CAUCASIAN CONFLICTS AND THE WAY OUT OF

DEADLOCK THROUGH CULTURAL

AFFIRMATIVE PHILOSOPHY

by

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ABSTRACT

This essay will elaborate on the South Caucasian conflicts of Nagorno-Karabakh between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which happened from 1988-1994, and those between Georgia and its breakaway territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia from 1991-1993. The goal is to show how Cultural Affirmative Philosophy may transform no-war-nor-peace situations into new possibilities for gradual conflict resolution. The thesis argues that the roots of the current ethnic and territorial antagonisms in the Caucasus are not in ancient hatreds, but are the results of war machines that were put into motion during the 90s and continue to keep communities and decision-makers enslaved by transcendental dynamics. Despite all the existing obstacles, it is still possible to deactivate the war machines through the lines of flight between similarly nomadic actors online. New media activism, which is accurately described by the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of the rhizome, can challenge barriers that divide postwar communities and create platforms for understanding of the grievances, hopes, and fears of each side.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines Caucasian conflicts through the application of Cultural Affirmative Philosophy, which implies discussion in terms of abundances and multiplicities, rather than scarecities and negations of differences. The manuscript offers a close reading of Deleuze and Guattari's *Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze's reflection of Nietzsche's philosophy (1983) and Badiou's ideas from *Infinite Thought* (2003). The essay aims to challenge existing perspectives on South Caucasian conflicts, examining how the application of a plateau of intensity to the Caucasian situation reveals multiple images of dynamism, desiring-productions, and states of endless becomings. The intention behind this utilization of Deleuzien, Guattarian, Neitzsheian, and Badiouian vocabulary is to bring to light factors of intercultural, interethnic, and international cooperation that are hidden in the shadows of yet-active war machines. War machines keep active forces reactive, but do not let them gain alternative views on the conflict resolutions. The nomadic multiplicity of people that helped put the war machines into motion can speak up directly through the rhizome of creative media activism and, thus, challenge the militarist aspirations of the society. The Deleuzo-Gauttarian concept of rhizome, indeed, is a perfect model for the World Wide Web, which would multiply the nomadic nature of citizen journalists' activism and transform the conflicts towards reconciliation (Ramsbotham et al., 2005). Thus, the essay aims to answer the following research questions: 1. What possibilities does Cultural Affirmative Philosophy open up

for the South Caucasian conflicts? 2. What are the implications for media activists in the process of opening new perspectives through their activism? 3. What are the social possibilities and the political implications of rhizomatic media activism in the South Caucasus?

In order to better accomplish this goal, the paper is divided into four chapters. In the first chapter, the ideas of Cultural Affirmative Philosophy and their influence on my analysis of the South Caucasian conflicts will be overviewed. Then, the coming sections of the chapter will provide historical background, starting from traceable ancient roots of the South Caucasian conflicts up to the most contemporary history of the peace process in the region. In the second chapter, the paper will move on to a more detailed examination of Caucasian ontology through the application of the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of war machines (1987), which represents a mix of various similarly unrelated actors and events that act in a tandem of destructiveness. Badiou's reign of communication and merchandise, as well as Deleuze's control societies and "vacuoles of noncommunication" (Deleuze, 1995, p. 175), and the need for interruption (Badiou, 2003) will be discussed in relation to the Caucasian war machines. Homogeneity of traditional media in the Caucasus and the coercion of media activists via soft power will be brought up, and the 2008 "cyber war" in Georgia will be re-territorialized as cyber attacks and hacktivism. However, to argue against a widely accepted fact that the August 2008 cyber attacks of Georgia constituted cyber war, the paper will employ the Schmitt model[1] and bring credibility to an otherwise radical claim. The third chapter introduces the Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizome, which is a nonhierarchical, borderless, persevering network of actors

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[1] Schmitt model has over 90 citations according to Google scholar.
http://scholar.google.com/scholar?cites=8719435068224032655&as_sdt=5,45&sciodt=0,45&hl=en

that can be constructive even while dismantling war machines. The paper   argues

rhizome is a creative new media activism, which peacefully eludes control and interrupts

war machines. The sections of this chapter will discuss the potential role of the

blogosphere and social networks, as well as citizen journalism and traditional journalism,

in transformative mediation and deactivation of the war machines. The final chapter will

discuss the implications for future research, including the utilization of Cultural

Affirmative Philosophy in the South Caucasian media and scholarly praxis, the impact of

media activism on the ground, and the affect on media activists themselves in the process

of opening new perspectives through their activism.

Hence, the essay will argue that Cultural Affirmative Philosophy and, in

particular, the way of thinking in terms of multiplicities, unlocks enormous potential for

paving the way of gradual conflict resolution in the region of the South Caucasus and will

advocate creative media activism as the active force of transformation.

EXAMINATION OF CAUCASIAN CONFLICTS THROUGH

CULTURAL AFFIRMATIVE PHILOSOPHY

The central advantage of employing Cultural Affirmative Philosophy for searching for a way out of deadlocked conflicts is its ontological commitment, which does not guarantee success but at least offers action instead of reaction; affirmation instead of negation. This immanence approach is even called pluralism and empiricism (Deleuze, 1983).

Deleuze (1983) works by analyzing Nietzsche's philosophy and says, "there is no event, no phenomenon, word or thought which does not have multiple sense" (p. 4). Truly, there is no event or notion that does not have multiple meanings in the Caucasus, but this is not why these conflicts exist.   The reason for having a deadlocked situation with growing potential for war renewal is the negation of the idea of multiplicity, and conforming to living in scarcity. Such living in singularities does not have room for understanding anything contrary to one's own.

Deleuze (1983) says, "a thing has as many senses as there are forces capable of taking possession of it" (p. 4). "Forces" are something Caucasians claim to have fought against throughout centuries to survive numerous conquerors, and those forces continue coming from East and West. Thus, Caucasians claim to have significant understanding of "forces" and continue to fight for the sake of surviving territorialization. However, that idea of "forces" seems to be rather far from the Neitzcheian or Deleuzian thinking of forces as spectrums of potential.   There is no acknowledgement of the "lines of flight, movements of

deterritorialization and destratification," only particular, self-justifying "lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories" (Deleuze & Guattrari, 1987, p. 3) are legitimized. In other words, Caucasians live in sharply defined borderlines, which they believe constitute part of their identity and whoever dares to confront or disrespect those lines is considered an evil other.

According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), "binary logic and biunivocal relationships still dominate psychoanalysis, linguistics, structuralism, and even information science" (p. 5). People try to connect things that are not related to each other and, thus, create images of black and white pictures, polarized ideas, extreme ends that seem not to have anything in between and have no way to meet or co-exist. Badiou (2003) calls that phenomenon a "profoundly illogical regime of communication" (p. 41) to which the whole world is submitted. In Neitzcheian (Deleuze, 1983) philosophy, such a regime enslaves masters and causes the negation of events and trends that do not justify one's own state and actions, thus transforming active forces into reactive ones.

Perhaps it is easier to negate multiplicity and live in contrasts when knowing that there is no alternative, knowing that things have proper names. The mainstream of the Caucasus depends heavily on the set of things that have proper names, are in the process of getting them, or soon will get them. This could be well illustrated by the popular Georgian beliefs, like, for instance, one about Abkhazia being considered part of Georgian territory, and, also, the idea that Georgia will soon be welcomed into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and thus regain its territorial integrity. Following Deleuze and Guattari (1987), "the proper name can be nothing more than an extreme case of the common noun, containing its already domesticated multiplicity within itself and linking it to a being or object posited as unique" (p. 27). Hardly one, if any, of the

Caucasians would think that their identity could have multiple meanings, realizations, or could be in a constant, endless process of becoming—becoming-Georgian, becoming-Armenian, becoming-Azerbaijanian, becoming-Abkhazian, etc. Thus, Caucasians are pretending to have the coherent identities of Georgians, Armenians, Azerbaijanians, Abkhazians, etc. that have survived multiple conquerors and maintained their ethnic identity. However, their ethnic identity is not the same as it was a couple of centuries, or even decades ago, as events surrounding them happen, cultural, political aspirations change and means of self-expression develop. Thus, "are we not witnessing the first stirrings of a subsequent adventure, that of the Signifier, the devious despotic agency that substitutes itself for asignifying proper names and replaces multiplicities with the dismal unity of an object declared lost?" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 28). Caucasian's identities are not lost; only certain elements that constituted them at a certain historical time are lost and dispersed. But despotic forces are not willing to let go, to affirm the loss, fearing this would shake their authority.

Nietzsche and Deleuze (1983) would call such a despotic force an exhausted one as it "does not have strength to affirm difference, a force which no longer acts but rather reacts to the forces which dominate it" (p. 9). For instance, the Georgian government does affirm that Abkhazian authorities are not under the influence of Russia, and their desire to be independent from Georgia is based on their desires and those of their civil society. Such neglecting of Abkhazian desire for independence does not imply any action; thus, it is more a reaction, a reaction to fear that it might not be able to act effectively. Such fear to act is similar to procrastination, but seems to be much more

pessimistic than procrastination, as it is a "genealogy taken up by slaves" (Deleuze, 1983, p. 55).

Calling people who are in charge of a country "slaves" should not be surprising, as in Nietzscheian philosophy. A reactive force that is related to negative will is called "slave" and affirmative will, sometimes with an active force, is called "master." Master versus slave juxtaposition is not highly metaphorical, because, at least, based on the Georgian-Abkhazian or any other Caucasian conflict, one who does not affirm difference acknowledges a counterpart's desires, seems to have much less potential of reaching any kind of breakthrough, and is thereby a slave of its own fears. Whereas, if one would surrender to the immanence of incorporeal transformation and affirm any combination in a dice-throw of a political game, one would have more control over the situation and thereby be a master.

However, there is an interesting phenomenon about slaves enslaving masters described in Nietzsche and *Phylosophy* (Deleuze, 1983), which can easily be illustrated by contemporary situations. "Reactive force, even when it obeys, limits active force, imposes limitations and partial restrictions on it and is already controlled by the spirit of negative" (Deleuze, 1983, p. 56). Again, returning to Caucasian conflicts and meetings of conflict resolution groups from the conflicting sides, one would easily notice how participants of those meetings surrender to incorporeal transformation of being equally biased, faulty in the conflict, and willing to reach social change. However, when going back to the place or origin and encountering negative spirit of friends, coworkers, family, neighbors, and the mainstream ideas, those "masters" of affirmative will and active force turn into "slaves" of dominant ideas. The reason for that is not only the influence of

dominant ideas of negative will, but the conformist nature of people, the fact that perhaps it is easier to be nihilist and have "bad consciousness" (Deleuze, 1983).

As Deleuze (1983) explains based on his analysis of Nietzsche, reactive force separates active force from what it can do, thus turning it into the reactive force, a slave that does not want to stop being a slave. This kind of phenomenon could be similar to the relation of minus and plus in mathematics. Minus turns plus into minus, but in comparison to math, two or multiple negative wills, reactive forces, so-called slaves, do not turn into masters as it happens in math when two or more even minuses turn into plus. Deleuze (1983) says that we have the hierarchy we deserve. Hierarchy that "also designates the triumph of reactive forces, the contagion of reactive forces and the complex organization which results – where the weak have conquered, where the strong are contaminated, where the slave who has not stopped being a slave prevails over the master who has stopped being one…" (Deleuze, 1983, pp. 60-61).

When looking closer, such contamination of strong and noble, and its transformation into dialectic resentment, resembles the arborescent root system of the tree of the absurdity. Every enslaved master becomes part of the arborescent root system, which has mystification, falsification, and absurdity as the main principles. From the point of view of contaminated affirmative will, none of the tree-like structure can be noble, because it is based on one main principle. But there cannot be one main principle, there can only be a multiplicity of principles that may form unity or go beyond the unity.

More precisely, multiplicity of truths could be better understood through the plane of consistency:

> Inscribed on the plane of consistency are haecceities, events, incorporeal transformations that are apprehended in themselves; nomadic essences, vague yet rigorous; continuums of intensities or continuous, variations, which go beyond constants and variables; becomings, which have neither culmination nor subject, but draw one another into zones of proximity or undecidability; smooth spaces, composed from within striated space. We will say that a body without organs, or bodies without organs (plateaus) comes into play in individuation by and haecceity, in the production of intensities beginning at a degree zero, in the matter of variation, in the medium of becoming or transformation, and in the smoothing of space. A powerful nonorganic life that escapes the strata, cuts across assemblages, and draws an abstract line without contour, a line of nomad art and itinerant metallurgy. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 507)

This kind of philosophy that deterritorializes discourses could be rather useful and timely in the Caucasus where sharp lines are drawn between various territories, social layers, ways of thinking, talking, and acting. Haecceity could open up new possibilities to the deadlocked conflicts that too much adhere to the lines of distinction and territorialization literally and figuratively. To better understand how haecceity and intensities of multiple plateaus could create new opportunities, a more detailed analysis of the Caucasian conflicts should be provided. For that, the next subsections will overview the historical background of the Caucasus, including separations between newly independent republics and their territorial entities, the violence that followed those desires of separations, and the deadlocked situations that are usually named as peace processes in the Caucasus.

Overview of the Historical Background

This section will look into the past of the South Caucasus to find the origins of the contemporary conflicts in the region and their potential resolutions. This multi-ethnic region, with its numerous ethnic conflicts, was unified as a single political entity twice –

during the Russian Civil War (Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic) from 9 April 1918 to 26 May 1918, and under Soviet rule (Transcaucasian SFSR) from 12 March 1922 to 5 December 1936. However, Caucasian ethnic groups rarely refer to these periods when they were represented by a single political entity, and mainly use history as their weapon for winning the zero-sum debate about who is guilty in the past and current unresolved conflict. Despite the presence of controversy and the infiltration of ethnic strife into historical accounts, some scholars still see the resolutions of the current conflicts through the formation of a South Caucasian Confederation (Akhvlediani, 2009), where every ethnic group would be able to maintain its identity and equal status. At present, the creation of a South Caucasian Confederation seems a rather remote and unrealistic possibility.

One of the very few aspects to be considered as common in the history of the Caucasian nations themselves is that the region has been under the great threat of assimilation by big neighbor states since ancient times. The Caucasian nations, which constitute a broad ethnic diversity, take pride in their constant resistance in saving their national identity, territory, and in the cases of Georgia and Armenia, their Christian Orthodox religion. However, resistance was not only against outside regions, but inside as well, where small neighbor nations were considered to present the same potential threats to their national identity and territorial integrity.

The memory of a turbulent and so-called "heroic" history constituting the national identity of the small South Caucasus nations was deliberately suppressed during Soviet times. The question of nationality was one of the taboo themes under the USSR, and ethnic differences were not allowed into open discussions (interview with Kerim Ankos,

chairman of the Kurds association in Georgia, June 16, 2006). "Convergence of all classes and social strata, juridical and practical equality of all nations, and their fraternal collaboration" (Supreme Council of USSR, 1977) was the major axiom of the regime, which excluded any possibility for ethnic conflicts. *Drujba narodov* (friendship of peoples) under the patronage of "big brother Russia" was propagated through politics, culture, and mass media. Even the USSR national anthem pointed to the "the stronghold of the friendship of the peoples" (Iakoutsky, September 11, 2006) as the most crucial element of Soviet statehood. This Soviet propaganda of the "friendship of peoples" among Soviet Republics was demonstrated, for example, through the chorus of the USSR's anthem:

> "Be glorified, our fatherland, united and free!
> The sure bulwark of the friendship of the peoples!
> The Soviet banner is the flag of the people,
> Let it lead from victory to victory!" (Iakoutsky, September 11, 2006)

Efforts to maintain the unity of the various ethnic groups were not only ideological but cartographic as well. Borders on political maps were redrawn and the statuses of ethnic groups changed. To the north of the then Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) of Georgia, the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast (AO), the northwest Abkhazian Soviet Social Republic, and the Ajarian Autonomous Soviet Social Republic (ASSR) in the west of Georgia, were created in the early 20th century. SSR Azerbaijan acquired the Nakhichevan ASSR, an exclave in Armenia, and the Armenian majority populated the Nagorno-Karabakh AO. Georgian historians will declare that both Abkhazia and South Ossetia have belonged to Georgia since ancient times, and that the Soviet Union tore away those territories from their monolithic territory; however, the Abkhazians and South Ossetians claim that the USSR attached them to Georgia without

consulting them, as they were not then aligned with Georgia at that time, and already had aspirations towards a certain level of independence. Similarly, dialectic discourses are present in the current Armenian-Azeri debate about Nagorno-Karabakh. Christoph Zürcher (2007), like many other scholars, argues that the USSR employed a "divide and rule" principle. Zürcher (2007) claims that a "system of administrative territorial division had given the Soviet leadership an instrument for the control and stifling of national ambitions" (p. 31). In other words, these various ethnic groups' peaceful coexistence was not the result of mutual understanding between them, but of the Kremlin's compulsion.

As Suzanne Goldenberg writes (1994), the "situation in Nagorno-Karabakh provides the most extreme example of the inherent dangers when the conflicts contained during the Soviet period become active again" (p. 8). Since the medieval period, the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh has been populated with both Armenian and Turkic nations, with changes in its demographics time after time (Cornell, 1999). However, ordinary people of the current conflicting nations got along well, and their cultures and their traditions became rather intertwined. If we were to believe Stepan Lisitsian (1992), Karabakhi Armenians sometimes even practiced polygamy, like the Karabakhi Azeris, and gave their children Muslim names. But in 1918–20, there were a series of short wars between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, which only ended with the intervention of the Soviet Army.[2]

Similar to Nagorno-Karabakh's case, some blame Soviet politics for seeding current conflicts in Georgia (Wright, 1996) by creating autonomous entities. However, I

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[2]   Public International Law & Policy Group and the New England Center for International Law & Policy. (2000). The Nagorno-Karabagh Crisis: A Blueprint for Resolution. Retrieved from http://www.nesl.edu/userfiles/file/center%20for%20international%20law%20and%20policy/nagorno.pdf

would argue that the Soviets' cannot be blamed for creating the roots of the conflicts, because origins of the rivalry were already present in pre-Soviet times; not addressing preexisting conflictive issues only contributed to the future wars between Georgians and Abkhazians, and between Georgians and South Ossetians.

The South Ossetian ethnic group is believed to be descendants of the Alans, a Sarmatian tribe related to Iranians that have lived in the northern part of Georgia since the Middle Ages (Lang, 1966). In the mid-19th century, the Roki Tunnel was built on South Ossetian-inhabited territory between Georgia and Russia, which allowed South Ossetians to first develop a pro-Russian orientation, creating strong ties with the North Ossetians that resided inside Russia (De Waal, 2010). In 1918-1920, South Ossetians staged three uprisings, announced their detachment from Menshevik Georgia, and stated their desire to join Bolshevik Russia. However, with the creation of the Soviet Union, they were attached to Georgian territory and remained calm during the Soviet era.

