (Taylor).

In 1954, Crimea was downgraded to an oblast (administrative region) in Russia. Nikita Khrushchev ceded the Crimean Oblast to Ukraine in 1954. Khrushchev worked his way up through the Ukrainian Communist Party and may have felt a strong kinship for Ukraine. It is likely that he gifted Crimea to Ukraine because of its fertile land as a reward for their great suffering in World War II. Crimea became an autonomous region within in Ukraine upon independence from the USSR in 1991.

Upon independence in December of 1991, Ukraine held a referendum regarding liberation in which 54% of Crimean voters opted for independence from Russia. Although this was a majority, it was the lowest majority voting in favor of independence in Ukraine. Succeeding a fleeting struggle with the "newly independent Ukrainian government, Crimea agreed to remain part of Ukraine, but with significant autonomy"(Taylor). The question of "Crimea's geopolitical status received little attention prior to 1990…the issue of Crimea's relationship to Ukraine,

Russia, and the world still seemed far off on the horizon. In keeping with general trends throughout the USSR, there was strong popular support for increased political and economic autonomy for the region but these goals never extended to regional independence or renunciation of their affiliation with Ukraine." (Dawson p. 436). In 1997, Ukraine and Russia "signed a bilateral Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership, which formally allowed Russia to keep its Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol" (Taylor). The region has been in the news frequently of late due to the invasion of Russian troops last year in March of 2014. Russia annexed the Ukrainian territory, leading to national controversy. After the annexation, the Crimean population voted for independence from Ukraine. The vote passed due to the large number of ethnic Russians on the peninsula. Russia and Crimea signed a Treaty of Accession and Crimea was thereby absorbed into Russian territory, and is currently under de facto Russian control.

(page break because of map below)

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2014/02/27/to-understand-crimea-take-a-look-back-at-its-complicated-history/

Ethnicity and Religion: The Muslim-Christian Divide

The Crimean population is composed of 58.8% ethnic Russians, 24.2% Ukrainians and 12.1% Crimean Tatars, with a collection of smaller ethnic groups, according to a Ukrainian census from 2001 (Lovasz). The Russian population primarily celebrates the Russian Orthodox religion, and Ukrainians celebrate eastern Orthodoxy as well. The Tatar population however, celebrates Islam and is ethnically Turkic, which has long been a point of contention with the Russian

government. Despite the fact that the Tatars were allowed to return to Crimea after the collapse of the USSR, they have continually been harassed and faced human rights violations. Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Nils Muiznieks states that there have been mysterious incidents of "'abductions' of civil society activists and attacks on Crimean Tatars, ethnic Ukrainians and people who have refused Russian citizenship since Russia annexed Ukraine's Black Sea peninsula in March" (Lovasz). Local Crimean activists Leonid Korzh, Timur Shaimardanov, and Seiran Zinedinov have disappeared, and the Human Rights Council has started investigations into their disappearances (Lovasz).

Since the Brezhnev era and leading into the post-Soviet Era, "ethnic conflict has emerged as one of the most serious obstacles to democratization in Eastern Europe and the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union" (Dawson). In Crimea, a large part of the ethnic tension comes from the various possibilities for delineating the region. The Organization of the Crimean Tatar National Movement (OKND) "has called for the creation of a Crimean Tatar state, which provides enhanced political rights to ethnic Crimean Tatars. However, the Russian Party of Crimea promotes the revitalization of an ethnic Russian national identity and supports privileges position for Russians in Crimea. Lastly, the Ukrainian National Assembly and the Ukrainian Republican Party maintain the Ukrainian-ization of Crimea. Some even favor a pan-Slavic identity for the peninsula (Dawson 429).

The Crimean Tatars' are able to trace their ancestries to the Crimea back to the 1400's. This has led the Tatars to label themselves as natives of the peninsula, much to the chagrin of ethnic Russians. Because of this, some believe that they

should have special rights, and privileges for their citizenship (Vozgrin, 1994). The Tatars have a history of "autonomous statehood, both prior to the Russian conquest and during the Bolshevik revolution, is used to further reinforce their demands for a definition of the political community which favors the Crimean Tatar population and ensures their ability to affect decisions in the region, despite their low population percentage" (Dawson p.430). The Russian population this claim is a farce because of the historical distance attributed to the story. "According to Russian historians, with the Russian conquest of the peninsula in 1783 came the introduction of civilization to the region…[that] prior to the Russian conquest, the peninsula was inhabited by a nomadic and uncivilized population" (Dawson p.430). Russians view the Crimean Tatar as barbarians, and so the Tatars appeal to independent statehood is rejected" (Dawson 430). In the endeavor to assemble Crimean culture, "all of the key political actors focused on utilizing existing ethnic, geopolitical, and ideological cleavages in society" (Dawson p.439). If politicians had negotiated a way bring these various groups into an alliance, "the path would have been laid for a powerful political movement" (Dawson p.439).