The Abkhazian case was similar to the South Ossetian case in terms of its attachment to Georgia and the resistance it created from both Georgian and Abkhazian sides. In contrast to South Ossetia, even before the Soviet Union, Russia had high interests in potential Abkhazian natural resources and tourism, and were accompanied by Abkhazia's desire for autonomy (De Wall, 2010).

In the 9th to the 6th centuries BC, the territory of modern Abkhazia was part of the ancient Georgian kingdom of Colchis ("Kolkha"); since then, Abkhazia has been colonized by the Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, and Ottomans (Suny, 1994). In the beginning of the 19th century, the Abkhazians faced total invasion from the Ottomans, so they wrote to the Tsar requesting the joining of Abkhazia to Russia for protection against

the Turks. On 8 July 1810, the Russian army freed Sukhumi from Turkish control (Cade, 2009). In spite of this initial appeal for Russian protection, since Tsarist times up to the Soviet period, various deportations of ethnic Abkhazians were organized by Russian decision-makers. As a result, by the mid-20th century, Abkhazians became an ethnic minority in their own Abkhazia, among Georgians, Armenians, Russians, Greeks, and Jews. By then, there was almost nothing left to do to revive the ethnic Abkhazian population, especially under the "Georgianization"[3] of Abkhazia imposed by the USSR, especially under Joseph Stalin and Lavrenty Beria (De Waal, 2010, p. 151).

Despite the entire deep-rooted incentives for ethnic rivalry in the South Caucasus, a certain level of multinational harmony was created, and World War II played a major role in this. The intense involvement and high death toll suffered by South Caucasian troops during World War II contributed to the replacement of ancient heroisms of the little nations with the contemporary braveries that were highly interconnected with the USSR. According to Thomas De Waal (2010), "this joint experience of war probably made Transcaucasian peoples feel a fully Soviet identity for the first time" (p. 86).

Nonetheless, each of the current breakaway territories conducted protests in every decade since the 1950s (De Waal, 2010; Kaufman, 2001), with demands of secession and national identity defense. However, they did not have the military potential for transforming their protests into conflicts with the Soviet Union that was still more or less managing them. At the time, conflicts in the South Caucasus were unimaginable, as it was unimaginable that the Soviet Union would break down.

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3   Abkhazia's autonomy during USSR was rather nominal, and under the rule of Stalin and Beria many Georgians were encouraged to settle in Abkhazia; schooling in the Abkhazian language was closed (Hewitt, 1999).

Another origin for the current de-facto breakaway republics being more trustful of and reliant on Russia is that during the Soviet Union, those who could not advance in career or receive a desired education ended up moving to Moscow. After the death of Stalin and the execution of Beria, the state of ethnic minorities in South Caucasus slightly improved. Georgian party chief Eduard Shevardnadze publicly denounced "the policy towards the Abkhazian nation" and called it "chauvinistic," and "against the interests of both the Georgian and Abkhazian nations" (Glebov & Crowfoot, 1989, p. 79). This statement was a great breakthrough in conflict prevention and was also followed by implementations of promises given by Shevardnadze: a new Abkhazian state university was founded, Abkhaz broadcasting was introduced, and quotas were created for ethnic Abkhazians in governing structures. These actions satisfied certain needs of the Abkhaz population and calmed down interethnic strife (but sparked Georgian jealousy and nationalism, as Georgians themselves most of the time had fears similar to other nations in the Caucasus—namely, fears of ethnic erosion, perhaps caused by the small size of their territory further fragmenting into even smaller entities. There have always been a very small number of ethnic Georgians that have precariously persevered against overwhelming powers both to the north and the south, throughout thousands of years of history. Similar gestures have not been made in Nagorno-Karabakh by the Azerbaijani leadership, though up until the 1980s, the ethnic balance between Armenians and the Azeris within the autonomous territorial and administrative entity had been stable, and hope had remained that the trend would continue (Yamskov, 1991, p. 647).

The preconflict origins for South Ossetia were the fewest compared to the other two conflicts in the South Caucasus. With highly intermixed villages of Georgians and South

Ossetians, the South Ossetian's fluency in Georgian language, the high rate of

intermarriages, the Roki tunnel linking South Ossetia with North Ossetia, South

Ossetians "had no incentive for conflict" (Interview with Ljyana Teddeva, journalist from

South Ossetia, 2007, March).

<div align="center">Separation</div>

> I don't remember the sound of fight
> and artillery. I remember the smell of
> blood, burn, and decomposition in my
> native village… Even now after so
> many years I still sense it when I
> drive near by…
> —Ljyana Teddeva mother
> of four from South Ossetia

In the late 1980s, very few could notice and even fewer people, if any, could talk

about the nationalism that polluted space, blurred vision, and pulled the peoples of the

Caucasus into three secessive conflicts that killed several thousands, and wounded,

expelled, and internally displaced many more. Unfortunately, the selective memory, the

distorted and partial perceptions, and the blindness of the late 1980s and early 1990s still

persist and continue to thrive today. Scholars still tend to ascribe the tensions in the

Caucasus to preliminary fixed-subject positions (Feldman, 1991) and not the ideologies

of space that disconnect political intent from political consequence (Feldmam, 1991, p.

20).

For instance, some scholars believe that *glasnost* (openness) unleashed the

nationalism that had been contained during the Soviet decades (Balance, 1997). Other

others blame an ideological vacuum that was filled by nationalism (Ciobanu, 2009), and

still others point to economic, social, and political injustices to which the current

breakaway territories were exposed (Herzig, 1999; Kaufman, 2001). However, I would argue this kind of thinking leaves out essential dynamics that created harsh intolerance and inter-ethnic strife in the South Caucasus; regarding Northern Ireland, scholars such as Hewitt (1981) and O'Hearn (1983) omit "important factors in the escalation of intercommunal violence between 1969 and 1979" (Feldman, 1991, p. 21).

Not that the aforementioned factors are irrelevant; I would not deny that Armenians outside and inside Nagorno-Karabakh feared that the number of Azeris was rising, that there was a perception of a deprivation of cultural rights and starvation of resources, and that anxieties around potential erasure of Armenian national identity were high. And I would not deemphasize the role of *glasnost* that allowed Armenians and Azerbaijanis to raise their voices more loudly against each other in the form of mass protests. But, all these are smaller pieces of a bigger picture, an ideology of space. All these different factors are floating independently, occasionally interacting with each other in space, rendering a much more complex collection of influences. Parallels could be drawn with what Feldman (1991) calls "indigenous cultural practice," wherein "Protests meant to agitate for civil rights, civil space, and an ethnically neutral jural subject were received as assertions of ethnicity by both their supporters and opponents" (p. 22). These processes in Armenia and Azerbaijan were similar to Georgia, where a national movement lead by the dissident Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the son of a popular Georgian novelist, was reaching its peak like a snowball. Movement started on the top of the hill and became an uncontrollable avalanche that would destroy everything in its way.

The violence that followed this "snowball" was the material reproduction of the context of the late 1980s where there was no place or anticipation for war. I would agree

with Feldman that subject positions are "contracted and construed by violent performances…chronic violence transforms material and experiential contexts" (Feldman, 1991, p. 20). However, I would argue against Feldman's (1991) claim that violence "renders the relations between structure and events, text and context, consciousness and practice, labile and unfixed" (Feldman, 1991, p. 20). If applied to the postwars situation in the South Caucasus, the relations between the structures and events in the Caucasus during the wars could have been labile and unfixed, but not afterwards. Perhaps, because of the sharpness and intensity of their war experiences, peoples' feelings became blunt in postwar everyday life, which was perceived as being much duller than their previous war existences. So, they live in their past, locked in their own perceptions of the conflicts that formed during the times of violence. The results of such locked perceptions for development thinking could be easily traced to the 2008 war in Georgia and the negotiation processes that keep Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia in a deadlock of conflict resolution.

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Violence in the Caucasus and Political

Use of Human Bodies

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> People are as inventive in devising torture and other atrocities as they are in any other fields of activity...
> —Kaufman (2001, p. 122)

Following the first precondition of the violent conflict—that of "communal content"—one would have to conclude that certain individual interests were mediated through the membership of social groups, i.e., conflict moved towards more communal than liberal values. One example for Georgians would be maintaining the importance of

the Georgian language in the autonomous republic of Abkhazia. By contrast, Abkhazians wish to preserve their own language against Georgian discrimination, and strengthen their ethnic and cultural self-identity. To realize these and other interests, individuals joined nationalistic groups, which pushed this idea of linguistic and cultural preservation further, unified their interests, and transformed these ideas into "societal needs," thus causing "disarticulation" (Azar, 1990, cited in Ramsbotham et al., 2005) between the Soviet Union and Georgian and Abkhaz societies; this disarticulation further fueled fragmentation and caused what Azar calls "Protracted Social Conflict."

However, not all Azarian preconditions fit the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict. Georgia's "international linkages" in the early 1990s, particularly its linkage to Russia over Western states, could easily be considered as one of the preconditions for the wars in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Despite the fact that the Soviet Union had finally broken up, in the early 1990s, Georgia was still heavily geopolitically dependent on Russia; however, this factual dependence was hardly realized by the ethnocentric government of Georgia at that time. Thus, Abkhazians allied with Russians and North Caucasians and banished Georgians from Abkhazia.

All of the Azarian preconditions are revealed through certain events and a "process of dynamics," which according to the theory of Protracted Social Conflict, are grouped into three categories of determinants:

1). "Communal actions and strategies," which involve various processes of identity group and political goals formations, and in accordance with that of the emerging leadership;

2). "State actions and strategies," which possibly involve "coercive repression"

and "instrumental co-option" as ways of reaching political goals;

3). "Built in mechanisms of conflict," which are "experiences, fears and belief systems" that generate negative images and solidify protracted social conflict (Azar, 1990, cited in Ramsbotham et al., 2005, p. 87-88).

In the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, "built-in mechanisms of conflict" (Azar, 1990, cited in Ramsbotham et al., 2005, p. 87) included dehumanizing propaganda that took place on both sides, and tended to attribute the worst motivations and actions to the opposing side. Each side exploited history in ways that favored and justified their own actions.

Once the conflicts in the Caucasus entered the military confrontation phase, stopping the growth of this nationalistic snowball became impossible. The inevitable increase of victims resulting from these military confrontations resulted in an abundance of martyrs as powerful symbols of the torture, rape, etc., that justified their own atrocities. What Feldman (1991) writes regarding the formations of violence in Northern Ireland is likewise applicable to the Caucasus: "As much as the violence occurred over the modes and methods of symbolization constructed by the Blanketmen as occurred over the issues being symbolized" (Feldman, 1991, p. 165). The human body became a key object in the creation of these powerful political symbols. As Feldman (1991) says, "the body as the terminal locus of power also defines the place for redirection and reversal of power" (p. 178). Power forms and regulates subject positions through the economy of body, which involves bodies being "coded and recoded, folded and unfolded by violence given and violence received" (Feldman, 1991, p. 146). However, each side of the conflict speaks almost nothing about "violence given," i.e., violence inflicted on others,

"victims" who vary from conflict to conflict.

One such popular Georgian narrative concerns the allegedly "common practice" among Abkhazian militants during the Georgian-Abkhazian war of inflicting an "Italian necktie," in which the tongue is cut out of the throat and tied around the neck. Catherine Dale was the first scholar to have interviewed a number of refugees, and she has written about the "Italian necktie" and other horror stories in her 1997 UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) account. She refers to a number of horror stories that support the official Georgian claim that Abkhazians committed an ethnic cleansing of Georgians. Some of the narratives include stories about Abkhazian soldiers having sex with dead bodies, playing football with the heads of killed children, and numerous stories of rape. As those cases continue to be repeated from generation to generation, they do not focus on achieving empathy towards the conflict victims, but rather aggression and hatred towards those who allegedly implemented them, in this case, the Abkhazians. Such aggression against people on the other side of the conflict, in the conditions of an informational vacuum, creates de-humanizing propaganda. I myself, when working as a journalist, have often heard from those who tell such horror stories, "How can a human play a football with the head of other human? They are not human and they do not deserve to be treated as humans!"

A similar trend of demonizing propaganda is taking place on the other side of the conflict. A bit lighter but still rather horrifying stories could be found in Abkhazian narratives that are less frequently published than Georgian ones in the international media and academic world, probably because of Abkhazia's weaker public relations capacity and authority on the international stage. One of the most frequently cited among

Abkhazian sources of Georgian war atrocities is Vitalii Sharia's (1993) collection of stories. This collection includes stories like the following: "Nodar Ashuba, a police major, in September 1992, was taken by Okhureyan[4] Svans[5] to the center of town and was brutally killed by them: they cut off his fingers, ripped out his heart, and poked out his eyes" (Sharia, 1993, Svidetelstvuyut jhertvij agresiyi [Victims of Aggression are Testifying], para. 37). One of numerous horror accounts is the story about the warlord "Babu" [grandfather], who according to Sharia (1993), while proclaimed a national hero in Georgia, led a gang of drug addicted, sadist militants like himself: "among his victims was Abkhazian beauty Rimma Djobava, who was raped by 8 Georgian militants in front of her husband's (who was a Megrelian[6]) Geno Samushia's eyes. Geno was trying to protect her. They cut her leg when she was still alive and then burnt their house with them inside the house" (Sharia, 1993, Svidetelstvuyut jhertvij agresiyi [Victims of Aggression are Testifying], para. 43).

These themes of rape, torture, and murder are repeated in many separate accounts, but none of them are supported by international war-crime investigation; therefore, they cannot be considered as real facts. Even Catherine Dale (1997), who tells many horror stories that give base to flourishing stereotypes that deepen the chasm between war-divided societies, says, "but after the war, and perhaps more importantly, popular understandings of violence have been both made more concrete through association with daily hardships, and generalized through shared retellings" (p. 108). Despite Catherine Dale's pragmatic assumption here, generally, her account builds towards Georgian and Abkhazian claims about the dehumanization of the "other" side of the conflict. However,

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[4] A village in the Ochamchira district, in North-East Abkhazia.
[5] A subgroup of mountainous Georgians who speak the Svan language.
[6] Megrelians are representatives of a Georgian subgroup speaking Megrelian language.

it should be noted that the Georgian narrative, in Dale's (1997) and many other scholars' accounts, takes much more space and involves many more emotions than Abkhazian stories. Thus, it seems that Georgian horror stories of the wars in Abkhazia and even South Ossetia are given priority.

It is rather hard to ignore horror stories about war atrocities, but it should not be forgotten where such belief in these horror stories takes us. As Feldman (1991) points out, "subversive mimesis subjects the 'model' to the detours and diversions of simulation, which can detach mimetic practice from any external or originary reference. This detachment, this transformation of power's re-presentation into novel political presentation, becomes a project of self-emancipation" (p. 179).

In the Georgian case, this "project of self-emancipation" (Feldman, 1991, p. 179) to which Dale and other scholars have contributed has gained some tangible results: the ethnic cleansing and massacres of Georgians has been officially recognized by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) conventions in 1994, 1996, and again in 1997 during the Budapest, Lisbon, and Istanbul summits, where they condemned the "perpetrators of war crimes committed during the conflict" (Resolution of the OSCE Budapest Summit, OSCE, 1994-12-06, retrieved from http://www.osce.org/documents/mcs/1994/12/4048_en.pdf).

Georgian and Abkhazian officials are still actively expatiating human bodies, the symbols of ethnic cleansing. Thus, to borrow Feldman's (1991) paraphrase of Sartre: "it is not only a matter of what history does to the body but what subjects do with what history has done to the body" (p. 177). Obviously, Feldman's (1991) H-block narratives about violence inflicted on Irish prisoners are rather compelling, but I would argue

against Feldman's claim that these stories "encompass experience that cannot be incorporated into traditional political ideology" (p. 179). Stories of violence, if paralleled with Georgian-Abkhazia, Georgian-South Ossetian, or Armenian-Azeri cases, all use the human body as an artifact, a symbol that victimizes and justifies belligerent sides of the conflict, thereby returning scholars to traditional notions of the empowered victim battling a simplified oppressor. Such self-righteous and belligerent attitudes among the participants of the bloody wars in the Caucasus continue, and are having counter-productive effects towards the peace processes.

<div align="center">Peace Processes in the Caucasus</div>

Through the mediation of international organizations, and a significant decrease in armor, soldiers, militants, civilian death tolls, and forced displacements, by the mid-1990s, the South Caucasian conflicts had frozen and given way to peace processes. Each peace process varied by the mediators, parties, dynamics, and commitment, but most of the time had one characteristic in common, i.e., firmness in defending their own position no matter the circumstance. Thus, these peace processes neither enhance the parties' capacity to listen to each other, nor understand the claims of the other side; doing so was believed to be equal to agreeing with and legitimating the opposition's assertions. As opposed to a real conversation, each side was engaged in what Dr. Leonard Hawes (2010) calls "Witnessing, rather than merely waiting and then rushing into a narrative with a speaking turn, [which] is a particularly challenging discipline in multicultural, multilingual long-term conversations, negotiations, mediations, and dialogues" (Hawes, 2010, p. 277). The existence of such a chasm in communications between the sides

protracted over the years and created feelings of futility and, thereby, contributed to the

formation of belligerent intentions as the only justified ways of conflict resolution. What

eventually resulted in August 2008 was war in Georgia.

What could have caused such a "spoiling behavior" (Richmond, 2006) of

Georgians, Abkazians, South Ossetians, Armenians, and Azeri's? According to

Richmond (2006), asymmetry of disputants could be one of the powerful reasons for

"devious objectives" that cause spoiling behavior. Richmond reaches closer to the

Caucasian picture as he goes on to say that the "…scenario becomes all the more

complex because of the fact that one party may represent an internationally recognized

entity, and therefore control all of the machinery of a state, while the other is viewed as

rebel, secessionist or insurgent" (p. 63). Georgia is an internationally recognized state,

whereas its breakaway territories are considered de-facto; thus, the international

community can already be considered to be taking a pro-Georgian stance. Thus, the

Abkhazian and South Ossetian sides are many times not perceived as parties to the

conflicts.

In this section, I will lay out several of the main developments in the South

Caucasian peace processes that will provide some explanation for the existing deadlocks

in this small geographic region. Georgian-Abkhazian negotiations, known as the

"Geneva Peace Process," chaired by the UN, facilitated by Russia, and observed by the

OSCE and the "Group of Friends" (US, Germany, UK, France, and Russia) created three

working groups on the nonresumption of violence, the return of refugees and internally

displaced people (IDPs), and economic issues, in 1997. However, the sides not being

willing to listen and in their view to thereby "legitimize" the other side's claims became

locked in a stalemate over the political status of Abkhazia. Georgians have always been considering Abkhazia to be an inalienable part of Georgia with at most the status of an autonomous republic, whereas Abkhazians insisted that negotiations be about the reconstruction of state and legal relations between the two republics rather than the political status of Abkhazia within Georgia. This deadlock created a gap in the peace process. The freezing of negotiations at that time, which was seen as a drawback, later proved to be a better position than what followed after the renewal of peace talks. This part of negotiations will be reviewed later on in the essay.