Russian Interests

Ukraine has tried to ideologically deviate from Russian sentiments numerous times since gaining its independence in 1991. However the "common history as well as the common source of identity still remain. Ukraine finds itself today in a

kind of discrepancy concerning its relations with the Russian Federation. On the one hand it is seen as a 'brother State', sharing the same problems and being, therefore, a possible partner in finding solutions. On the other hand Russia is regarded as former oppressor still trying to deter Ukraine from becoming a self-confident, European State" (Wydra p.114).

After Russia' successful annexation of Crimea, the Russian government is confident in its ability to influence Eastern Ukraine.

President Putin says that he sees U.S. hegemony is a "pseudo-occupation [that] we won't put up with" (Putin). Russia has put pressure on the Baltic States of Latvia and Estonia, but its influence is small considering both nations are privy to the EU and NATO. NATO's continued involvement in Eastern Europe poses a large threat to Russian clout in its former territory. Former Ukrainian President Yanukovych was ousted by protests for his pro-Russian leanings, and replaced with President Poroshenko, who favors the West, along with EU and NATO incorporation. Pro-Russian activists and NGO's "have been particularly influential elements in Russia's foreign policy toward the Crimean peninsula" (Yesilot p.171). Following the recent "Maidan" Protests in Kiev and the subsequent deposition of former president Yanukovych before Russia annexed Crimea, pro-Russian groups "protested the Ukrainian government's ultra-nationalist policies and sought to justify their separatist campaigns based on the premise that Ukrainian authorities had been unwilling to recognize and protect their cultural rights" (Yesilot p.171). Pro-Russian rebels have actively revolted against the current regime in eastern Ukraine, which has a large Russian population. The regions of Donetsk and Luhansk have been

especially vulnerable to this violence and "it was the opposition to…nationalist policies that formed the basis of pro-Russian rallies and gatherings in the Ukraine" (Yesilot p.171).

The annexation of Crimea and subsequent violence in eastern Ukraine is a result of three motives on the part of the Russian government: punishment, protection of ethnic Russians, and naval security. Russia views Ukraine's pro-western orientation as a betrayal by their cultural brother and hence it seeks to punish its former ally by threatening its territorial sovereignty. Russia often cites the interest of ethnic Russian when its takes military action in the post Soviet space. Crimea falls in line with this pattern. Russia stated concern for the large Russian population in Crimea, which comprises almost 60% of the total inhabitants on the peninsula. The Crimean Peninsula is located at a critical and strategic crossroads that bisects the east-west and north-south corridors. Its ideal location on the Black Sea has led to intense Russian and international interest. Russian naval access to the Black Sea is paramount to Russian security, both economically and militarily (Lawler). Taking into consideration its concerns for both internal and external security, Russia has begun a rigorous modernization program for its military called the State Armament Program (SAP 2011-2020). Improvement the "Russian Black Sea Fleet is believed to be one of the most ambitious parts of it, with the expected commissioning of 15–18 new units (Boltenkov p. 82) The implementation of this program enables the "modernization and development of Black Sea and Mediterranean naval facilities, reminding the strategic interests of the region for Moscow, as a nexus between Russia and the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and

beyond, the world ocean" (Delanoe p.368). The Crimean Crisis emphasizes the "maritime dimension of Black Sea security" as an important factor in the Russian government's aims to re-establish itself as a world power and shows a "still-predominant pattern of the use of hard power in the region. The analysis of quantitative and qualitative factors in the light of Russia's recent takeover of Crimea suggests that Moscow's maritime power is likely to increase in the Black Sea in the short term" (Delanoe p.379).