The Georgian-South Ossetian peace process was mainly implemented by the Joint Control Commission (JCC) created in 1992, a quadrilateral body comprised of Georgian, Russian, and North and South Ossetian representatives, in addition to participation from the OSCE. The JCC's main objectives, similar to the Georgian-Abkhazia case, were divided into three parts: military and security matters, economic rehabilitation of the zone of conflict, and establishing conditions for the return of refugees and IDPs. The negotiation process was characterized as protracted inactivity. However, this peace process could be described as more "peaceful" than the one that took place after 2004. In July 2004, the new Georgian government's antismuggling operation of taking down the informal marketplace Ergneti on the de-facto border escalated into fighting between Georgian and Ossetian troops. As De Waal (2010) says, the closure of the Ergneti market by the Georgian government "cut off grassroots Georgian and Ossetian relations at a stroke" (p. 202). Having traveled several times to Ergneti as a journalist, I have seen how thousands of Georgians and Ossetians were gathering everyday engaging in wholesales of wheat, petrol, cigarettes, Russian candies, and other consumer goods, that were tax-

free. I heard Georgian, Ossetian, and Russian all spoken at once, as many of the local farmers from both sides of the conflict were also selling agriculture produce. The market did no good for the Georgian state budget, but it was the only place in which those particular conflict-divided societies jointly earned their living.

From the economic and antismuggling point of view, the operation contributed to more polarization of the conflicting parties. Isolation of the conflicting sides created an informational vacuum, that are the ideal conditions for developing higher levels of misperceptions that helped me to understand what Richmond calls "devious objectives." "Factors that shape and distort perception, such as stereotyping, selective perception, projection, and perceptual defense" (Richmond, 2006, p. 62) were caused by the need of both Georgian and South Ossetian sides to fill in the gap created by isolation. Each party tried to do it the way that would justify their position, not taking into consideration implications like further polarization between them.

A similar process of protracted misperception was also occurring among Georgians, Abkhazians, Armenians, and Azerbaijanians. De Waal (2003) makes the link between the protracted misperception of war-divided communities in Armenia, Azerbiajan, and their governments. He refers to "a kind of slow suicide pact" (De Waal, 2003, p. 3), wherein the leaders from both sides of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict continue to be held hostages of public reaction, and cannot move the conflict towards reconciliation. In Deleuzo-Guattarian words, the war machines of the South Caucasus are producing a movement that holds its smooth space instead of letting South Caucasians be held by the local movement in their space (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 363). War machines that are "distributed by turbulence across a smooth space" (Deleuze & Guattari,

1987, p. 363) and those same machines are yielding a deadlock to be unpacked in the next chapter.

WAR MACHINES AND THE NEED

FOR INTERRUPTION

This chapter looks through the lenses of the affirmative philosophy of Deleuze,

Guattarri, and Nietzsche in attempts to shed light on the media aspect of the South

Caucasian war machines. It also aims to de-territorialize cyber attacks as Deleuzian

"vacuoles of noncommunication" (1995, p. 175) aimed at interrupting the war machine's

workflow and at the same time being part of another war machine. At first, this section

will discuss the arborescence of militarism, appropriated by the reactive forces in the

South Caucasus, which unwittingly become transcendental "slaves" (Deleuze, 1983) to

the nomadic war machines. Those war machines, however, do not imply solely state

armies or guerillas, but rather are based on actions and existences of everyday individual

life in the Caucasus, which is invisibly directed by mainstream ideas about national

identity and territorial integrity. Those mainstream ideas leave out any possibility of

alternative thought and thus result in destructive war machines, which seem to be

impossible to deactivate. The lines of one-sidedness logically merge into militarism in

striated space, which could be traced to the lines of an instant communication network in

the smooth space keeping societies in a constant state of modulation through popular

culture and mainstream media. The section will then move to analyzing why one, in these

circumstances of enslaving communication, would be willing to break the vicious cycle

and to "hijack speech" (Deleuze, 1995, p. 175), to conduct virtual sit-ins like those that reactive forces have already labeled as the cyber war.[7]

Before examining Caucasian militarism, which is a part of the war machines, it is important to note that none of the South Caucasian nation-states or their breakaway territories consider themselves reactive, militarist forces, officially. War machine/s as such have never been recognized. They rather accentuate their desire to solve ethnic and territorial conflicts peacefully. However, they never stop arming, training soldiers, striving to get accepted into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). They remain transcendent to the point where they will be winners in the conflicts because they are poised to take advantage of opportunities to succeed in war. Ongoing sedentary media coverage, another part of the war machines, is well suited to ensure the smoothness of the militarist process through the creation of war-machine-justifying sedentary contexts. In a simplified sense, they mostly mean to maintain a "frightened, confused and misinformed public" (Buchanan in Buchanan & Parr, 2006, p. 22).

Why do the nation-states remain on their roads of militarism that produce belligerence among their populations if they claim they are willing to resolve conflicts peacefully but continue to spend billions of dollars from their own budgets and those of international organizations to support their preparations for war? This phenomenon, seemingly paradoxical at first glance, could be understood more thoroughly through the application of the war machine (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) concept. It should be noted that even though nation-states appropriate war machines, eventually, they lose control.

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[7] Cyber attacks on the websites of the Georgian president, government, and mainstream media that coincided with the conventional war between Georgia and Russia in August 2008 are argued to constitute the precedent of cyber war (Clarke, 2009; Hollis, 2011; Zoller, 2009).

The reason is the nomadic nature of the war machine, which makes it impossible to

regulate. As Deleuze and Guattari say:

> …even though the nomadic trajectory may follow trails or customary routes, it
> does not fulfill the function of the sedentary road, which is to parcel out a closed
> space to people, assigning each person a share and regulating the
> communication between shares. The nomadic trajectory does the opposite: it
> distributes people (or animals) in an open space, one that is indefinite and
> noncommunicating. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 380).

If applied to Caucasian conflicts, and perhaps to any other conflicts, war

machines, once fights break out and injustices occur, pull in more and more people, ideas,

and movements as parts of the war machine. This war machine moves in an open,

indefinite space in tandem with the other, similar war machine on the other side of the

conflict. It should be noted that neither of them are sedentary, territorialized state armies,

but rather noncontrollable and deterritorialized, a nomadic mix of guerrilla troops,

civilian armed groups, mafiosi gangs, individual revengers, journalists, politicians, and

others. The existence of a similar nomadic war machine on the other side of a conflict

does not mean that those two are in a state of communication and information sharing.

People living in those divided societies follow news of their own side and see the

opposing side through the dark lenses of one-sided, distorted media coverage. Thus,

media coverage turns out to be in an informational vacuum, a space of

noncommunicating as Deleuze and Guattari say (1987).

For a closer look at the origins of the contemporary conflicts in the Caucasus and

the functionality of the war machines on that land, Merab Mamardashvili,[8] a Georgian

philosopher, provides a similar concept to that of the war machine—the mechanism—that

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[8] Up to now it was not possible to locate any published manuscripts of Merab Mamardashvili in the English
language. The reason, perhaps, is in his preference for live talks, in the form of lectures and interviews, as
he believed that there was a huge difference between the written and spoken word.

could be helpful. During the prewars period of the early 1990s, Mamardashvili was ringing bells of alarm due to the fractioning among Georgian political parties and multi-ethnic populations that were taking place in striated space, right after the break-up of the Soviet Union, in a hive of nationalistic pressures. With the major support of ethnic majorities, authorities of the newly born nation-states of the South Caucasus helped compose a smooth space for the recently unleashed war machines, which they eventually proved to be incapable of controlling. What was at first anticipated to be a limited war, morphed into "so-called total war" and transformed the relationship between aim and object (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 421). To translate that into Caucasian ontology, war machine unleashers were thinking of ensuring territorial integrity and ethnic identity, before starting to build newly independent states, but then found themselves sinking in the rhizomatic roots of uncontrollable violence and injustices, which had war itself as their main principle. Again, going back to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), "when total war becomes the object of the appropriated war machine, then at this level in the set of all possible conditions, the object and the aim enter into new relations that can reach the point of contradiction" (p.421). This contradiction is between initial goal—ensuring territorial integrity/salvation of the ethnic identity, and actual goal—destruction; initial controller—the state and eventual ruler, and the war machine. As Buchanan says, "it effectively subsumes the state, making it just one of its many moving parts" (Buchanan as cited in Buchanan & Parr, 2006, p. 31). Governments of those Caucasian conflicting sides still remain hostages of the public opinion they helped create throughout the history, and therefore prove to be one of the moving parts of the war machines.

Some may argue that war machines are now stopped and bring up the fact that there is no armed conflict or mass killings going on right now. But "war does not necessarily have the battle as its object, and more importantly, the war machine does not necessarily have war as its object, although war and the battle may be its necessary result" (p. 416) as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) point out. In response to that, others may even claim that there have never been war machines unleashed, only one-sided oppression, and claim that those who believe in war machines are anti-Georgian, anti-Armenian, anti-Azerbaijanian, etc. As it is rather unimaginable for Caucasians to accept someone's neutrality; "you are either with us or against us" has been the dominant thinking for the past decades.

Thus, nonacknowledgement of one-sidedness, the win/lose approach, and the dynamics of the nomadic war machines prove that Mamardashvili's[9] statements of the 1990s are still relevant today: "the [war] mechanism is in full swing and is beating the hammer into our heads, we should do something to stop it before it causes more dramatic results"[10] (Tsiteli Zona [red zone] March 12, 2010). Unfortunately, Mamardashvili's words were not adhered to and the "more dramatic results" (Tsiteli Zona [red zone] March 12, 2010) he was warning about have already taken place. The 2008 August War between Georgia and Russia is one of the prominent examples of the dramatic results of ongoing militarism as the integral part of war machine activity. Also, there will be more

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[9] Unfortunately, Merab Mamardashvili was perceived as antinational and anti-Georgian, and at some point was even ostracized from the Georgian community. That ostracization was in large part driven by his words: "truth stands beyond the native land" (Tsiteli Zona [red zone] March 12, 2010. My translation of Mamardashvili's speech that was broadcast in the retrospective TV show, "Red Zone"). In the early 90s, when Mamardashvili made that statement, even a slight downplaying of one's native land was perceived oversensitively, because at that time, there was an urgent need for defending Georgia's newly independent fragile state, which was then plagued with problems of territorial integrity and extreme nationalism.

[10] My translation of Mamardashvili's speech that was broadcast in the retrospective TV show "Red Zone."

dramatic results in other parts of the South Caucasus because "militarism creates problems it claims only militarism can solve, but its solutions are only so many more problems that, too, seem insoluble except to militarism" (Buchanan as cited in Buchanan & Parr, 2006, p. 22).

Media is another part of war machines, which helps militarism to better permeate lay populations through its homogeneous, one-sided coverage. The forthcoming section will examine the ways in which the media represents itself as a micromechanism of the war machines.

<div align="center">Homogeneity of Traditional Media</div>

Even a cursory look at media production and its public perception in the South Caucasus allows those distanced from the scene to see that the vast majority of the lay population, including civil society leaders and governmental decision makers, are gatekept by mainstream media. This kind of reporting that some would even call "war journalism" (Webel et al., 2007, p. 258) exercises the framing of events one-sidedly and prejudicially, without implying that such mediation unwittingly transforms the public into war supporters (Akhvlediani, 2009).

Perhaps the very variety of cultures, languages, and traditions is the main cause of "war journalism" and endless belligerence in the South Caucasus. There are more than 100 nationalities in Georgia and about 10 ethnic groups including Armenians, Azris, Russians, Ossetians, Abkhazians, Kurds, Greeks, Kists, Yezids, and Ukrainians. People of minority ethnic groups make up 34% of Georgia's population and are constantly objects of various prejudices and stereotypes that lead to belligerent discourses

(Rekhviashvili, 2010). The discourses of *otherness* are being permanently reproduced by the mainstream media and are tied to the problem of current and potential breakaway territories (Tsuladze, 2010). In an article "What threats are being posed for Georgia in 'EU charter on Languages,'" the authors review the abundance of scarcities in regard to proclamations of some of the local languages, Megrelian, Abkhaz, and Svan as regional or national languages. Tsuladze (2010) points to the fear among the Georgian population and the country's government that if languages of ethnic minorities would be empowered, it would give rise to new secession tendencies which will further weaken the nation state. The mainstream media's government control and over all possible independence may be partially to blame, as main TV stations in Georgia are owned by ex-government officials and their close friends who are still largely associated with the ruling party and the President of Georgia. The same could be said about the mainstream media in Armenia and Azerbaijan. According to Freedom House (2011), "Despite constitutional and legal protections, press freedoms are restricted and the media environment in Armenia remains oppressive and has not improved since the flawed 2008 presidential election" (para. 1). Mainstream broadcast media is still heavily controlled by the government in Azerbaijan as well (BBC, 23 December 2011).

Overall, the South Caucasus region represents one of the examples of how "media and official news services are only there to maintain the illusion of actuality, of the reality of the stakes, of the objectivity of the facts" (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 38, as cited in Buchanan & Parr, 2006). I agree with the idea of Meg Spratt that "news media don't simply transmit factual information, but also shape cultural myth—or the stories we tell to define our histories, our values, and our beliefs" (Spratt, 2008, p. 87) — this,

especially, is one of the reasons why the same story archetypes are applied repeatedly to new events in Georgia. These archetypes are not hard to notice in news about Russia, the breakaway territories, and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) summits, where the archetype of an evil country is applied to Russia. No matter the subject of the news story, the breakaway territories are introduced as measurable marionette secessionists and NATO officials as potential defenders and rescuers of Georgia from a "limbo land" where, thanks to Russia and the breakaway territories, it is bound. Often reinforced and reproduced in the actual and virtual statements of the nation-state leaders, those archetypes crash into similarly one-sided claims of the other state or nonstate actors.

However, even if the media were completely independent, I believe that for progressive thinking to take place, there is a need for journalists to step out from their ethnic frames and remove their experience from their stories, especially in such multi-ethnic communities as the Caucasus, where stereotypes and prejudices play a major role in constructing everyday "reality."

This dichotomy of conflicting narratives could be traced back to pre-Soviet times, when there was no internet or television and it took much longer for a political statement or illusory, propagandistic news story to spread. However, finding the historic roots in this case does not provide the ultimate cure for these phenomena, which have become much more expansive due to the development of information and communication technologies.

Soft Power Against Media Activism in

the Caucasian Nation-States

As Deleuze says, "we're moving toward control societies that no longer operate by confining people but through continuous control and instant communication" (1995, 174). There is a similar idea in Badiou's (2003) philosophy, where he talks about the danger of the speed with which our world is marked: "the speed of historical change; the speed of technical change; the speed of communications; of transmissions; and even the speed with which humans beings establish connections with one another… It is because things, images and relations circulate so quickly that we do not even have time to measure the extent of this incoherency" (Badiou, 2003, p. 51). When contemplating the same idea of speed in the Caucasus, there is even more danger of incoherency, because there are more actors submitted to the propaganda of the war machines. However, the more communication develops, along with the creation of new tools and microschemes for spreading rigid, self-righteous thinking, it also provides opportunities for rhizomatic activism and deactivation of the war machines. The constructive dynamics in regards to war machine deactivation could be seen in the online "power shift" from nation-state to nonstate nomadic actors. The next subsections will elaborate on the issues of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) development, soft interferences from the nation-state, and its partial transformation into an ideological battlefield instead of a war machine opponent.

Development of ICTs and the "Power Shift"

in the Caucasus

This subsection illustrates how the development of ICTs and, in particular, the emergence of new media is shifting power in the nation-state of Georgia, how the government is finding ways to adapt to this power shift, and how this process of "adaptation" may affect or is already affecting the impartiality and even-handedness of new media activists in the country. For the most part, the analysis of the nation-state in relation with international communication has been guided by topics of "liberation technology" or "technology of control," such as filtering and censorship (Diamond, 2010; Villeneuve, 2008; Zittrain & Palfrey, 2008). From this perspective, it is unlikely that a nation-state's use of soft power could ever be equal or superior to the above-mentioned discursive topics for blocking freedom of expression, and thereby enacting public protest or democratic deliberation.

The development ICTs have added new alternatives to broadcast media for politics, where dominant cultures and subcultures are able to promote their own agendas and interests; as vast numbers of scholars suggest, this trend will persist and even increase into the foreseeable future (Kellner, 2004; Mathews, 1997; Rheingold, 2002). Georgia is clearly a player in the global picture of this digital "contested terrain" (Kellner, 2004).

The popularity of new media was slowly rising in Georgia before August 2008, but intensified during the 2008 war with Russian over South Ossetia and currently continues to be so (Kosmo Show Interview with Georgian Bloggers, (Dodie Kharkheli,

Mariam Talakhadze and Giga Paichadze, November 10, 2009). Here are several reasons for the popularity of new media in Georgia and South Caucasus:

• TV channels, which were at that time and still are the main sources of information for the Georgian population, where providing one-sided coverage of the war developments (Akhvlediani, 2009); thus, electronic media became more popular.

• Due to the politically tense situation, more people started blogging to share their feelings and opinions with the online community.

• As certain governmental agencies' websites were blocked, officials also started to spread official information via blogs.

The popularity of the blogosphere and social networks continued to rise even after the war crisis subsided. The fact that the new media in Georgia is enjoying unusual attention could be verified by numerous events dedicated to its present and future activists. Here is the list for major new media-related events for the past period:

• On October 29-31, 2010, training in New/Social Media for journalists and citizen journalists was held in the biggest cities of Georgia, Tbilisi, Kutaisi, and Batumi, by Transitions Online, during which new media strategies and tools were discussed.

• On June 30, 2010, the first Social Media Day was marked in Georgia. Bloggers and social media workers gathered in Mtatsminda Park in Tbilisi and gave presentations on the introduction of chat, different types of social media, RSS functions, and corporate blogs.

• On June 24-26 2010, under the initiative of the Ministry of Economy of Georgia and with the financial support of Ltd Georgian Air Navigation, the Days of Georgian

Blogging were held in Kvariati, Black Sea. (I will elaborate more on this event in the next section.)

• On June 20, 2010, AIESEC[11] Georgia held a Media Conference at Tbilisi Free University, which included talks about social media along with traditional media.

• On April 8 - 10, 2010, first Social Innovation Camp in Caucasus[12] gathered 40 participants, including designers, entrepreneurs, social needs experts, marketing, legal, and advertising gurus, from Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia.

• On April 9 - 10, 2010, the "Social Media for Social Change[13]" conference was held in Tbilisi.

• On October 12, 2009, with the financial support and arrangement of the Open Society Georgia Foundation, the New Media Forum was held and attended by 200 acting, beginner, or student journalists and NGO representatives.

• On October 12, 2009, within the framework of the Georgian new media forum, the first Georgian blog catalogue www.blogroll.ge was presented, which provides its visitors with the list of Georgian blogs, rankings, statistics, and information about the Georgian blogosphere.

• On June 7, 2008, about 150 people attended the Bar Camp Caucasus[14] in Tbilisi.