President Putin has another reason for making the decision he did concerning Crimea. Russia faces a wide variety of domestic issue, including corruption, poor living standards and a suffering economy. Crimea has long been considered a region that is important to Russian heritage as wealthy Russians vacationed there and Pushkin and other famous writers traveled there for inspiration. When President Putin addressed audiences from the Kremlin, "attendees in Red Square said they felt pride in their resurgent country and in Putin for his decisive actions on the world stage…Putin's power play in Ukraine has been enormously popular at home, with 79% of Russians in favor of Crimea joining Russia…[and] Putin's approval rating has reached a three-year high of 71.6%" (Luhn). Irina Makarova, a working class Muscovite attending Putin's address, stated that "I am proud to be Russian and proud of Putin, proud that he didn't back down and kept Crimea," she said. "For a long time, we didn't know what kind of country we were living in and where it was going. Now a new confidence in our country has appeared" (Luhn).

In conclusion, Putin's memorandum to the now sovereign nations that once comprised the Soviet Union, most significantly Ukraine, remains the same: "If they go West, Russia will dismember them and prevent them from regaining their sovereignty. Since the conflicts can always be used to stage various provocations, Moscow can use its influence to keep these countries weak and vulnerable" (Cornell). How the West responds to this with the incorporation of international and regional organizations is still in progress. Candid communication between the United States, the European Union, and Russia is necessary to resolve the conflict. However, since it is in Russia's interest to foment violence and discord, the likelihood of a resolution is null, and Crimea will doubtlessly join the large number of post-Soviet frozen conflicts.

International Negotiations

The Black Sea region is a culturally heterogeneous region, and the "absence of effective regional security mechanisms have so far precluded the stakeholders from preventing, diffusing or settling any security issues" (Delanoe p.367). Crimea lies in the middle of a region that has turned into a competition field between major regional and international actors with antagonistic interests. Since the collapse of the USSE, "Russia, Turkey, the European Union (EU), the USA and NATO have turned the region into a 'zero sum game' area. Rising tensions and security challenges have subsequently led to permanent growth in military spending among Black Sea states during the past decade" (Delanoe p.367). In light of Russia's recent and controversial annexation of Crimea, the U.S. and the European Union have

imposed sanctions on influential Russian political and economic elites as well as companies (Lovasz). Recent negotiations between major world leaders in Munich have come to a standstill. The negotiations have focused mainly on the increasing violence in Eastern Ukraine, but relate to Crimea as the West hopes to stop violence in the region and return Crimea to Ukrainian control. German chancellor Angela Merkel has met with French President François Hollande, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, and United States Secretary of State John Kerry to discuss Russian military involvement in Ukraine (Doroshev, Rudnitsky). Russia has been supplying arms to pro-Russian sympathizers in Eastern Ukraine and its army facilitated the takeover of Crimea.

NATO, the European Union and the United States have discussed ways to negate Russian influence in the region. While some American congressmen advocate for arming Ukrainian rebels, chancellor Merkel refuses to follow this strategy, citing United States disastrous experience in the Middle East using the same tactics. President Obama remains skeptical of the idea as well (Doroshev, Rudnitsky). Currently "NATO is setting up military headquarters and command centers from the Baltic to the Black seas along Russia's borders and plans to ultimately field a rapid-reaction force of 30,000 troops as relations with the Kremlin have deteriorated" (Doroshev, Rudnitsky). Lamberto Zannier, who is the head of the OCSE, stated in an interview on February 8th, 2015 that "we see the emergence of dividing lines" in a "very polarized environment" (Neuger).

President Putin's policy regarding Ukraine is "directly drawn from Russia's experiences manipulating internal conflicts to divide and rule across Russia's

western and southern periphery"(Cornell). Russia has had previous successful experience in fueling separatist states, South Ossetia and Abkhazia being prime examples. Due to this experience, annexing Crimea "probably seemed like a good idea to Putin in part because he thinks such a strategy has served Russia well in its efforts to undermine pro-Western states in Russia's neighborhood for more than twenty years"(Cornell). The Russian government believes that excessive western involvement in its perceived sphere of privilege is a serious and legitimate reason for intervention in the Caucasus. Thus, the most important factor in containing Russia's irredentist claims in the Former Soviet Union is to thwart President Putin's ability to influence and intimidate governments in the post Soviet republics. In order for this to be possible, the west must take the circumstances of these conflicts seriously and aid the victimized populations in safeguarding their sovereignty and security (Cornell). In order "to successfully push back against Putin's invasion of Crimea, America and Europe must acknowledge the regional dimensions of Putin's ambitions. Further, they can no longer afford to ignore or neglect the unresolved conflicts, as they essentially have for two decades" (Cornell).