Besides ongoing activities and new media-related events, there are also cases of blogs and social networks influencing mainstream media and even political developments. Bijan Kafi (2010) describes one of the strongest cases on

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11 AIESEC, international student organization, an international platform that enables young people to explore and develop their leadership potential in order to have a positive impact on society. For more information please visit http://www.myaiesec.net/

12 http://sic-caucasus.net/

13 https://sites.google.com/a/ph-int.org/socialmedia2010/

14 http://globalvoicesonline.org/2008/06/13/georgia-armenian-georgian-blogosphere-assessed

OpenDemocracy.net. This is a story of 25-year old Sian Davies, then a charity worker in

Georgia from Wales, who witnessed the 2008 war:

> After commenting on a BBC website and on her blog that, contrary to CNN
> reports, Tbilisi had in fact not been bombed, international media picked up on the
> fact that she seemed to be one of the few reliable sources in an unusual information
> vacuum. Within 60 hours the media that had picked up her reports up from her blog
> had forwarded the stories to other stations and news agencies. These in turn were
> copied by others. (Para. 7, Kafi, 2010)

Worth noting is that when the war started out, it was summer holiday season when

most embassies close and many major TV and radio stations have no reporters on the

ground. Thus, the information provided by Davies in 2008, which she herself gained from

friends and friends of friends, reached the global public via new media. Nonetheless, the

relevance of such citizen journalism still quickly diminished with the arrival of traditional

media reporter, although many activists like Davis continued to reach out via mobile

phones, Facebook, and various blogging platforms.

There are a number of Georgian social movements on Facebook still, one of

which took place in spring 2010 and was one of the most interesting antigovernmental

critiques in Georgia. It was caused by broadcasting the fake news on one of the leading

national TV channels, Imedi, stating that a new war with Russia had started. That

evening, thousands of people logged onto Facebook to find out what had happened in

reality. After discovering the fact that news about the assassination of President

Saakashvili and Georgian invasion by Russia was fake, innumerable Facebook users

uploaded a crossed-out logo of the Imedi channel as their profile pictures, created

antiImedi channel pages, and continued to have debates over the level of governmental

control on TV stations in Georgia. To trace the concrete outcomes of this event would

require further research, but the fact that dissemination of fake news was protested by a

major part of the population that was most vividly seen on web once again proves the strong potential of new media in Georgia.

Another example of blogging being important is the numerous attacks on one of the Georgian bloggers. *The Guardian* has covered one of the most active series of attacks on http://cyxymu.livejournal.com/, who writes pro-Georgian posts mostly on Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Russian conflicts. His social network accounts on LiveJournal, Facebook, and Twitter were attacked on August 7, 2009 on the anniversary of the Georgian-Russian 2008 war. *The Guardian reports* that:

> The strikes appeared to be one of the most widespread and coordinated attacks ever seen online, shutting down Twitter for significant portions of Thursday, as well as causing serious problems for Facebook and blogging service LiveJournal. Google, too, was subjected to attacks but said it had been able to prevent any damage - although some users reported some unexpected problems with the Internet giant's services. (guardian.co.uk, Friday 7 August 2009)

As reported by *The Guardian*, these attacks could be evidence of a grudge or personal vendetta rather than an organized criminal act aimed at blackmailing major websites. However, some Georgian bloggers see the traces of Russian government action, or, as Ronald Deibert and Rafal Rohoznski (2010) would say, "patriotic hacking":

> …individuals can take creative actions—sometimes against perceived threats to their country's national interest—that have systemwide effects. ...Those individuals who possess the necessary technical skills have at times taken it upon themselves to attack adversarial sources of information, often leaving provocative messages and warnings behind. ...Some government security services informally encourage or tacitly approve of the actions of patriotic groups.

In the case of http://cyxymu.livejournal.com/, it is still undetermined whether the attacks were the work of the Russian government, their citizens, or a combination of the two. Some skeptics might assert that this attack was a coincidence, a system glitch, that no blogger could be worthy of such large-scale hacking. However, I would argue that

such intensive attacks simultaneously on several accounts of the blogger could not be a coincidence, and those facts of interference in the blogosphere once again prove that some actors were affected by the single blogger. Otherwise, why would someone have to put so much effort into disrupting someone's social network account or blog? Many are asking this question in Georgia and are thrilled by the popularity of http://cyxymu.livejournal.com/, and there is no surprise among these Georgians that new media activists wish to take this person down.

As reported by Blogroll.ge,[15] on average, 141 posts are being created per day by 818 bloggers in the country. There is a wide variety of bloggers and social network activists in Georgia. Some of them are "just for fun bloggers" as they call themselves: others pursue a goal of establishing certain networks and engage in joint initiatives and discussions. There are also a number of corporations, governmental agencies and traditional media blogs and social network profiles. There has not been systemic study of blog segments in Georgia; however, a strong parallel-study could be drawn with the results of Technorati's 2010 report on the state of the blogosphere.

The statistics support the optimists' views, which consider new media as being a "liberation technology." In Georgia, like worldwide, hobbyists could be seen as the majority of bloggers; in Georgia, similar rates of bloggers exist of part-time and corporate bloggers. However, making arguments on the rate of self-employed bloggers is much harder, as bloggers themselves do not report their income from the Internet, nor does any organization.

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15 www.blogroll.ge is agregator of the Georgian blogosphere as it calls itself was created in October 2009

However, the idea of Internet marketing and self-specialization in the blogosphere is rather popular in Georgia. According to blogger Lishtota, in Shota Khinchagashivili's[16] opinion it may be profitable for some new media activists to get involved in product advertising for business companies; financially less attractive topics such as election processes and media criticism are less motivating to write on. "Georgian bloggers, who are represented by the overwhelming majority of young people, are not interested in political processes of the country and are the least probable to make political comments if there is not a special mini-grant or contest announced" (Khinchagashvili, S. 2010). Therefore, it is less likely to expect any strong political criticism in this new media populated primarily by disinterested youth.

However, as Richard Kahn and Douglas Kellner (2004) argue, "the success of blogging should not be judged solely on whether it generates obvious political effects" (pp. 92-93). Ethan Zuckerman (2010) notes in an interview with suprisinglyfree.com, even nonpolitical bloggers may turn political when cases of major injustice occur. Besides politics, there are other sensitive themes, like breakaway regions and ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities, which are not treated with much tolerance in Georgia. Ongoing discussions though new media could also foster processes of reconciliation and tolerance.

New Media Support projects are also emerging among NGOs operating in Georgia and are helping new bloggers to find better and easier ways for citizen reporting. Among those are the Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Embassy of United States of America in Tbilisi,

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16 personal correspondence with Shota Khinchagashivili a blogger and Ph. D. student of Ilia University in Tbilisi, Georgia. His blog can be found at http://lishtota.blogspot.com/

European Commission. Newly emerged local NGOs like GO Group Media, Singular Group, and well-established NGOs like Internews Georgia have also started implementation of new media related projects. Even the most popular TV channels' shows and programs are incorporating new media elements like Facebook, Twitter accounts, blogs, and forums.

On the other hand, it also should be noted that regardless of a significant resonance with its emergence and popularization, ICTs cannot be a replacement for other forms of interaction and communication, but only a powerful supplement (Danitz & Strobel, 2002). However, the need for such a supplement in a country where the whole TV media is polarized—leading national TV channels have an apparent pro-ruling party stance while small TV stations in the capital gear towards extremely oppositional posture—the need for alternative insight is rising. The emerging and developing blogosphere and social networks have already started to satisfy a rising demand for neutral credible information sources.

To go back to the initial purpose of this paper, I will now explicate how the Georgian government is adapting to this new "power shift" caused by the emergence of ICTs and how it is exerting "soft power" in doing so.

Adaptation of the Nation-States with

the New "Power Shift"

Pessimists' arguments that Web 2.0 is equally accessible for nefarious purposes proves to be true in Georgian case as well. The fact that the nation-state is affected by the existence of Web 2.0 could be well concluded from its active involvement in new media.

Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili alone has three personal accounts and four public figure pages with hundreds of friends and fans. Similar stats could be observed in other ruling party leaders, with similar pages being created by opposition figures.

One of the most interesting periods for observing governmental behavior on the web was the election of the Tbilisi mayor in May 2010, when the page in support of the ruling party candidate Gigi Ugulava was created on Facebook. The most interesting thing about this was that the fans' accounts had been created less than 1 month before and most of them had no activity except being a fan of Gigi Ugulava. Such faking of a grass-roots movement is the perfect illustration of what Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane (1998) call the use of *free information*, i.e., "information that actors are willing to create and distribute without financial compensation. The sender benefits from the receiver believing the information and hence has incentives to produce it. Motives may vary. Scientific information is a public good but persuasive messages, such as political ones, are more self-serving" (p.85). Therefore, use of social networks for political purposes could also be considered exertion of soft power through use of "free information" (Nye et al., 1998).

Some other instances of astroturfing are touched on in a blog by Radio Liberty journalist, Ia (2009, November 20). She concretely talks about ideological supporters of the ruling party, one of leaders of the Liberty Institute NGO, and an established pundit in the country. Ramishvili makes several posts per day and has more than 4,000 friends on Facebook, part of whom actively comment on his statuses and posts. As Antadze says in her blog, although "the Facebook club" is in the public space, the decisions discussed on there are taken behind closed doors, but the public has no trouble accepting those. For

that, she calls Georgians' activity on Facebook a club, which in her opinion, seems to be guided by liberal values and, more specifically, the protection of society from religious fundamentalism or the religious autocracy. However, the group is, in fact, characterized by overarching loyalty towards the government and especially one of the governmental groups: "Thus all the issues discussed in this club are being viewed through the lens of this group" (Antadze, 2009, November 1, para. 5). However, Levan Ramishvili is not the only politically active person on social networks and the blogosphere, as there are many more. It would be relevant here to draw a parallel with what Evgeny Morozov (2010) talks about on SuprisinglyFree.com. He describes similar types of activities in Russia and China, where designated web-active people attempt to destroy communities by making innumerable posts and "leaving so many comments that any kind of rational debate becomes impossible." Such activities online narrow the public sphere, thus decreasing the democratization potential of "liberation technology."

If we follow Joseph Nye's and Robert Keohane's (1998) arguments, by indirect influence, government tries to gain credibility over their ideologies if those become transmitted by bloggers. Hence, as Nye et al. claim:

> It [soft power] depends largely on the persuasiveness of the free information that an actor seeks to transmit. If a state can make its power legitimate in the eyes of others and establish international institutions that encourage others to define their interests in compatible ways, it may not need to expend as many costly traditional economic or military resources. (Nye & Keohane, 1998, p. 86)

The potential of online activists in gaining "persuasiveness of the free information" has not been underestimated by government, which could be concluded from its attempts to establish a close relationship with them. One of the most visible examples of government trying to interfere in new media would be Georgian Blogging

Days organized by the Ministry of Economy of Georgia, with financial support of Ltd.

Georgian Air Navigation on June 24-26, 2010 in Kvariati, a popular Georgian Black Sea

resort. The seminar covered the following topics: creation of an electronic manual for the

beginner bloggers; marketing and branding strategies for private companies; organizing

an action to promote Batumi (capital of autonomous region of Georgian Ajara, mostly

popular for its seaside resorts) through blogging and collecting relevant material;

elaboration of recommendations for the authorities to activate actions in new media

(GOV 2.0); etc.

It could be concluded that the Communications, Information Technology, and

Innovation Department of the Ministry of Economic Development of Georgia, which

organized this meeting of bloggers, does a good job, as it is trying to promote information

technology advances, so that the country catches up with the modern global world;

however, as blogger Lishtota [Shota Khinchagashvili] (2010) asserts, "indirect political

influence could be observed there as well" (personal communication with Shota

Khichagashvili). As the blogosphere is independent of civil media, any of its cooperation

with state structures could be dangerous for the freedom of expression. Especially in a

country where much of traditional media is monopolized, civic journalism remains one of

the rare credible information sources, though in the case of cooperation with government,

the whole notion of credibility would be destroyed. Thus, the only way to do a good job

for new media is not to interfere in it all. As blogger Lishtota believes, Georgian

government has anticipated the actuality of new media in Georgia and the potential shift

of power relations. Thus, meeting bloggers in the wake of political criticism should be

considered as an affective means of adaptation brought by ICTs.

However, there is a huge debate on governmental involvement in that sphere even among bloggers. Journalist and blogger Tazo Kupreishvili claims that even if Georgian authorities bribed 30 bloggers, there are around 700 active bloggers remaining in Georgia. "And if so-called 'bribed' bloggers would decide to protest, they would not face any difficulty creating anonymous blogs, and express their ideas this way. So, there is no way Georgian government can have control over new media activists in the country" (Kupreishvili, 2010, para. 7).

However, soon after the state-funded meeting of Georgian bloggers at one of the best seaside resorts of Georgia, a scandalously titled article "На Черном море вербуют блоггеров" (bloggers won over at the Black Sea) appeared in a trilingual online edition of *The Georgia Times*. The article, with a noticeable pro-Russian stance, harshly criticized the event, saying, "Young people are generously wined and dined and taught how to fight on the media front" (Bolotnikova, 2010, para. 1). Despite the ultimately pro-Russian sentiment in her article, Svetlana Blotnikova points out some important points that have not been favored in the attention of the Georgian media, such as the fact that part of the meeting was led by famous pro-Georgian and anti-Russian bloggers Georgi Jakhaya, blogging on the above-mentioned suhumu.livejournal.com, and Oleg Panfilov, both of whom dedicated their reports to the role of social media in the protection of state interests.

As blogger Lishtota [Shota Khinchagashvili] says, unfortunately, in Georgia, producing low-grade Internet productions and thus involving anti-Russian information campaigns is a more fashionable trend than providing critical analysis of actions of those who are in power inside the country. However, with the recent war with Russia and the

political ideological campaign driven constantly by the ruling party that Georgia should be united against "one evil adversary" – Russia, hinders independent thinking. Another point is that those who are guided by the blogs are largely young journalists or students and they naturally have the desire for self-actualization. As Davit Mchedlidze of the Internews Georgia mentions, "the best way to gain attention is to do that via blogging. Then, the most active and creative ones are being monitored and invited by government" (personal communication). Therefore, it is not only the government being "nefarious" as Joseph Nye et al. call it, but there is also a weakness of new media activists who are relatively easy to win over.

The fact that the Georgian government is trying to adapt with the emergence of new technologies is evident, though it is not clear if bloggers are willing to resist and to what extent the content of their work changed since the government activated its "pro-blogger" policy. Further research of soft governmental interferences into the blogosphere would be effective from the viewpoint of the development of independent rhizomatic media activism. The fact remains that progovernmental and antipolitical opponents' statements are abundant in cyberspace. The traditional one-sidedness of Georgian journalism in broadcast or print media can be opposed online, a place where pro-Georgian ideas are juxtaposed with anti-Georgian claims. Such a multiplicity of conflicting statements online transforms cyberspace into an ideological battlefield, which will be discussed in the next subsection.

"Liberation Technology" as an

Ideological Battlefield

This subsection will elaborate on the Georgian-Russian "war of videos" on www.YouTube.com (hereafter YouTube) as an illustration of the war machines' affect on the war-divided communities. This particular analysis of the "war of videos," which occurred on YouTube following the 2008 war between Georgia and Russia, will show how the dominant ideologies of both countries have been re-appropriated in this new media and how those discourses thereby gained radical character in this rhetorical battlefield. Particularly, the goal of the subsection is to examine how these dominant ideologies are re-articulating and disarticulating socially constructed realities of each side through offensive, insinuating, and belligerent discourses.

Being anonymous creators, free of any moral and professional responsibilities, the authors of these videos demonstrate the purest national hatred and thereby bring to light the extreme ideologies that usually are being veiled in traditional media. The dominant cultural, social, and political one-sided meanings of public discourse are being re-articulated and disarticulated in similar manners by both Georgians and Russians.

Analysis of the videos

In all analyzed videos, I found re-articulation and disarticulation of each other's ideas and representations of socio-political actors. On the basis of results, I then defined seven distinctive discourses for each of the sides that justify and legitimate Georgian and Russian nationalism, which are presented and discussed in two sections below. Most of the discourses leave out claims made on the other side of the conflict and, thereby,

vividly illustrate irrational, one-sided discourses and the need for reconciliation.

Anti-Russian videos

1) Russia the "Goliath," Georgia "David" discourse: Russia is an authoritarian bloody state that caused large-scale destruction and human suffering in Georgia and should be punished. The war has been between disproportionate powers, with the significant military domination from the Russian side; the 2008 war and further isolation of Russia from the West; Georgia—a small but democratically evolving country in acute need of the West, were successfully brought up by all acting agents for disarticulation and re-articlation of Kremlin's ideologies, starting from Georgian mainstream media (Akhvlediani, 2009; Heinrich & Tanaev, 2009) and ending with new media including UT. Pro-Georgian YouTube users articulate Russia as invader and ask the international community for help; thereby, most of the text that appears in the videos is in English. For example, nanaka77 (2008) says in her video: "SOS!!! Small Caucasus republic of Georgia is in a state of war with dangerous enemy Russia. Russians killed thousands of civilians. They are terrorists and must be punished. Support freedom of Georgia! We need to say no to Russia and stop them" nanaka77 (2008). The text is written in red color, similar to the burning houses and bleeding people shown in the background. This video is accompanied by a sad Georgian song about the war and further shows refugees in shelters and protest demonstrations with tabloids against Russia and particularly Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. "Putin Killer"—says one of the tabloids in demonstration pictures. "Russia is attacking innocent people. Shame on Russia! Long live free Georgia!"—the nationalistic text continues to be accompanied with more pictures of

mass destruction of Georgia, human casualties, and protests against Russia. The second half of this video is more optimistic and has a belligerent nationalistic stance and will be discussed further with regard to self-defense. All those above-mentioned components of nanaka77's (2008) video are present in other pro-Georgian videos and come as "ideological elements" (Hall, 1986) that are aimed at disarticulating the Russian discourse of "Georgia the 'Goliath,' South Ossetia 'David,'" thereby drawing a picture of Russia that is isolated from the civilized world with its belligerent actions—like "Goliath" as a gigantic freak of nature isolated from humankind.

 2) Anti-Russian President discourse: The Russian president is the marionette of a crazy, bloody, "soviet" prime minister. Videos that come directly under this discourse are purposefully aimed at re-articulating key political figures from the conflicting country. Particularly, videos intended to distort Medviedev's and Putin's reputation use some offensive elements that traditional media dare not use, though sometimes alluding to them. For example, BexoDzia (2008) uses Vladimir Visotsky's popular Russian song about romantic remembrances of a man's youthful years, starts with the smiling, innocent-looking picture of teenage Putin and then adds some awkward cadres and picture montages of Putin in a convict's uniform, and pictures of bloody hands and guns, thus trying to show how the young boy was spoiled and turned into a tyrant. Framing Russia's main political figure so negatively strengthens this "us-versus-them" distinction—we have a tall handsome democratic leader; they have a short, gloomy tyrant.