Conclusions

The annexation of Crimea by Russia may cause a "domino effect elsewhere in the former Soviet countries. In particular, this applies to the Georgian breakaway territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Their limited and illusory political independence could be scrapped and they may officially become part of Russia, therefore further deepening the crisis in the South Caucasus and in relations between Russia and the West" (Dzutsev). "The creation of another semi-recognized territory and a change of official borders signifies a crisis in the post-Soviet world that threatens to develop further, undermining the existing status-quo in variety of ways" (Dzutsev).

Forthright discussions regarding frozen conflicts and especially the Crimea Crisis could take the wind out of Putin's metaphorical sail, as he relies on the inability of western nations to make firm decisions and decisive action to wield his impervious sword. More specifically, it is important to outline some strategies that would help diffuse the situation in eastern Ukraine and Crimea. First, the response must be regional in nature, reassuring Ukrainian citizens that the conflict plaguing their homeland will not damage their future relations with the west (Cornell). Providing troops is not a viable option at the present due to disagreements between the US, Germany, and France about whether or not to provide military forces to intervene in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea. The EU and NATO, should make clear to Ukraine that membership in either organization is still possible. If Ukraine does join one of these organizations, Russia could be dragged un-preparedly into a much larger conflict than it was expecting, and facing much stronger adversaries.

Western nations must be cognizant of the fact that they will not be able to achieve their goals of democracy and economic diversity in Eastern Europe if they neglect the struggles and challenges that are inherent to these states because of their Soviet past. Issues regarding sovereignty and security are legacies of the soviet era that the communist leaders put in place cognizant of the chaos they would cause it the region separated form Russia. Weakening its subordinate republics was a Stalinist strategy pursued by many Soviet leaders that was used to intimidate its acquired republics into submissive policies towards Russia.

"Whatever else one may feel about Russia's status in contemporary world politics, there is no escaping the realization that Moscow will continue to exercise considerable geopolitical importance within the European continent and will play an important role in the negotiation of the new international order in the post-Cold War world."
(Polikanov & Timmins p. 223)

Conclusions:

The conclusion section will be broken into a series of three parts. The first section will summarize the similarities between the circumstances and actions of Russian aggression in the Caucasus region. In order to do this, I will elucidate how Russian intents revolve around its shroud of security. Security threats are Russia's main concern, and can be broken up into three parts political, economic, and Soviet kinship. The three subjects are not mutually exclusive but complimentary and often coincide with each other.

The second part of the text will focus on the distinctive qualities of each of the three case studies. This will help show readers that although the Russian government focuses on key issues when making foreign policy decisions, each situation is unique, as Russia has individual concerns with each of the nations represented. In understanding the differences between the case studies, the reader can gage Russia's main concern with the area of interest, thus explaining Russian actions in the region. Looking at the dissimilarities grants the analyst a fuller picture of Russian priorities and concerns.

The final section of the conclusion will outline the lessons that can be learned from analyzing Russian aggression in Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Crimea. Various lessons will be assessed. First is the east-west dichotomy, or

Russian methodology in handling the West through controversial 'land-grabs' in order to annihilate western-oriented international organizations and investment in its 'near abroad'. Second, that the Russian government will act in any way that will garner domestic approval, and interventionism is extremely popular at home. Third, Russia's egoism as prime motivator for foreign policy moves. Finally, I will discuss potential options for future negotiations between Russia and the West. These topics coalesce into one major concern: what is Russia's fate in the Post Soviet world? This is not a question that can be answered, but it is relevant because it is in the mind of every Russian elite and citizen.

What is similar?

When thinking about Russian foreign and domestic policy decisions, security is always an important feature to consider. The main objectives Russian officials consider in their decision to use military force in each of the case studies can be broken into three main sections. These are, political influence, and economic security, and the preeminence of soviet kinship ties. Soviet kinship characterizes Russia's social domination and sentimental ties to its fellow republics during the 20th century. This has remained influential after the breakup of the Soviet Union. Russian foreign policy concepts reveal a "hierarchy of regional prioritization in which the post-Soviet space remains the top priority" (Monaghan p.3).

Political Influence

The first security concern for Russia is its diminishing political influence in the former Soviet republics, especially the Caucasus. Russia aims to create discontent and disorder in the former republics so that it can assert political guise over the incumbent governments. In Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Crimea, Russia asserts its political clout by undermining government sovereignty.

In the case of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia aided the separatists to punish the Georgian government for its pro-western leanings and ambition to join NATO and the EU. The Russian government warned that not only could it actively seize their land, but also that Russia was able and willing to destroy Georgian sovereignty, if it showed preference to western nations over Russia. Russia also feared its territorial integrity. Abkhaz and Ossetian minorities reside in Russian territory in the North Caucasus, notorious for its instability. Russia did not want to provoke minorities in its own territory, fearing they would seek to separate from Russia and join their ethnic brethren in forming new nations. Russia took the opportunity to damage Georgian infrastructure and government while strengthening the separatists in order to impede any uproar in the Northern Caucasus that could threaten its political and military sovereignty in the region.

Concerning Nagorno-Karabakh, the Russian government sought to assert its political power over Azerbaijan in order to counterbalance extensive western involvement in the area. Russia hoped to benefit from Azerbaijan's profitable natural resource sector, but western oil and gas companies were taking home the profit instead. Russian officials felt that, as with Georgia, Azerbaijan was allowing too much western investment in its territory, and aimed to disrupt Azerbaijan's

relative success by sending Russian troops to intervene and help the adversary. The goal was to cause damage to Azerbaijani infrastructure and cause western companies to be reticent about investing in Azerbaijan. Russian officials aided Armenia so as to show Azerbaijan that Russia still had power that could influence the effectiveness of the Azerbaijani government despite their strong economy. In Crimea, Russia's annexation of the peninsula could be seen as a political threat to Ukraine. Ukraine recently ousted pro-Russian leader Yanukovych in favor of a western leaning official. The Russian government fuels unrest in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea in order to affirm the superiority of its political prowess. This aggressive military move also suggests to the west that Russia views itself as an influential world power and must be taken seriously. Russia frequently exhibits its political clout in the region by making controversial moves against the incumbent governments in the FSU, often resorting to force, and Crimea is a prime example of this.

Economic Security

All three case studies focus on instances where Russian economic security was in question. President Putin pursues a "pragmatic policy with sound economic interests underpinning the process of decision-making" (Polikanov & Timmins p. 227-8). Although Russia has vast amounts of crude oil and other natural resources within its territory, Russia has always been dependent on its surrounding states (once republics) to acquire cheap gods and diversify its fledgling economy.

Azerbaijan has a prevalent natural gas and oil reserve along its Caspian Sea coastline. Azerbaijan's economic success in some ways aided Russia's economy because they were able to have access to certain offshore drilling. However, extensive western investment lessened Russia's profit and importance in world trade and thus Russia felt economically threatened by the west more so than Azerbaijan. Russia intervened in Nagorno-Karabakh with the hopes of weakening the Azerbaijani government and economy to the point where they were more receptive to Russian policy and veered away from its western orientation.

Crimea served as an economic opportunity for Russia because of its direct access to the Black Sea. Taking away one of Ukraine's most fertile land holdings gives Russia the ability to hurt the Ukrainian economy. Russia fears that as Ukraine becomes more western oriented, they will be less likely to serve as a conduit point for Russian oil. Ukrainian independence is a detriment to the Russian economy because Ukraine was one of Russia's largest trading partners, and political allies. Losing such an important source of regional control could not only be damaging to domestic approval, but challenging in terms of maintaining control in the Caucasus region.

Georgia is important to Russia's economic interests because it transports Russian and Central Asian oil to Europe. Although Georgia is not a wealthy nation, it has a strong sense of nationalism and identity that makes Russian influence difficult take hold. The Russian government aided the separatists in Abkhazia and South Ossetia in order to weaken the Georgian economy and henceforth make the nation more dependent on Russia. This does not appear to have been effective, as Georgia

still pursues a western-oriented foreign policy and transports oil from the Caucasus and Central Asia that bypasses Russia and so is a detriment to the Russian economy.

Soviet Kinship and Sentimentality

The Russian government often pursues a foreign policy of interventionism and irredentism in order to exert its Soviet primacy and kinship ties with its former republics. In all three case studies (Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Crimea) Russia took military action in a region where it was not the sovereign governing body. Russia's actions can be boiled down to an important psychological belief that Soviet kinship and dominance are still influential in the 'near abroad'; what westerners know as the Former Soviet Union. The Soviet period lasted for a substantial amount of time. Over the various decades of Russian dominance, Russian culture took root in many of the republics. Even after the collapse of the USSR, the new nations struggled to find a sovereign identity apart from their oppressor.