 One of the most interesting features of this video is the picture manipulations aimed at the re-articulating and distorting of Russian leadership's key figures, as is done

with the theme of "Medvedev, Putin's marionette." Medvedev and Putin's pictures are here juxtaposed on the Madonna and infant Jesus, and on Dr. Evil and "mini" Dr. Evil.

However, online activists were not the first to articulate the Russian president as a "marionette" of Vladimir Putin; the Georgian mainstream media has often depicted these kinds of power relations within Russian political leadership (Kavkasiuri Dgiuri, 2009). Thereby, nationalism on YouTube is once again a reflection of ideas spread by the mainstream media and it indicates the need for more responsible and cross-country cooperative journalism. Work of journalists from all the conflicting sides on two or multi-sided reports or participating in multisided trainings and conferences would help overcome extreme one-sidedness, which is yet prevailing.

3) Nazi Russia discourse: Parallels drawn between Putin and Hitler. Most of the negative rhetoric is geared not toward Medvedev but the heavier political figure—Vladimir Putin. This phenomenon could be easily noticed in anti-Russian videos that are more focused on re-articulating the persona of Putin. For instance, fuckrussia3 (2008), one of the most active YouTubers aimed at creating associations between Putin and Adolf Hitler, shows manipulated pictures of the Russian prime minister with a Hitler mustache.

As Hall (1986) says, there is a "non-necessary link" between constituents of an ideology; i.e., in case of antiRussian videos this "non-necessary link" is between German Nazism and Russian policy, between Putin and Hitler. However, in order to further strengthen Georgia's "David" position fighting against evil "Goliath" Russia's associations with "evil" (Ivie, 2007), components are being created. Specifically, the Soviet Union symbols that surround Russia and its political leadership in fuckrussia3's

(2008) and other related videos are being used as representations of "an evil empire" and Nazi symbols meanwhile strive towards creating the link between "the dark memory of Adolf Hitler" as "the personification of archetypal evil" (Ivie, 2007, p. 223) and Russia today, thereby rearticulating its self-righteous ideology.

4) De-facto authorities of Georgian breakaway territories are Russian marionettes; thereby they constitute the same "evil" as Russia. This discourse took root during the early 1990s when the conflicts with breakaway territories started. Georgian authorities blamed Russia for turning "Caucasian brothers" against each other (De Waal, 2010) via aligning with the "criminal" de-facto authorities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, thus forming alliances against peaceful civilians and the Georgian government. This myth is still present in Georgian political statements, media coverage, and what is more significant, in popular Georgian music clips (Jashi, S., October 1, 2010, personal communication). Therefore, it is no surprise that YouTube users appropriate the discourse of "Georgian breakaway territories" about de-facto authorities being Russian marionettes. "When we expressed desire to be independent they [Russians] incited against us from one side Kokoiti [South Ossetian de-facto president Eduard Kokoiti] from another Bagapshi [Abkhazian de-facto president Sergey Bagapsh]," says singing amiko1815 (2009) and shows the Russian army with a dog, which has South Ossetian de-facto president Eduard Kokoiti's face. This small detail aims at justifying Georgia's battle against South Ossetia.

5) Self-defense, pro-war discourse: Georgia has strong and brave soldiers. In order to justify war, Georgia promoted a discourse of self-defense against the "Goliath" Russia. Most of the anti-Russian videos feature "brave" Georgian solders, who were

defending their land and therefore are "heroes." For example, nanaka77 (2008) starts her video showing the Russian invasion and Georgian victims of the war, but in the end turns to the theme of "bravery" of Georgian solders. In her video, a Georgian rap song accompanies photos of anti-Russian rallies and the Georgian army, saying: "They [Georgian solders] have sacrificed their lives for the native land. So, we all have to stand together to defend freedom of our country…" Then, the rhetoric of the video and song becomes more belligerent as it shows aggressive protestors with their fists, saying, "We should show our power to the enemy…" nanaka77 (2008).

Other YouTube activists like BangRonZA (2008) have focused their videos entirely on cadres of Georgian army fighting accompanied by rock music, thereby re-articulating what pro-Russian online activists frame as the weak and defeated Georgian army. Despite the fact that almost 4 years have passed since the end of the 2008 war, pro-war Georgian videos featuring "brave solders that are defending their country" still continue to be uploaded onto YouTube (Paskunji, 2010; ALEMAN523, 2010), thereby trying to re-articulate the idea that Georgia cannot defend its land. The "strong Georgian army" is also a leitmotif on the leading Georgian TV channel; thus, it is no surprise that new pro-war videos in Georgia continue to be created and naturlize the idea that Georgia must one day have war with Russia again.

6) Derogatory Russian army discourse: Poor alcoholic soldiers of Russia. To strengthen the idea of a powerful Georgian army capable of defeating the "enemy," YouTubers aim at disarticulation of the "powerful Russian army." At least one-fourth of the videos portray Russian soldiers in a derogatory manner, arguing they are incapable of fighting. George19947 (2010) shows cadres of Russian soldiers stealing from a shop in

the town of Gori. RadikalGeorgia (2009) shows the footage, apparently shot by a Russian

soldier himself, where he walks in the ruins and emotionally tells how the Georgian army

caused huge losses to the Russian army, how much better conditions are in the Georgian

army, and how poor the Russian soldiers are themselves. Amiko1815 (2009) shows

pictures of a drunken Russian solder with a bottle of vodka and of Russian solders kissing

each other and stealing things.

Amiko1815 (2009) is trying to make these elements symbols of a weak Russian

army, as such claims make it easier for a small country like Georgia to think about

effectively fighting against them. The Georgian song about "Vania" [this is what most

Georgians casually refer to Russians] that accompanies the pictures, says: "Totally drunk

Vania with his tank is coming to invade us. He has stolen anything what he could take

and now he is leaving" (Amiko1815, 2009). By putting these different pieces of "Russian

army character," pro-Georgian Youtubers are trying to disarticulate the idea of a "strong

Russian army" and, thereby, are pointing at its weakness, which is similar to what is

being usually broadcasted by mainstream Georgian media in a more subtle way. Sandro

Kakabadze (2008), a correspondent for the popular Georgian TV channel Rustavi2, says

in his footage, "what they did not manage to steal, they [Russian soldiers] are exploding,"

(Sandro Kakabadze, 2008) and at the same time indicates the poor conditions of Russian

military technique. Georgia thereby posits itself as better than Russia and capable of

defeating them in a future war.

7) International support, Kremlin destruction discourse: European countries and

USA are supporting Georgia in its conflict against Russia; Russia does not like NATO,

Russia/Kremlin soon will be destroyed as it leads itself to isolation. This discourse is one

of the best examples of the reflection of the dominant Georgian ideologies that are being constantly reproduced by traditional media; in particular, the idea of Western support for Georgia against "evil" (Ivie, 2007) Russia. It should be noted that this discourse did not just originate during the 2008 war, but was created during the "Rose Revolution," and when George W. Bush visited Tbilisi (Veyser, 2010). amiko1815 (2009) shows a picture of George W. Bush holding President Saakashvili's hand up (as a boxing judge usually holds the winner's hand) during his welcome ceremony in Tbilisi and the text of the song reports that "The world—America and Euro-Asia—is standing on our side, which makes Duma [Russian Parliament] concerned [about its perspective]" (amiko1815, 2009). Then, the text plays with the word "NATO," which in Georgian is a woman's name, and goes onto say: "Russia cannot understand that our land is our land and that we prefer 'Nato' over Miss 'Larisa' [a Russian women's name]." This discourse in comparison to other above-discussed discourses brings into the debate international elements like the EU, the United States, and the international community, and with this is trying to justify and strengthen its ideology of Russia as the "Goliath" and re-articulate "antiGeorgian-PR discourse," which will be discussed in the anti-Georgian videos section.

Now, I will discuss how the Russian side is addressing disarticulation and re-articulation of its ideas by Georgian UT users.

Anti-Georgian videos

1) Georgia the "Goliath," South Ossetia "David" discourse: Georgia is an authoritarian, bloody state that caused large-scale destruction in South Ossetia. Videos analyzed under this discourse, as in anti-Russian videos, contain similar elements as

argued by the mainstream media and politicians in Russia: the 2008 August War started between disproportionate powers, with oversized military supremacy from the Georgian side; the small nation of South Ossetia needed help; and Georgia spreads propaganda favoring its version of the war. The above-mentioned elements clash with the pro-Georgian discourse of "*Russia the 'Goliath,' Georgia 'David'*" discourse's elements and thus enable its disarticulation. For instance, iveter999 (2008) in his video tells how in the heat of the Beijing Olympic Games and summer, Georgia attacked peaceful South Ossetians. "There are many disputed territories around the world"—the author says in Russian with a strong South Ossetian accent—"but people discuss, argue and not kill each other over them… Life is more important than any kind of wealth, though not for coldblooded Saakashvili [president of Georgia]. He thought to defeat small South Ossetian nation quickly—to kill half and half would flee. However, it did not turn out as he planned" (iveter999, 2008). This kind of simple language mimics the supposed authenticity of an ordinary people's views on war. As the text goes on, the cadres of the Georgian army moving towards South Ossetia are shown. Similarly to anti-Russian videos, here too, protest actions against Georgia are shown, with the tabloids "bloody Saakashvili," pro-Russian users are trying to show that they represent not only their own view but the whole South Ossetian and Russian population, thereby making anti-Georgian rhetoric sound more rational. To add more to this claim, maikle75 (2008) focuses more on South Ossetian victims of the 2008 war, showing an elderly woman's interview, where she tells about the unexpected Georgian invasion and massive destruction of Tskhinval/i: "People were hiding in basements with their children, but [Georgian] militaries were still finding and killing them" (maikle75, 2008).

2) Georgians are hotheaded, crazy, and have a cowardly president who is the marionette of the United States. For further disarticulation of Georgian self-defense ideology, Russian "online warriors" focus on disarticulating of its primary components of Georgian ideology—President Mikheil Saakashvili's figure. Disarticulating his ideas and actions seemed to be a crucial task for anti-Georgia web activists, as Saakashvili was the main advocate for articulating Georgia's "David" position through international media during the 2008 war (Vaagan, 2009). putinist95 (2009) argues that "Saakashvili has killed thousand of civilians in South Ossetia and also destroyed his own country" (putinist95, 2009). Then he shows a famous clip of Saakashvili chewing his tie while talking on the phone. With the Abkhazian national anthem playing, the author says, "We have to support free South Ossetian people and not the mass murderer Saakashvili." The "Saakashvili chewing his tie" theme is present in most of the analyzed videos, but some have dedicated whole videos to him in this act. Multpolitik (2009), for instance, has created a special cartoon, where president Saakashvili is drawn to have bad dreams of his red tie that bites him.

Others focus on "Saakashvili the coward," and show again widely circulated cadres of the Georgian president with an extremely frightened face, accompanied with guards falling to their knees when hearing Russian military air planes flying over (Iveter999, 2008; Tsesson, 2008). The message is clear—our president is better than yours, our country is better than yours, thereby strengthening the "us-versus-them" binary. Espo3d (2008), like many other pro-Russian UT users, shows Saakashvili as a "puppet" of the U.S. president George W. Bush, arguing that Georgia started the war with South Ossetia with U.S. backing, equating Saakashvili and Bush as terrorists. This kind

of rhetoric is similar to its main source of inspiration—mainstream media—and leaves out factual information representing claims about territorial integrity and the Western orientation of the Georgian side. Such one-sidedness further polarizes the Georgian-Russian perceptions of each other.

3) Nazi Georgia discourse: Parallels drawn between Saakashvili and Hitler. YouTubers incorporate some Nazi components in drawing Saakashvili's portrait as a "bloody tyrant"—the comparison was alluded to in many Russian and South Ossetian mainstream media even before the 2008 war (Gabaratiy, 2007). As with Russian videos, here too, Hitler-like-mustaches are drawn on President Saakashvili's portraits and swastikas are placed on the Georgian flag and objects surrounding the president (MetallMensch, 2008; putinist95, 2009; Swordman85, 2009).

Some (SpbGoro, 2008) went further and incorporated an audio of Adolf Hitler's emotional speeches into the visual of President Saakashvili addressing the masses. Others like KaterinaArt (2008) use German hard rock accompanied with montage images of Saakashvili looking like Hitler. In between pictures of Saakashvili, images of war victims are shown, though unlike in other pro-Russian videos, here some Georgian refugees and injured people are present. Presumably, the author was trying to assure Georgia that they are victims of their own president's actions. Particularly, this discourse illustrates how even one component added to a picture—in this case moustaches to Saakashvili's portraits or audio of Hitler's speech to the Georgian president's visual— may cause complete disarticulation of what is represented as reality by the other side.

4) Protective and punishing discourse: Russia was defending civilians in breakaway South Ossetia and therefore punished Georgia for its Nazi intentions. The

media and political sphere argued that Russia only reacted to an unprovoked attack on South Ossetia that caused hundreds of civilian deaths as well as those of many Russian peacekeepers. One example of is radio program Ekho Moskvi [Moscow's echo] (2008), where former foreign deputy minister Aleksey Arbatov responds to the skeptical remark of the journalist about "why international mass media is making such a big deal out of this Georgia-South Ossetian conflict." Here in this program, Arbatov paints Russian military involvement in Georgia as "undoubtedly needed and unavoidable" due to the need for small South Ossetia's protection. Mainly, pro-Russian YouTubers do almost the same as Arbatov, though not via discussions, but with pictures and sounds. Tsesson (2008), for example, uses Soviet-era cartoons of Russia trying to punish and discipline naughty boy President Saakashvili. mger43 (2008) tells the story of the 2008 war in two sketches. The first shows a Georgian man beating a little bear [South Ossetia] and a big scary bear [Russia] that is watching the scene from a distance. The second sketch shows a Georgian man severely beaten, calling for NATO, the EU, and the United States' help, and the big and small bear walking away holding each others hands.

Russiasila (2009) incorporates visuals from some military video game accompanied by rock music and writes the text on screen: "On 8th of August Georgian army perfidiously attacked South Ossetia, destroying everything on its way. Russia responded to the aggressors with the attack" (Russiasila, 2009). Other pro-Russian YouTubers re-articulate Georgian self-defense rhetoric into a Georgian invasion of small South Ossetia and with UT justifies Russian involvement in the war.

5) Pro-war discourse: Russia is a powerful state and has a strong army. This discourse correlates with the previous one in regards to effectiveness of Russian military

action to "coerce Georgia to peace" (Allison, 2008). stallz123 (2008) in his videos says: "maybe we are not good diplomats, but we are good soldiers—as we broke Georgia and protected Ossetians." Like pro-Georgian UT users, pro-Russian online activists also bring up widely the theme of a strong Russian army. However, one of the YouTubers, RussiaTvSold (2009), instead of focusing on the fight against Georgia, writes in the descriptions of the video: "Coming to an end the era of U.S. hegemony over the world ... This Russian army, in 2014." The video itself is accompanied with American rap and features colorful pictures of the Russian army.

6) Derogatory Georgian army discourse: Cowardly Georgian soldiers. In order to further strengthen the negative image of the Georgian side, pro-Russian YouTubers focus on showing a humiliated, defeated Georgian army. "Video for Georgia 2" by iveter999 (2008) shows beaten Georgian solders, surrendered and shivering in fear. Some of them say that they did not know that they were going to the war. One of them says he was fighting only because he received a salary of 600 Georgian lari (approximately 300 USD). Another video by sashkacom (2008) features cadres of Georgian captives standing against the wall and one of them saying that they ran away as soon as they found out why they were sent to South Ossetia. All those components (humiliation, defeat, cowardice, incapability of fighting) together dehumanize Georgian solders and try to disarticulate Georgia's ideology of heroes that fight for their native land

7) Anti-Georgian PR discourse: There is no way for Georgia to persuade the international community in its rightness, thereby it is isolating itself with its belligerent policy. After the 2008 Georgia-Russia war, many have indicated that even though Russia may have won the military battle, it lost the "PR war" (Gee, 2008; Rogers, 2008).

Therefore, pro-Russian YouTube users are trying to prove the international community does not value the Georgian narrative. However, in contrast to pro-Georgian videos, which mainly use the English language for such international messages, pro-Russian videos are mainly in Russian. For example, foreskin (2008) uses a melody from the soundtrack from the popular Soviet era comedy "Caucasian Captive Woman" and changes the words to: "Somewhere in the Caucasian mountains it started to freeze and Caucasian Misha got sick… He started to howl at the moon. Then he started to bark, so that everyone including himself turned blue… But nobody cares about his barking". iveter999 (2008) in his video about how Georgia attacked South Ossetia says: "The whole world could see how Georgia took advantage of the politically inactive summer and Olympics time to regain by force small South Ossetia. How can the president of Georgia rely upon international support after the brutalities he had done to this small nation?!" The same discourse of anti-Georgian PR was appropriated by Russian mainstream media (Golos Rossii [Voice of Russia], 2010; Stringer, 2008). However, this discourse was more aimed at persuading a Russian audience than an international audience; unlike Georgia, Russia was mainly addressing Western communities. Thereby, with this discourse, the Russian side was trying to disarticulate the Georgian perspective. Such re-articulation of "Goliath" and "David" in Russian and Georgian media further contributed to strengthening the alienation between Georgians and Russians, but at the same time pointed to the need for reconciliation.

Analysis of anti-Georgian and anti-Russian UT videos shows that technology is being used to irrationally spread propaganda and reproduce dominant ideology, which makes it a mere tool in the hands of ordinary people that are already "gatekept" (Reese &

Ballinger, 2001) by mainstream medias. However, on the other hand, this new technology of UT also provides opportunity for juxtaposing those ideologies and via "dialectical logic" (Merrill, 1989) reaching rational debate. Via a dialectical analysis of anti-Russian and anti-Georgian videos, this part of the thesis shows the web illustrations of the Russian and Georgian harsh antagonisms, and brings to light the partialness of both sides' claims, representing their belligerent ideologies as small pieces of the Georgian and Russian war machines.

<div align="center">The Need for War Machines' Interruption</div>

In the situations where media plays an integral part in the war machines actions and seeks to submit newly emerging independent activists to reactive forces, activists may not find it sufficient to revolt in real life, but seek to protest via hacktivism.

Deleuze (1995) introduces the need for "vacuoles of noncommunication, circuit breakers" (p. 175) as means of resisting the regimes of communication in control societies. "It's true that, even before control societies are fully in place, forms of delinquency or resistance are also appearing. Computer piracy and viruses, for example, will replace strikes and what the nineteenth century called "sabotage" ("clogging" the machinery)" (Deleuze, 1995, p. 175). It could be proved that "vacuoles of noncommunication" have been realized already.

The next subsections will scrutinize the exaggerated calls for an excessive securitization of cyberspace, calls that are partially based on speculations around the 2008 cyber attacks on Georgia. Through the application of the Schmitt Analysis, this paper will attempt to define whether Georgian computer network attacks fall under the

"cyber war" category, or are being reactively interpreted to lead to industrialized governments' deeper entanglement into war machines. That would lead to centralized control and militarization of cyber media, infringing on individual privacy rights and intensifing of war machines.

Where's the "War" in the Russia-Georgia

"Cyber War"?

Recently, major cases of cyber attacks have emerged and added to the continuous drum beat of cyber threats, including cyber attacks on critical infrastructures and terrorists' use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). As the attention towards cyber security grows, the cyber attack cases of Georgia have become one of the most frequently referred to piece of "evidence" for some scholars' claims that "cyber space is in trouble" (Hollis, 2010, p. 2).

This kind of intensification of cyber security discourse has even contributed to the formation of the official U.S. agenda that states: "cyberspace and its associated technologies offer unprecedented opportunities to the United States and are vital to our nation's security and by extension, to all aspects of military operations" (Gates, 2009, p. 1). The policy implications in the United States has also included the establishment of the Office of the National Cybersecurity Advisor, a so-called "cybersecurity czar" within the Executive Office of the President (Rockefeller, 2009), the creation of the military's U.S. Cyber Command, and the release of the draft National Strategy for Trusted Identities in Cyberspace (Schmidt, 2010). Such international resonance of cyber attacks in Georgia, further strengthen the Georgian idea of being a victim in unjust cyber war. Therefore,

policy changes have also taken place in the country of Georgia, which made it easier for law enforcement to infringe individuals' privacy online. On October 8, 2010, the Cybercrime Law was enacted and enforced in Georgia. On the same day, Georgia joined the European Union Treaty on Cybercrime. One of the main reasons for developing these legislative changes rather quickly was the 2008 August cyber war in Georgia, when most of the governmental websites were hacked (Akhvlediani, 2009).

In the summer of 2008, weeks before the Russian troops marched into full-scale conventional war against Georgia, cyber attacks began on Georgian websites. Based on Shadowserver Foundation comments, Danchev (2008) writes that the website of President Mikhail Saakashvili of Georgia (www.president.gov.ge) was unavailable for over 24 hours due to a "multi-pronged distributed denial of service (DDoS) attack" (para.2). Later on, Hollis and others labeled these cyber attacks a "dress rehearsal" for a Russian "cyber war" synchronized with conventional warfare, occuring less than a month before the physical assault began (Hollis, p. 4).

The DDoS attacks against Georgian cyberspace reached an unprecedented level on August 8, the first day of Georgia's armed conflict with Russia over its breakaway territory of South Ossetia. Most scholars believe the first detected coordinated online assault, conducted by six different botnets[17] against the Georgian government and media websites, occurred at 2:00 PM GMT on August 8, 2008. Ahamad et al. (2008) concludes that on August 9, 2008, based on logs of DDoS traffic and changes in network routing, "Russian cyber warfare operations coincided almost exactly with the final 'all clear' for

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[17] A botnet is a collection of compromised computers, each of which is known as a 'bot', connected to the Internet. When a computer is compromised by an attacker, there is often code within the malware that commands it to become part of a botnet. The "botmaster" or "bot herder" controls these compromised computers via standards-based network protocols (Puri, 2003).

Russian Air Force attacks sometime between 06:00 and 07:00 [a.m.]" (p. 4). Ashmore

(2009) even claims that as the armed conflict escalated further, increased attacks on the

Georgian ground mirrored the intensity of the attacks in Georgian cyberspace.

But, there is a discrepancy among these various accounts on the number of

attacked websites. According to the U.S. Cyber Consequences Unit report's overview

(Bumgarner et al., 2009), there were 17 Georgian websites targeted simultaneously; but

Networked World (Oltsik, 2009) claims there were 54 websites, while Zoller (2010)

wrote that it was hundreds of Georgian websites. However, the fact remains undeniable

that nearly all the most important Georgian media, finance, business, and government

websites were successfully attacked. "Banking, media and government websites were

blocked, disrupting the flow of information throughout Georgia and to the outside world.

The websites of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Bank were vandalized

by adding pictures of the Georgian President and Adolf Hitler" (Ashmore, 2009, p. 10).

The website StopGeorgia.ru was established in the summer of 2008 and provided

volunteer hackers with the list of targeted websites in Georgia and instructions on how to

carry out those attacks: "Any civilian, Russian-born or otherwise, aspiring to be a cyber

warrior was able to visit pro-Russia websites to download the software and instructions

necessary to launch denial-of-service attacks on Georgia. The only effort required by the

user was to enter the Web address of a target and click a button labeled 'Start Flood'"

(McAfee, 2009, p. 6).

According to Bumgarner et al. (2009), the first wave of cyber attacks was carried

out by botnets and command and control systems, and started with only a few initial

websites, the number of which was raised in the second wave of attacks. Some of the

website defacements were done through SQL injections,[18] which were also discussed in the online attacker forums.

To support the claim that cyber attacks against Georgia were part of Russian military operations, one of the arguments that various reports brought up was that attacks in cyber space were well-coordinated with Russian troops activities on the ground throughout the duration of the 2008 Russian-Georgian conflict (Ahamad et al., 2008; Goodman, 2010). However, Russia denied any involvement in the cyber attacks against Georgia. "Grey Goose," a volunteer cyber analytical group, was set up to investigate the cyber attacks against Georgia, but no evidence was found to implicate the Russian government (Ashmore, 2009).

Nationalistic accusations aside, the fact remains that, in total, researchers found traces of the following: route hijacking, brute force server compromise, data theft, multi-factor DDoS attacking network and application layers, defacement, and the hosting of fake Georgian web pages containing misinformation and propaganda (Ahamad et al., 2008, p. 3).

In contrast to Estonia, which was similarly hacked in 2007, Georgia's preparedness to minimize the negative affects of a cyber assault in 2008 was much lower, but "its international partners and private industry jumped to assist" (Goodman, 2010, p. 61) in mitigating the offensive. As a result of Georgia's plea for international support and assistance, Estonia, Lithuania, and Poland offered to host some Georgian government websites on their "better-defended systems" (Goodman, 2010, p. 61).

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[18] SQL (Structured Query Language) injection is a code injection technique that exploits a security vulnerability in a website's software.

However, despite the high number of the defaced web pages and temporarily shut down cyberspace services, no permanent damage was done (Zoller, 2010). Nonetheless, a considerable number of scholars deem the 2008 cyber attacks on Georgia as an alarming "cyber war" precedent (Clarke, 2009; Hollis, 2009; Zoller, 2009), requiring further policy change and stronger securitization. As Clark and Levin (2009) assert, "the cybersecurity threat is real" (p. 7) and may cause catastrophic consequences for the United States if the U.S. continues to ignore cyber threats. "Adversaries can target networks, application software, operating systems, and even the ubiquitous silicon chips inside computers, which are the bedrock of the United States' public and private infrastructure" (Clarke, 2009).

Swanson (2010) also believes that the 2008 cyber attacks on Georgia illustrate a potential manner by which to weaken an opposing state's "critical infrastructures—systems and assets vital to national security, economic security, and public health and safety" (p. 305). However, in the Georgian case of the cyber attacks, no critical infrastructures were targeted.

Some scholars suggest that the reason for this avoidance of critical infrastructure is because the attackers, who are believed to be Russians, might have deliberately chosen not to attack vulnerable infrastructures, to avoid higher levels of attention from the international community (Bumgarner et al., 2009; McAfee, 2009). According to the U.S. Cyber Consequences Unit's report, "at least some of the Russian cyber attackers showed signs of considerable technical expertise. If the Russian military had chosen to get directly involved, such attacks would have been well within their capabilities. The fact that physically destructive cyber attacks were not carried out against Georgian critical

infrastructure industries suggests that someone on the Russian side was exercising considerable restraint" (Bumgarner et al., 2009, p. 5).

Nonetheless, based on the nonexistent evidence and hypothetical assumptions about the potential destructive capabilities of the Georgian cyber attacks, it seems an exaggeration to claim that these attacks illustrate how states will continue to use cyberspace to weaken an opposing state's "critical infrastructures—systems and assets vital to national security, economic security, and public health and safety" (Swanson, 2009, p. 305). In the publicly available overview of the U.S. Cyber Consequences Unit, there is no direct evidence to support the claim that the attackers were capable of implementing destructive cyber attack on the critical infrastructure of Georgia. Even if there were such evidence demonstrating the sufficient technical expertise of the attackers, still, the probability of political decision-makers allowing excessive damage and injury through the use of cyber attacks still seems rather remote.

Another type of argument in regards to equating the Georgian cyber-attacks case with an act of war is made by Zoller (2010). He argues that Russia "made cyberspace attack a major factor in its military strategy in order to coerce 'near abroad' nations to align with Russian national interests" (p. 1). Zoller (2010) builds off John Bumgarner (a former cyber security expert for the CIA and other U.S. intelligence agencies) and Timothy L. Thomas (a senior analyst at the Foreign Military Studies Office at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas) in deeming that Russia's cyber attacks triggered a "comparative inconvenience" and disorganization in the mind of average citizens, and thereby could be considered as a weapon of intimidation and coercion of "near abroad" states through the use of cyber assault. Based on this argument, Zoller (2010) calls the U.S. "to deter Russia

from using cyberspace to coerce its neighboring states" (p. 18). Zoller's call is a kind of echo of existing voices in the current cyber security discourse. U.S. officials claim almost unanimously that the status quo in cybersecurity is no longer acceptable. "The United States must signal to the world that it is serious about addressing this challenge with strong leadership and vision" (White House, 2009, p. iii). Some even compare the "cyber war" era to "the atomic age" and refer to the potential scenario of a coordinated attack on a power grid, or on transportation or banking systems, which would create as much damage as a nuclear weapon (Harris, 2009, p. 6).

However, no damage done by the 2008 cyber attacks on Georgia could be comparable to the harm caused by the potential use of nuclear weapons. Goodman (2010) believes that despite Russia's prevailing over Georgia's cyberspace, at that time, "Georgia probably feared Russia's physical attack more than its cyber attack" (Goodman, 2010).   This statement, in my experience, is quite close to the reality. Because I had been in Georgia and interviewing people on the ground during the August 2008 war, I would say that in general, fears of cyber attacks, in comparison to the fears of physical invasion by the Russian army, were minor and almost inexistent in most parts of the country. Denning (2009) also agrees with the aforementioned statement and concludes that, "for Georgia, the Russian military's invasion of its territory had a much greater impact" (p. 10). So, could the cyber attacks on Georgian in 2008 alone be considered as an armed attack? I will return to this question when applying the Schmitt model to an analysis of the 2008 cyber attacks on Georgia.

Another argument that justifies labeling the 2008 cyber attacks in Georgia as a "cyber war" is the economic harm done by the cyber attacks. According to Hollis (2009),

"a cyber threat targeting the Internet's very architecture could produce losses system-wide" (p. 39) and result in trillions of dollars of losses. Hollis also writes that "attackers also disrupted Georgia's financial system by having botnets launch DDoS attacks against international financial institutions that appeared to come from Georgia, triggering an automatic shutdown of Georgian banks' access to international financial markets" (p. 15).

Along with that claim of financial disruption, some accounts still claim that "the cyber attacks on Georgia had 'a strategic economic impact'" (Goodman, 2009, p.115), which resulted in much stronger economic loss than the cyber-attacks-caused failure of online banking and other transactions had. The U.S. Cyber Consequences Unit's report also builds towards the argument of cyber attacks causing strategic economic implications for Georgia. Bumgarner et al. (2009) believe that the cyber attacks augmented "unstable ground conditions" and "soon made Georgian pipelines seem unreliable" (p. 8), which resulted in the diversion of business from Georgian fuel pipelines over to Russian infrastructure at twice the price.

Nonetheless, a number of scholars compare Georgian cyber attacks to the Estonian cyber attacks in 2007, and admit that there is no noticeable economic damage caused by cyber attacks alone (Ashmore, 2009; Denninh, 2009). One of the explanations for cyberattacks being less severe for Georgia is that "Georgia is less dependent on cyberspace for banking and financial transactions, so the attacks would not have affected day-to-day business as much as in Estonia" (Denning, 2009, p. 10). Another rationale for classifying these cyberattacks as an act of war could be in the fact that the cyber attacks actually coincided with military operations during the conventional Russia-Georgia war. As Ashmore (2009) and some other scholars point out, "this was the first time that a

cyber attack was done in conjunction with armed conflict" (p. 10), but they fail to mention that because of this very fact, it is so hard to single out the role of "cyber attacks" in augmenting "unstable ground conditions" (Bumgarner et al. 2009, p. 8).

However, scholars like Beidleman (2009) still argue that "the economic impact of the Estonian and Georgian cyber attacks was considerable and illustrates the potential for future, more devastating attacks on economies" (p. 23). However, one might question how those cases could illustrate the potential for future devastating attacks on economies, if those attacks have not caused any high-level devastation that could be equated to an "armed attack."

Among the circulating hypotheses justifying labeling the 2008 Georgian cyber attacks case as a "cyber war" is Georgia's defeat on the PR battlefield as a result of these cyber attacks, perhaps the most highly acknowledged among scholars (Ashmore, 2009; Beidleman, 2009; Goodman, 2010; Hollis, 2011) writing on cyber security.

According to McAfee (2009), "Russia achieved a significant psychological victory by preventing Georgia from disseminating accurate information about the state of battle to the public. And, with Georgia's side of the story silenced, Russia practically won the battle over international public opinion by default" (p. 6). As for Goodman (2010), cyber attacks "made it very difficult to offer the global media its [Georgia's] perspective on the conflict" (p. 115), and "served to delay any international response" (Bumgarner et al., 2009, p. 5). Beidleman (2009) argues that defaced websites in Georgia limited Georgia's ability to communicate its message not only to the world, but also to its own people. The U.S. Cyber Consequences Unit report's overview states that "the inability of

Georgia to keep these websites up and running was instantly damaging to national

morale" (Bumgarner et al., 2009, p. 5).

Deibert et al. (2010) named considerable "leverage gained in the conflict by the

pursuit of information denial" (p. 30) as a second cyclone in cyberspace, and thereby

emphasize the strategic importance of accessibility of online information, especially

during the war, even if there was a low level of connectivity. Bumgarner et al. (2009)

confirm that the cyber attacks were "intended to make Georgian population uncertain

about what to expect and what they should do" (p. 6), i.e., they were intended to cause

chaos among ordinary citizens. Consequently, as Hollis (2011) concludes, "Georgian

difficulty in getting their media message out to the world, led to Georgia's strategic defeat

in the war" (p. 1).

However, a cursory look at international media coverage of the 2008 August War

in Georgia and only reviewing scholarly articles, it is not hard to notice dominance of

pro-Georgian narratives over the pro-Russian narratives. If these cyber attacks really

caused Georgia's defeat in the battle over international public opinion, then how would

one explain the significant international support for Georgia during the days of the war?

According to Ashmore (2009):

> Georgia received considerable assistance in countering the cyber attacks and in
> communicating internally and internationally. Google provided domain space to
> protect the websites of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Civil.ge, a Georgian
> Daily online news service. A private American Internet service provider (the head
> of the company is an ethnic Georgian) assisted the Georgian government by hosting
> the Georgian President's website. The President of Poland also assisted the
> Georgian government by placing official press releases on his website. Estonia even
> sent two information security specialists from its Computer Emergency Response
> Team to assist Georgia in countering the cyber attacks. (p. 11)

As for the cause of chaos among ordinary citizens, it is impossible to single out the negative affects of cyber assault from those of conventional warfare. While I was in Georgia at that time, I observed that the population of the country, even in the capital of Georgia where citizens enjoy high levels of internet connectivity, was still heavily dependent on mainstream Georgian TV channels rather than online media. It could even be argued that the censorship of media by the Georgian government, as well as Georgian journalists' self-censorship, motivated by national panic and fear not to give out any strategic military secret during the war, placed the Georgian population in an informational vacuum far more than cyber attacks.

It seems that the scholars labeling the 2008 Georgian case of cyber attacks "cyber war" deemphasized factors that question their assumptions and use the Georgian case as evidence of future-hypothetical ICT-mediated-disasters. However, the major reason for such speculations about how the Georgian cyber-attacks presage all sorts of wild doomsday scenarios, perhaps, is due to the lack of a commonly endorsed model for scrutinizing the empirical data regarding cyber attacks. Therefore, application of the Schmitt model to the case of Georgian cyber attacks of 2008 will bring some systemized clarity and explanation to the current cyber security discourse. The next section will apply the Schmitt model to the case of the 2008 cyber attacks on Georgia, and will try determine whether these cyber attacks alone constituted an "armed attack," and if they resulted in Georgia's alleged defeat in the PR battle with Russia, caused internal chaos among the ordinary citizens of Georgia, and thus assisted in Russia's successful invasion of Georgia in 2008.

Application of Schmitt Analysis

In this subsection, I will lay out the Schmitt system (Schmitt, 1999), which enjoys considerable favor among scholars studying cyber security. Using this model will provide systematization for the consideration of the 2008 cyber attacks on Georgia.

As the Schmitt model speaks to the *jus ad bellum* aspects of a computer network attack (CNA), and builds off the United Nations Charter's prohibition of the use of force in Article 2(4), this model allows us to attempt to determine whether the 2008 Georgian cyber attacks qualify as an act of war under International Humanitarian Law.

Since physical damage and human injury hypothetically could be achieved through the utilization of nontraditional military attack, i.e. cyber attacks, it is fair to consider CNA as an "armed attack," even if there is no conventional weaponry used, nor implementation through kinetic energy. Thus, the 2008 Georgian cyber attacks, hypothetically, could be considered as an "armed attack"; however, for the cyber attacks to thus qualify, they would have to comply with a number of criteria provided by the Schmitt model.

I will start by examining the 2008 Georgian CNAs against relatively easily identifiable criteria of CNA that would go under "the armed attack" category. According to Schmitt, "the armed attack" would include a CNA that is "intended to directly cause physical damage to tangible property or injury or death to human beings" (p.913). Swanson (2010) also believes that the 2008 cyber attacks on Georgia illustrate a potential way to weaken an opposing state's "critical infrastructures—systems and assets vital to national security, economic security, and public health and safety" (p. 305). However, in the Georgian case of the cyber attacks, no critical infrastructures were targeted

(Bumgarners et al., 2009). Therefore, it could be assumed that cyber attacks were not intended to cause any human death or injury or physical damage of the country's property. Thus, under this first criterion, the Georgian case of CNAs fails to earn "cyber war" status.

Another way of identifying the use of force is more complicated, as it neglects the absence of direct physical damage or injury criteria. Schmitt (1999) believes that the use of force in cyberspace could also be somewhere between economic coercion and the "armed attack," and consequently offers a specific criteria for delimiting the "armed attack" force through economic and political coercion. I will go through all of the six criteria and analyze the nature of the consequences of the 2008 Georgian cyber attack.

1) Severity—when a CNA exhibits a much greater degree of threat of physical injury or destruction of property than in other forms of coercion. When compared to events like the massive deportation of Georgians from Russia in 2006, Russia's tightening of Georgian visa regulations, and Russia's imposition of an embargo on Georgia's most highly exported products, namely wine and mineral water, the 2008 cyber attacks seem like flowers. The aforementioned diversion of oil pipelines from a South Caucasian infrastructure to a Russian infrastructure was more the result of conventional warfare; there had been no cyber-attacks on the Georgian grid that controlled that pipeline. Thus, these attacks do not meet the "severity" criteria.