For instance, Crimea was and still is ethnically dominated by Russians despite being given to Ukraine upon its independence, because the native Tatars were forcibly moved to Central Asia and not allowed to return until the 1990's. Since Russians comprise the ethnic majority in Crimea, the Treaty of Accession passed, much to the chagrin of both the Tatar and Ukrainian population. Russia's annexation of Crimea has led the Tatar population to justifiably fear ill treatment and bias.

In the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Russian cultural influence is subtler. Since there is no Russian population in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Russian forces aided their Eastern Orthodox brethren in order to establish the Muslim Azerbaijanis' as other.

Russian cultural influence was not strong in Azerbaijan upon independence because of its blossoming natural resource economy and nationalist intellectual elite. However, in Armenia, Russian influence is still strong, and the Russian government exploited this fact to punish Azerbaijan for their willful independence from Russian influence.

In Georgia, Soviet cultural influence was waning and being replaced by pro-western sentiment and a desire to join international organizations that Russia is opposed to, mainly NATO and the EU. Thus, Georgian intervention in the separatist republics and recognizing their sovereignty showed Georgia the limit on the amount of nationalist, western ideologies that they could adopt before facing Russian aggression. Soviet culture and Russian supremacy is present in the sense that the Russian government fears losing control of the Caucasus. Russia believes that if it is able to continue its cultural influence in these territories, the. Imperial continue to be relevant. This dream that Russia will return to greatness fuels the autocratic government

What is different?

This section addresses the singularities of each of the case studies researched. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict it noted for the lack of ethnic Russians in the area. Russia usually intervenes in the former Soviet space claiming that the welfare of ethnic Russians is being compromised. Also notable is the Azerbaijani perception of Russia as a Christian aggressor aiding its brethren against a secular Muslim nation. Georgia is singular in its lack of natural resources, and also its

ambition to join NATO and the EU, a significant factor that heavily contributed to Russia's decision to intervene in their separatist regions. Crimea stands unique among the case studies because Russian military intervention was not used to aid in an existing conflict, but to annex a sovereign territory of Ukraine. Each of these peculiarities will be explained in more detail below.

Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

A substantial amount of Russia's involvement in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was in the form of international negotiations, most prominently with the Minsk Group. Many experts and regional media sources state that Russian forces participated in the conflict on the side of ethnic Armenians. An important factor on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is that there are no ethnic Russians in the region. Russia aided Armenia to the detriment of Azerbaijan in order to weaken Azerbaijan's political control and economic revenue, not to protect ethnic Russians, which is unique among many of Russia's previous military endeavors. Russia hoped to cripple the Azerbaijani government, which the former saw as unfaithful, and reward the relatively weak Armenian government, who was far more dependent on Russia for its economic and political policies. Another factor that influenced Russia's decision to impose itself militarily in the conflict was the Muslim-Christian dichotomy. Russia defended its Eastern Orthodox brethren against a majority Muslim, Turkic nation, which many argue, was consequential in Russia's decision to send troops to aid the Armenians. Some analysts and many Azerbaijanis' postulate

that this was Christian aggression against the unsubstantiated but willingly perceived threat of Muslim extremism.

Russo-Georgian War

Russia became involved in Georgia's battle with its separatist regions South Ossetia and Abkhazia due to their strategic location along the north Caucasus and Black Sea. Unlike Crimea and Azerbaijan, Georgia does not have natural resources that Russia wishes to take advantage of. Instead, Russia sees Georgia as a competing conduit point for moving natural resources from Central Asia and the Caucasus to Europe. It is important to note however that neither of the ethnic minorities breaking away from Georgia was Muslim or Turkic in origin. Georgia's independent nature and its embrace of western principles, physically shown by Georgia's ambition to join NATO, led Russia to retaliate by ceding parts of its territories to ethnic minorities, thus threatening Georgia's sovereignty.