2) Immediacy—a CNA's immediacy is only analyzed in cases of great severity but without great severity, then the CNA does not qualify as an "armed attack"; the aforementioned Georgian case had no great severity, thus there cannot be a factor of immediacy analyzed.

3) Directness—a CNA is considered an act of war in cases of a more direct linkage of the armed coercion's consequences to the *actus reus*, i.e., "wrongful deed." Over the exact same time period when the cyber attacks occurred, the following type of *actus reus* took place: there occurred a heavy mass destruction in the area of Shida Kartli (bordering South Ossetia), and on a lighter level throughout the whole country; according to international organizations, 150,000 Georgian citizens became victims of the war with Russia, plus 326 died due to official Georgian statistics; 20,000 people had to flee from their houses; overall, the Georgian population, especially the area of Shida Kartli, suffered traumatic stress, loss of properties, economic and agricultural devastation, and consequently, the means of the local populace to earn a living. But how direct was the link between the cyber attacks and the above-stated severe consequences, especially if there was a full-scale conventional military operation going on in the country during that time period? One direct link would be if the conventional warriors were dependent on the cyber attacks as command signals, which was not the case. Another link would be if cyber attacks targeted critical infrastructure, which also did not take place.

4) Invasiveness—a CNA qualifies as an act of war if it causes an economic or political coercion representing a greater intrusion into the rights of the target state, featuring a greater potential for causing international instability. Defacement of a country's main websites could probably be considered intrusion into the rights of the target state, but its potential use as an economic or political coercion is rather doubtful. Even Bumgarner et al., (2009), who advocates for the importance of the Georgia 2008 "cyber campaign" and the urgent need for the creation of an international cyber response force, writes that political propaganda placed on hacked websites of Georgia "seems to

have been designed more for emotional disruption than political persuasion" (Bumgarner et al., 2009, p. 4). Bumgarner et al. (2009) do not even use the word "coercion"; that omission perhaps means that the cyber attacks alone, which were mostly intended to put up political propaganda or just deface websites, had almost zero effect on Georgia and therefore could not have caused any international instability.

5) Measurability, measures overall damage from the cyber attack, despite the inherent challenges in measuring the effects of cybernetic assault. If we put aside the conventional war factors and measure only the effects of the cyber attacks, those effects would not rank high, for no one died or was injured, and no significant property loss occurred (Zoller, 2010). Measuring the effects of low-level CNAs is problematic because they remain difficult to identify and measure due to their miniscule nature. Zoller (2010) also considers cyber attacks to be aimed at causing disorientation in the mind of ordinary citizens; thus, causing chaos would assure the success of military operations on the Georgian ground. However, as mentioned above, the Georgian population was heavily dependent on mainstream TV channels, the broadcasting of which were not affected by the cyber attacks, and the share of online media was tiny. Thus, disruption of online media could not have caused chaos.

6) Presumptive Legitimacy, considers the consequences of armed coercion presumptively impermissible. The consequences of the 2008 war in Georgia listed in the third criterion discussion above are impermissible, but they are not consequences of the 2008 cyber attacks on Georgia. Destructive and damaging consequences of the 2008 August War occurred as a result of armed battle that was going on during the conventional war involving armies of Georgia and Russia during that time. Therefore, the

2008 CNA in Georgia cannot be given the status of the "armed attack."

While determining an "armed attack," Schmitt (1999) also assesses "reasonably foreseeable consequences" (p. 916) according to the aforementioned criteria of CNA. So, I will now assess some of the consequences of the 2008 Georgian cyber attacks against this criteria scheme, beginning from July 2008, when the first attacks occurred, and how those CNA could inform the potential cyber threats of the future.

1) Severity—when a much greater degree of threats of physical injury or destruction of property is occurring. The DDoS attacks on the Georgian president's website on July 20th created a great inconvenience for the presidential administration and caused some disorientation among those who actively visit Mikheil Saakashavili's website. However, threats of future physical injury or destruction of property in Georgia due to CNAs have not risen from that attack.

Some (Bumgarners et al., 2009; McAfee, 2009) claim that the attackers were capable of causing even more severe consequences through cyber attacks; if so, it would be fair enough to accept the future threat such as more severe attacks. According to the U.S. Cyber Consequences Unit's report, "at least some of the Russian cyber attackers showed signs of considerable technical expertise and could implement physically destructive cyber attacks against Georgian critical infrastructure industries" (Bumgarner, et al., 2009). Nonetheless, the publicly available overview of the U.S. Cyber Consequences Unit does not present any direct evidence to support the claim that the attackers were capable of implementing destructive cyber attack on the critical infrastructure of Georgia. Thus, at this point, there could not be any foreseeable consequences that would comply with severity.

2) Immediacy—if the aforementioned case is taking place with great immediacy. In the aforementioned case, the threat of physically destructive consequences did not exist, and, therefore, the factor of immediacy cannot be analyzed.

3) Directness—in the case of a more direct linkage of armed coercion's consequences to the *actus reus,* i.e., "wrongful deed"; before the 2008 war in Georgia in July, it would probably have been less possible to anticipate if there would be any war, how long it would last, and what *actus reus* would take place as a result of the war. Therefore, identifying a direct linkage of the 2008 July cyber attacks with the 2008 unanticipated August War seems less probable.

Those criteria do circumscribe the 2008 Georgian cyber attacks; there was neither "invasiveness" (4), "measurability" (5), nor "presumptive legitimacy." That is, that the foreseeable consequences of future cyber attacks and the attacks of July 2008 in Georgia do not demonstrate high severity, immediacy, and directness on the cyber attacks with potential *actus reus.* Those CNAs could not have caused any international instability, nor be measured to demonstrate a strong use of force that is more than mere cases of economic or political coercion and that represents an armed coercion with presumptively impermissible consequences. According to Schmitt (1999), "an operation that generates doubt as to its status under use of force typology would surely not rise to the level of an armed attack" (p. 920). Thus, by following the previous analysis of the 2008 Georgian cyber attacks case, referring to Georgian CNAs as an act of war is a mistake.

Nonetheless, based on the Schmitt Analysis (Schmitt, 1999), even if the Georgian cyber attacks did not constitute an armed attack, there still could be justification for a forceful response in self-defense against an attack. For the military defense against

allegedly Russian cyber attacks, according to Schmitt, a confluence of three factors must be present. I will now examine these factors in regards to the Georgian CNAs case:

1) The offensive CNA must be part of an overall operation, culminating in armed attack. This factor does not specify intensity and the nature of cyber attacks; therefore, this factor could be commensurable to the Georgia cyber attacks of 2008.

2) The CNA must be an irrevocable step in an imminent and probably unavoidable attack. The Russian military intervention could have occurred just as easily without the CNAs, therefore, the Georgian CNA cannot be considered either "irrevocable" or "unavoidable."

3) The defender must be reacting in anticipation of the attack itself at the last possible opportunity available to effectively counter the attack (p. 933). This factor pushes us back to July 20th, 2008, when the cyber attack was implemented against the Georgian president's website; there would have been no way for anyone at that time to anticipate that a war would follow these cyber attacks. However, even if it was possible to foresee the 2008 August cyber attacks on Georgia, it would be hard to contemplate them as an irrevocable step in conventional warfare, because these cyber attacks did not share the same consequences as a conventional war. As Bumgarner et al. (2009) says, those attacks were intended to cause more emotional disruption than political coercion or physical damage.

That confluence of the three factors justifying military response to the cyber attacks is not present in the case of the 2008 Georgian cyber attacks. To return to an earlier point, Schmitt himself states that his model does not provide "new prescriptions" (p. 919); hence, his model may allow alternate angles of views on the same cases, including the

ones analyzed in this paper. However, the Georgian cyber attacks case, based on the

Schmitt Analysis, does not seem to rise to the level of an "armed attack," and therefore

cannot be called a "cyber war." Therefore, labeling the 2008 cyber attacks in Georgia as a

case of "cyber war" only exaggerates security discourse unproductively. To go even

further, if discussing cyber attacks on Georgia in 2008 in a different light, a completely

different picture may be rendered, where nomadic actors are trying to interrupt colossal

compositions of reactive forces.

The 2008 Cyber Attacks on Georgia as

a Sample Interruption

In fact, the rhizomatic networks of hacktivists, or cyber warriors as they call

themselves, exemplify Deleuzian nomads; they are having virtually tactile relations with

each other. Deleuze and Guattari describe this relation this way:

> The interlinkages do not imply an ambient space in which the multiplicity
> would be immersed and which would make distances invariant; rather,
> they are constituted according to ordered differences that give rise to
> intrinsic variations in the division of a single distance. (Deleuze &
> Guattari, 1987, p. 493)

Thus, I argue that nomads within their rhizomatic network are creating "vacuoles

of noncommunication." But before elaborating more on those, it is appropriate to unfold

the concept of control societies, of enclosed environments that dominate the

contemporary world. Those structures and enclosed institutions are factories, hospitals,

and schools, which are becoming prison-like systems morphing into the bigger machines

of control as their little moving parts. For Deleuze, "instant communication" plays a

major role in feeding the control societies, keeping them in a constant state of modulation

(Marks as cited in Buchanan & Parr, 2006). The process of constant modulation[19] that is taking place in the Caucasus explains the existence of the archetypes applied to public statements of government officials and news media. Thus, it is logical to agree with Deleuze and Guattari that subjectivity and collectivity are inseparable from the form of political communication that is characterized by resentment, and productions of faces of evil (Ivie, 2007) for making the intentions of governmental and other reactive forces appear noble. Therefore, Deleuze's call, "we've got to hijack speech" (p. 175), seems fair enough: "The key thing is to create vacuoles of noncommunication, circuit breakers, so we can elude control" (Deleuze, 1995, p. 175).

Deleuzian (1995) "vacuoles of noncommunication" (p. 175), the contemporary illustration of which includes cyber attacks aimed at disrupting war machine workflow, are at the same time part of another war machine. Despite its liberating potential, the World Wide Web is still well permeated by money and serves propagandistic goals. Not all web content is commodifying, but hardly anyone would agree that a President's website is an objective and free source of information. Thus, if some choose to block the entrance of a television station and throw rotten vegetables and eggs against its windows, why would others not think of hacking a Presidential website, implementing denial of service attacks and replacing a President's photos with some offensive images?

This kind of affirmation of the alternative view is painful for the Caucasian population, as it deterritorializes discourses, deprives country leaders of their illusory protector role, and disrupts the belief that only the other is evil and we are innocent

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[19] In the Caucasian case modulation is not based on the model of business solely as described by Deleuze, but along with that model of getting better education and desired salary, it also includes reinforcement of certain borderlines in its citizens thinking. One of the best illustrations of this is the tendency to label different thinkers as traitors.

victims. However, breaking away from modulation and embracing haecceity could open up new possibilities for the deadlocked conflicts, as those would draw abstract lines without contour, lines of "nomad art" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 507). The forthcoming chapter will seek ways of stopping war machines via a creature of similarly nomadic nature, the rhizomatic (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) network of new media.

DEACTIVATING WAR MACHINES THROUGH

DELEUZO-GUATTARIAN RHIZOME

OF NEW MEDIA

This chapter is an intersection of Deleuzo-Gauttarian philosophy of

multiplicities, Badiou's ethics of truth, and, through the combination of those

philosophies, advocates for new media activism against war machines (Deleuze, 1987).

One-sidedness and bias are components of a bigger war machine represented by

the South Caucasian media and, in particular, in Georgian media; they are revealed

through the application of Badiou's first and second principle obstacles for development

of philosophy: the reign of merchandise and the reign of communication. Then the

chapter introduces the idea of new media for disrupting war machine/s—an idea that

employs the Deleuzo-Guattarian (1987) rhizome as its philosophical basis. The war

machine is both immanent and implicit with respect to the practice of daily life. Rhizome

does not have a beginning or an end, an identifiable structure, is in constant movement

and process of becoming, could be cut, but will continue to develop from other points.

Application of the rhizomatic, immanent approach via new media activism shows more

productiveness in conflict resolution. Change may happen in war-divided societies, and

what the role of both traditional and new media in this process could be, would be even

more fruitful when discussed through the full spectrum of Badiou's list of principal

obstacles for the infinite thought. Those are: "the reign of merchandise, the reign of communication, the need for technical specialization and the necessity for realistic calculation of security" (Badiou, 2003, p. 42). Application of these principal obstacles for the infinite thought to Caucasian ontology helps classify the intensive multiplicity of dynamics.

After the Soviet Union broke up and a free market was introduced, the reign of governmental control of the media was replaced by the reign of merchandise. Newspapers started to self-censor to better and faster feed the needs of the war-traumatized population with the Soviet mindset. Thus, the newspapers with stories about the glorious nation of Georgia, and their evil neighbor Russia, who helped Abkhazia and South Ossetia to break away, were and still are selling best in Georgia. People are happily paying to become quickly satisfied with this kind of information, and at the same time, are having their interest in new ideas killed. The editors of those newspapers do not want to stop working in support of the war machine, as this will deprive them and their co-workers of their source of income. Fortunately, noncommercial newspapers, supported by international organizations, try to bring in different points of views, but find it hard to compete with the " infinite glitter of merchandise" (Badiou, 2003, p. 40). For instance, a unique Georgian-Abkhazian newspaper, *Panorama*, which went through huge obstacles to put together the work of journalists from war-divided communities, by providing balanced information, was less popular and in some cases was even called a Russian propaganda tool for having information that was not well aligned with mainstream ideas. Thus, Badiou's principle of the reign of merchandise is logically intertwined with the reign of communication. In other words, communication is thoroughly permeated by the

money, not only of big corporations, oligarchs, and governments, but also of the "masses."

Thus, media-reproduced and modulated transcendent and self-righteous policies in Georgia and the rest of the South Caucasus already paved the way for further fracturing inside the region and are seeking emancipatory forces outside the region. Margarita Akhvlediani (2009) writes about how Armenian-Turkish relations started to warm up and how Azerbaijan started to become more aligned with Russia, perhaps because they saw that the West did not prove to be effective in stopping Russia swiftly from invading Georgia in 2008. Georgia itself, as usual, continues to rely on the West in hopes that one perfect day, NATO and EU structures will open their doors and help Georgia regain territorial integrity and overcome the Russian existential threat. However, as Badiou (2003) would say, there are no such great emancipatory forces that would play the role of a magic wand and solve all the problems. "We cannot hide behind any great collective configuration, any supposed force, any metaphysical totality which might take a position in one's stead" (Badiou, 2003, p. 54). When applied to Caucasian ontology, this would read like an advocacy for grassroots media activism. And even though Badiou opposes the Deleuzo-Guattarian call for multiplicities and speed, he still makes a great contribution to the development of the Deleuzo-Guattarian idea of rhizome and new media via his immanent approach and call for perseverance.

So, could new media be an optimal way to reach a social change in such conflict-swamped, locked, war-divided societies—and if yes, how? It would be helpful to go back to the ideas of Georgian contemporary philosopher Merab Mamardashvili, regarding his analog to the Deleuzo-Guattarian war machine, which is the mechanism discussed in the

previous section. According to Mamardashvili's logic, the mechanism should be stopped

by those who helped put it into motion. Similar logic could be found in Deleuzo-

Guattarian writing. "The war machine is the invention of the nomads (insofar as it is

exterior to the State apparatus and distinct from the military institution)" (Deleuze &

Guattari, 1987, p. 380). Thus, if a war machine is of a nomadic nature, it could never be

influenced by something as sedentary as government or mainstream media. So, the

nomadic multiplicity of people that helped put the war machine into motion should not

wait to be represented via some supposedly emancipatory forces, but speak up directly

through creative media activism and thus challenge the militarist aspirations of the

society. For that, it is extremely useful to employ the idea of rhizome, proposed by

Deleuze and Guattari, which has already been called "the philosophical bible of the

cyber-evangelists" (Spiller, 2002, p. 96). Rhizome, indeed, is a perfect model for the

World Wide Web, which would multiply the nomadic nature of citizen journalists'

activism.

Blogosphere and Social Networks

As Pool foresaw (1983), technology now provides a wide variety of delivery

vehicles and forms of information display at low cost. To many, blogging deserves

analysis; "bloggers have demonstrated themselves as technoactivists favoring not only

democratic self-expression and networking, but also global media critique and

journalistic sociopolitical intervention" (Kahn & Kellner, 2004, p. 91). For Tom O'reilly

(2007), the blogosphere is "a kind of global brain" (p. 26) with the equivalent of

"constant mental chatter in the forebrain." As with any human brain, this chatter also

could have various implications. There are two main views on the new media

technologies, but this section will focus on the optimistic view, as it tries to promote

rhizomatic media activism, which would contribute towards conflict resolutions in the

Caucasus. The utopian/technophiliac approach could be easily recognized in the "Global

Citizen Media Project's" Manifesto:

> Thanks to new tools, speech need no longer be controlled by those who own the means of publishing and distribution, or by governments that would restrict thought and communication. Now, anyone can wield the power of the press. Everyone can tell their stories to the world.

Optimists like Global Voices believe in a power of direct and decentralized

communication, where participation and maximum information flow constitute the main

components of a more democratic society (Mehra, Merkel, & Bishop, 2004; Rheingold,

2002). With regard to ICT's probability of reviving direct democracy, what Habermas

(1989) calls "extension of fundamental rights in the social welfare state" could be the

most relevant:

> The ideas of public sphere, preserved in social welfare state mass democracy, an idea which calls for rationalization of power through the medium of public discussion among private individuals, threatens to disintegrate with the structural transformation of the public sphere itself. (Habermas as cited in Durham & Kellner , 1989, p. 107)

The blogosphere and social networks in terms of "a reflection of conscious

thought and attention" have begun to have "a powerful effect" (O'reilly, 2007, p. 26) on

development of civil society and challenging the political sphere. According to

Technorati's[20] 2010 report about the state of the blogosphere, 40% of respondents agree

that their trust in mainstream media is dropping as a result of the emergence of new

media, which offers much more diversity and a higher level of interaction. Some of the

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20 http://technorati.com/blogging/article/state-of-the-blogosphere-2010-introduction/

conditions contributing to new media and blogosphere success are that facts that: 1. blogs are relatively easy to create and maintain – even for nontechnical web users; 2. most of the blog platforms are free of charge; and 3. blogs represent the next evolution of web-based experience. According to Richard Kahn and Douglas Kellner (2004), "blogs make the idea of a dynamic network of ongoing debate, dialogue and commentary central and so emphasize the interpretation and dissemination of alternative information to a heightened degree" (p. 91).