Crimea

The most significant aspect of the Crimean Crisis is the scale and visibility of Russia's actions. Russia annexed Crimea using its military forces without constraint. In both the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the Russo-Georgian War, Russia aided separatists in order to weaken states that were not longer acting favorably towards Russia, but in this case, Russia actively seized sovereign territory for itself. Although the annexation of Crimea can be seen as a punishment for Ukrainian pro-western ideals, it is a singular occurrence in recent history for Russia to seize territory with

irredentist claims. The incident is a reminder of Russia's former imperial glory, which the government attempts to capitalize on in order to garner domestic support. Analysts are reading Russia's actions in various ways, and it is not yet clear what Russia further intentions are in the FSU, but one can grasp that Russia is pursuing a rigorous foreign policy in its 'near aboard'. The Russian government is capitalizing on Russia's imperial history to excuse its militaristic foreign policy. Whether Russia will seek to annex other territories is unknown at this point, but the most fragile region currently is Eastern Ukraine.

What can we learn?

The west must be careful in its negotiations with Russia and the Former Soviet Union. Although western powers have a greater sense of legitimacy and economic power, western organizations' involvement in former soviet republics is viewed as a major threat by Russia. Thus, if NATO and the EU are looking to expand membership to nations in the Caucasus or other areas once under Russian control, its progression must be moderate and calculated. At the same time, the West has power over Russia because of its relative economic and political strength. The Russian government under President Putin often resorts to violence because of the lack of 'soft power' influence it wields. Russia officials are able to procrastinate effective negotiations but rarely officiate affective peace talks. Part of this is because it is in Russian interest to breed chaos and discontent in its former republics, so as to secure their dependence on Russia. However, a significant portion is that Russia realizes that much of the western world no longer sees Russia as an important

world power, but merely a nuisance, a big bully. Russia fuels controversy in order to stay relevant. Now that the West is paying more attention and concern to Russian involvement in the FSU and shows that it is willing to punish Russia for its actions, the time may comes when the West develops an effective policy to mitigate Russian power in the region. Russia will not back down easily, and it is most likely that there will be more conflict to come, but the FSU could become more independent and maintain a multi-vector foreign policy if other world powers continue to take interest and invest in the region.

Russia's aggressive foreign policy developed because of elitist egoism. President Putin is especially known for his personality cult as well as his concrete and intimidating domestic political tactics. Recently, the leader of the opposition party PARNAS (Republican Party of Russia – People's Freedom Party), Boris Nemtsov, was assassinated close to the Kremlin, and his second in command is imprisoned. President Putin denies responsibility for the murder and claims it is a tragic crime, but many believe Russian authorities are to blame (Northam). The Russian elite eliminates threats to its proliferation and appeals to the public's sense of solidarity in light of their imperial past, Russia's 'age of glory'. Russia was a great power during the cold war and the age of empires, but has lost political clout. President Putin pursues a vigorous foreign policy in the near abroad to prove to Russian citizens and western governments alike that Russia is recovering and is once again a great power. This also distracts Russian citizens from the dirty maintenance required to keep up such as regime.

The Russian government will go to great lengths to garner domestic approval. The Russian economy is suffering from western imposed sanctions as well as a lack of modern infrastructure. President Putin and his cohorts are aware of this and strategically maintain an interventionist foreign policy in order to convince their citizens that Russia is a strong world power, erstwhile distracting Russian inhabitants from the lackluster conditions at home. Russian officials under President Putin's leadership use the concept of hard power to sustain Russia's image as a relevant world power not only at home but in the 'near abroad' and western political sphere. Although western nations realize the internal struggles Russia faces, they are cognizant of the fact that Putin is able to manipulate negotiations without facing a direct military threat to Russia itself. It is unknown how the East-West dichotomy will play out in the future, but it is certain to be an important geo-political game for some time, and Russia is sure to play a large part in it.

America and Europe have more control at their disposal than they realize. Russia is fully aware that although they see the West as antagonists, they need the economic and social support that western organizations such as the EU can provide in order to rebuild itself as a world power. Western Nations are members of many negotiation platforms for unresolved conflicts that comprise the Minsk Group concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and the Geneva discussions concerning Georgia's separatist republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. This affords an opportunity for lucid and constructive Western engagement.

Although in the short term this may result in caustic relations with Russia, leading the latter to continue its damaging foreign policy, the Russian government would learn that the West is taking the post-Soviet space seriously (Cornell).

The United States and Europe are capable of significant bilateral and regional discussions with nations that are privy to frozen conflicts. Holding conferences with Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Ukraine would deepen the sense of trust and security between East and West and enable further objectives toward cooperation. This would allow Russia to realize that its ‘sphere of influence’ is not accepted by Western nations, and shows that the latter will use whatever strategies at its disposal to counteract Russian aggression.

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