<div align="center">Citizen Journalism</div>

Self-told human stories of ordinary citizens created without professional journalistic intervention/mediation are perhaps the most effective way of opposing dehumanizing propaganda and thus helping to deactivate war machines. Those could be even more efficient than traditional journalistic reports as they have higher authenticity in depicting reality (Alan et al., 2009; Witt, 2009). One of the most significant advantages of citizen journalism is its eyewitness character and thereby immanent approach to reporting. As Barbie Zelizer (2007) contends, citizen journalists are able to better bring about the sense of "being there" which creates "…a broader thrust toward realism and a growing recognition of the value of direct observation" (p. 416). Needless to say, the technological development and increased accessibility of camera built-in cell-phones along with high quality amateur camcorders creates favorable conditions for citizen journalism development.

In the South Caucasus, there is not even a handful of organizations working with citizen journalists, but their work is starting to expand. One such organization is

Eyewitness Reporting Studio (www.gogroupmedia.net), which offers a platform for voices that are frequently marginalized in the mainstream media, such as those of minorities, women, and young people. Those individuals come from different layers of society and professional backgrounds, but through short documentary films and the World Wide Web, they tell human stories that indirectly foster sociopolitical intervention in the region.

As Schuler (2008) says, what defines citizen journalism is "a networked structure of storytelling based on openness of information, horizontal linkage structures rather than vertical flows of information, blurring lines between content production and consumption, and diffused accountability based on reputation and meaning rather than on structural system hierarchies" (p. 381). Noticing the connection between citizen journalism and the Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizome is inevitable. The line of the rhizome does not form a contour like mainstream media, but instead it passes between points:

> It draws a plane that has no more dimensions than that which crosses it; therefore the multiplicity it constitutes is no longer subordinated to the One, but takes on a consistency of its own. These are multiplicities of masses or packs, not of classes; anomalous and nomadic multiplicities, not normal or legal ones; multiplicities of becoming, or transformational multiplicities, not countable elements and ordered relations; fuzzy, not exact aggregates, etc. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 505)

Those nomadic multiplicities of masses Deleuze and Guattari (1987) refer to are teams of resident reporters from amongst the general public, including some professional journalists, who produce a series of short films, blogs, multimedia outputs documenting real-life stories about human rights, the rule of law, economic development, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. These currently acting citizen journalists are still only drops of water in an ocean, but they are aimed at decreasing people's self-righteous and self-centric attitudes that are strengthened through one-sided media coverage.

<u>Collaboration between War-divided TV,</u>

<u>Radio, and Print Journalists</u>

It also should be noted that regardless of a significant resonance upon its emergence and popularization, new media cannot be a replacement for other forms of interaction and communication, only a powerful supplement (Danitz, & Strobel, 2002).

According to early researches, media is capable of both fomenting (Doob, 1935; Lasswell, 1928) and reducing prejudice and conflict (Cooper & Jahoda, 1947; Flowerman, 1949; Peterson & Thurstone, 1933). Unfortunately, the media's role in the reconciliation of ethnic conflicts has not yet been sufficiently realized.

In terms of developing rhizomatic antiwar machine mechanisms, it would be rather effective to create long-term projects involving leading Georgian, Russian, Abkhazian, and South Ossetian TV journalists working together on joint footage that should be broadcasted widely by the national TV channels. At the first stage, such joint journalistic work should bypass statements of officials and only focus on human-interest stories of victims and solders from all sides of the conflict; then documentaries should be produced reflecting all sides' national discourses. Special talk-shows with the discussions about those documentaries should be arranged, where the clash of war-divided communities ideologies will be shown; finally, all the materials should be uploaded on YouTube and on any other international free video sharing websites, where commentary debates involving the belligerent and nationalistic online activists could be stimulated. Such multisided media spectacles would enable the audience to overcome stereotypical, prejudicial, one-sided thinking that foments no-war-no-peace situations and stands in the way of reconciliation.

Transformative Mediation through

Media Production

It would be more useful to discuss the application of Deleuzo-Gauttarian

principles of rhizome to new media activism and the potential for those serving as

catalysts of the conflicts towards the "four dimensions of reconciliation" (Ramsbotham et

al., 2005, p. 232). Principles of connection and heterogeneity would enable the exchange

of diverse points of views, which would gradually result in the acceptance of the status

quo by the conflicting parties. That would mean that Azerbaijanians would accept

Nagorno-Karabakh being broken away from their nation state; Armenians would have to

admit that Azerbaijanians have the right to claim Nagorno-Karabakh, despite the fact that

there is currently no Azerbijanian control over that region—it is their territory according

to international borders; Georgians would have to accept that Abkhazians and South

Ossetians do not recognize Georgian legitimacy on their territory; Abkhazians and South

Ossetians would realize that international actors still consider Georgia as the official

owner of the territory from which they are claiming to be independent. Such acceptance

of the status quo would only be possible with the contribution of the creative,

provocative, interactive media activism of citizens living in conflict zones and rural areas,

which would be placed in the nomadic, rhizomatic cybersphere. This kind of media

activism would look like citizen journalism accounts in the form of documentary films,

photography, animation shorts, blogs, multimedia projects or any other kind of visual

and/or verbal productions. The difference between those citizen journalists' pieces and

mainstream media accounts will be the multiplication of alternative thoughts and

viewpoints that is so underrepresented at this time.

The principle of multiplicity of the Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizome, i.e., new media, will help "expose arborescent pseudomultiplicities for what they are" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 8) and thus will question the objectivity and fairness of mainstream media coverage. Those multiple lines of new media networks would help find connecting threads for the conflicting accounts of war-divided communities and thus realize the second dimension of reconciliation—"correlation of accounts" (Ramsbotham et al., 2005, p. 232)—through blogging, commenting, sharing, tweeting, channeling, and foruming. In the Caucasus, a correlation of accounts, even between states such as Georgia and Armenia that do not have an official shared conflict zone, remains rather complex. Needless to say, the scale of complexity in correlating accounts related to the state borders would be much higher between the other state and nonstate actors in the region, which do have official conflict zones. Therefore, from the point of view of current fractionation and self-centricity, bridging opposites seems rather problematic. It would be logical here to agree with Deleuze and Guattari on the fourth principle of the rhizome, regarding signifying rupture: "there is a rupture in the rhizome whenever segmentary lines explode into a line of flight, but the line of flight is part of the rhizome. These lines always tie back to one another" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 9). Because of its openness to new ideas, sedentary, reactive forces might attempt to break the lines of connection between conflicting accounts, but a rhizome "will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 9). The independence and nomadic nature of the lines of the rhizome are also due to the principles of cartography and decalcomania. These make new media activism "not amenable to any structural or generative model" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 12). Following the principles of

rhizome, there would be all the conditions for the realization of the third and fourth

dimensions of reconciliation, which are "bridging opposites" and "celebrating

differences" (Ramsbotham et al., 2005, p. 232).

Civil society should prove its strength by recognizing patterns of nationalistic,

prejudicial, and destructive ideology being exerted at various levels—official political

statements, print, or electronic media. A population has to be informed to be able to think

critically and responsibly. Like Rheingold says: "The technology will not in itself fulfill

that potential; this latent technical power must be used intelligently and deliberately by

informed population…" (Rheingold, 2000, p. xix).

This kind of affirmation of the alternative view is painful for the Caucasian

population, as it deterritorializes discourses, deprives country leaders of their illusory

protector role, disrupts the belief that only the other is evil and we are innocent victims.

However, breaking away from modulation and embracing haecceity could open up new

possibilities for the deadlocked conflicts, as those would draw abstract lines without

contour, lines of "nomad art" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 507).

Thus, belligerent one-sidedness of the war machine's media could be challenged

by new media activism. Innovative, nomadic artful media activism can expose pseudo-

multiplicity of the reactive forces, interrupt transcendent circulations, help develop civil

societies, and reconcile divided communities.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This paper has given an account of and the reasons for the widespread one-sidedness of the South Caucasus and its destructive character as illustrated by the Deleuzo-Guattarian war machine. As Deleuze and Guattari point out, the importance of the war machine and their philosophy in general is "…to draw attention to collective mechanisms of inhibition. These mechanisms may be subtle, and function as micromechanisms" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 385). This paper provided and analyzed examples of such micromechanisms of the bigger war machines, such as journalists and media producers exercising reactive media coverage, civil societies generating new myths justifying the informational vacuum in which they are being held by one-sided media coverage, and decision-makers tied by the pseudo-obligations of fulfilling promises made to the electorates based on their mythical perceptions regarding the ethnic and territorial conflicts. These groups, who represent different layers of societies in the Caucasus, can be seen as the bands or pack phenomena signifying war machines that Deleuze and Gattari (1987) refer to.

This essay has argued that media activism is the best instrument to challenge and possibly deactivate war machines, as its rhizomatic and nomadic character is best suited for tackling war machines with similar nomadic natures. This thesis explained the highly acclaimed role of new media and media in general and tied it to conflict resolution.

The goal of utilizing Cultural Affirmative Philosophy was to reveal unpopular, perhaps hidden, perspectives on conflict resolution. This study set out to define the ways that war machines operate, and through exposing these obstacles of conflict resolution, uncovered the perspectives. This paper tried to define how the transformation of deadlock situations could be attained through media activism. The present study was firstly designed to determine the effects of war machines and their possible treatment through media activism.

Returning to the hypothesis posed at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to state that Cultural Affirmative Philosophy helps to analyze and find solutions for the problems in the South Caucasian Conflicts. However, this Deleuzo-Guattarian, Nietzschean, and Badiouan approach does not provide ready prescriptions for curing the war machines malady, nor does it guarantee success of potential ways of treatments.

Research Question One: What Perspectives Does the Cultural

Affirmative Philosophy Open Up for

the South Caucasian Conflicts?

This study has shown that the most prominent advantage of the Cultural Affirmative Philosophy of Deleuze, Guattari, Nietzsche, and Badiou is the call for realization of immanence, appreciation of processes of multiple becomings, which altogether form a strong argument that things can always be otherwise. The focal point (and at the same time innovation) of such a grasp on versatility of even deadlocked circumstances such as South Caucasian conflicts proves that it is not based on transcendental visions or perceptions of reality through dreamy, mythical "would be"

lenses. The potential of Cultural Affirmative Philosophy, rather, is in its ontological

approach, which is oriented on flexible treatment of issues as they change.

　　The importance of emphasizing distinction between the immanent and

transcendental course lays in the problem of the South Caucasian conflicts as discussed in

the first chapters of this thesis. Caucasian perceptions and policies are and have been

essentially aimed at rationalizing conflicts and making conflicts static and one-sided.

Thus, as illustrated in the war of videos between Georgia and Russia on YouTube,

articulation of one's own position yielded disarticulation of its counterpart's beliefs. Such

destructive essences represent transcendental visions of a better future in the Caucasus,

which is lacking the other sides of the conflicts. Georgia's hope of regaining its territorial

integrity once it is accepted into the NATO could be one of the examples of such

transcendental thinking.

　　Therefore, radically different pictures are rendered when Caucasian conflicts are

exposed to the Cultural Affirmative Philosophy. Its rhizome "…pertains to a map that

must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible,

modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight," (Deleuze &

Guattari, 1987, p. 21).

　　Such surrender to nomadic infinite thought could well help Caucasians let go of

their past grievances, focus on the present, and gain an immanent approach:

> A response to inequity and infringement designed for a singular set of
> circumstances promises to be better fitted to immanent political, economic,
> cultural, religious, and aesthetic conditions than does a response consisting in the
> discursive invocation of and reliance on abstracted categories of transcendent sets
> of universal principles. (Hawes, 2010, p. 263)

　　With such an immanent approach, Caucasians would ultimately switch their focus

from narrow territorial claims to broader region-wide ambitions, which could also involve the fulfillment of their initial claims related to territorial integrity and the survival of ethnic identities.

Even though Badiou's ideas operate in tandem with the Deleluzo-Guattarian manifest for immanence, he claims to be against multiplicity in forms of polyvalence, and says that "…thought must at least be able to extract itself from this circulation and take possession of itself once again as something other than an object of circulation" (Badiou, 2003, p. 49). However, if there were no circulation, there would be nothing to extract. Nonetheless, Badiou generates similar contemplations favoring the idea of needed interruption. "If philosophy is to sustain its desire in such a world [the world of endless circulation], it must propose a principle of interruption" (Badiou, 2003, p. 48-49). One type of interruption would be a "cyber attack," or hacktivism, as discussed in the previous chapter. However, new media, or creative activism, would be more peaceful and constructive. This is related to Deleuze's (1995) advocacy for the "vacuoles of noncommunication" (p. 175) as means of resisting the regimes of communication in "control societies." Both types of interruptions are aimed at disrupting the reign of oppresive communication. However, provocative new media activism could be the best tool for reaching the full potential of the Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizome and Badiou's ethics of perseverance.

Research Questions Two and Three: What Are the Implications

for Media Activists in the Process of Opening New

Perspectives Through Their Activism?

What Are the Social and Political

Implications of Rhizomatic

Media Activism in the

South Caucasus?

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, there are two main views on the

new media technologies. However, this section will flesh out the pessimistic view- the

dystopian/technophobic view as the potential threats to rhizomatic media activism.

It should be noted that there should be fantasies regarding the universality of the

new media as catalyst. As Doug Schuler (2003) says, there is nothing inherently

democratic about technology. The earlier provided analysis of anti-Georgian and anti-

Russian YouTube videos shows that technology is being used to spread propaganda and

reproduce dominant ideology, which makes it a mere tool in the hands of ordinary people

who are already "gatekept" (Reese & Ballinger, 2001) by mainstream medias.

Thus, the pessimistic perspective focuses on how the goodness of the "public sphere"

(Habermas, 1989) could not be realized because of neoliberal capitalist domination

(Brown, 1997; McChesney, 2002; Wilhelm, 2000). Under this analysis, it is hegemony,

and not democracy, which dominates the Internet, which is increasingly fortified by

multinational corporations and nation-state actors (Hindman, 2008).

Those multinational corporations and nation-states in multiple cases spread

conformist and reactive—rather, than active—pathos, thereby decreasing the

transformative potential of rhizomatic media activism. Deleuze and Guattari acknowledge the existence of "micro black holes" [potentially weak or reactive new media actors] and the lines of flight that, "…always risk abandoning their creative potentialities and turning into a line of death, being turned into a line of destruction pure and simple (fascism)" (Deleuze & Guattari, p. 506).

The fact that the state controls cyberspace in some Asian and post-Soviet countries has analogies in the West, and confirms the substantiality of Deleuzo-Guattarian fears about the potential downfall or risk of nomadic media activists. Deibert et al., (2010) are concerned about peoples "…implicit (and perhaps unwitting) consent to the greatest invasion of personal privacy in history," which is taking place even in democratic countries where "…surveillance systems penetrate every aspect of life."

A more concrete explanation is Badiou's idea of why there is no easy way for the realization of infinite thought. Returning to the discussion of Badiou's obstacles for infinite thought is timely. The last two obstacles, as he puts them, are the needs for technical specialization and calculation of security. The need for technical specialization not only breaks the circuit of rhizome's universality by subjugating its lines to one or the other category, but also pulls the brightest minds into the arborescent fields of technical specializations, leaving the rhizomatic humanities insufficiently realized. On the other hand, the obsession with calculating security is already infringing on online privacy and militarizing some parts of the Internet.

Thus, the ICTs' platform cannot fully promote individuals' autonomous participation in development of civil society, but rather merely upholds commodification, commercialization, and state ideologization. Some reasons for pessimistic views could be

justified by Georgia, where like in other countries, business and political parties

organizations are actively blogging and communicating with potential consumers via

social networks, thus narrowing space for public deliberation. The lack of quantitative

analysis on this regard hinders further arguments, though this tendency towards

decreasing "breathing room for civil society" (Morozov, 2009) by commercial

comodification and political ideologies is more than noticeable.

Commercial and political holding of the Internet is supported by the fact that not

all layers of societies are represented equally in the blogosphere and social networks. As

Roger Hurwitz points out (1999), "the Internet's diffusion has increased the opportunities

for political action among those who are already the most politically active and

informed." To be properly informed and not gate-kept by mainstream media, people need

to have Internet access and free time for thinking. According to the Central Intelligence

Agency, only 1.024 million out of 4.4 million have Internet access in Georgia; this

population mostly constitutes the middle class, which does not suffer that much from

economic hardships or ethno-territorial conflicts. Therefore, the potential for discussing

antigovernmental and antimainstream ideas in cyberspace is not as expansive as it could

be in the case of citizens receiving equal access to Internet throughout the country and

region.

Moreover, it should be noted as well that it is not easy to be critical of

government or the mainstream ideas in the South Caucasus and in Georgia in particular.

As Andrey Babitsky (2010) argues on Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty Ekho Kavkaza

section, "anyone who risks to say something critical of the president of Georgia or his

entourage, immediately is placed in the less favorable club of the Putin or totalitarian

Russia supporters."

According to one of the most popular bloggers in Georgia, Dodie Kharkheli, "Internet - Society" in general is much more loyal to the government, because those who have access to the Internet are mostly satisfied with their state of being and current leadership of the country. As she has observed during last years, despite the presence of some sharp oppositional users online, the ratio of pro-versus antigovernmental users online would be only about 35/65. Although it appears new media, unwittingly, has become just another tool of the state, the recent Georgia-Russo War has demonstrated the inverse.

Thus, the above-stated confirms that earlier advocated potential of media activism should not be romanticized or taken for granted. Its potential should rather be realized through constant assessment of risks, possible downfalls and, in general, the process-essence of the whole becoming- process.

<p style="text-align:center">Implications for Future Research</p>

The possible negative implications of media activism identified in the previous section along with its positive potentials discussed in Chapter III assist in an understanding of the role of media in conflict resolution. This research will serve as a base for future studies and NGO-facilitated media empowerment in the places where independent voices are needed most.

The current findings add substantially to an understanding of underlying causes of deadlock conflicts in the South Caucasus and potential ways out. The current findings add to a growing body of literature on Cultural Affirmative Philosophy and the role of

media in conflict resolution through its transformative mediation. The findings in this study provide a new insight into the reconciliatory potential of irrational and illogical South Caucasian conflicts without trying to centralize its problems around right- or wrong-doers. The findings from this study make several contributions to the current literature. First, it adds to the scholarly works on history, politics, sociology, and ethnography of Caucasian conflicts. The study ties existing literature to the Cultural Affirmative Philosophy and uses the scholarly and media works on Caucasus to illustrate war machines and potential development of their antidote that is the rhizome of media activism. The present study provides additional evidence with respect to the growing role of media production as the instrumental process of reaching "fusion of horizons" (Gadamerian concept as cited in Ramsbotham et al., 2005, p. 293). This study confirms previous findings and contributes additional evidence that suggests that change is attainable through the empowerment of local actors. In other words, it confirms the importance of the immanent approach and argues that media activism could be the best way for the approach's realization. Whilst this study did not confirm that here have been significant changes already reached through media activism, it did partially substantiate the needs and transformative potential of the provocative, constructive, and creative media production.

Finally, a number of important limitations need to be considered. First, the study was mainly aimed at defining problems through the application of Cultural Affirmative Philosophy and Deleuzo-Guattarian war machines in particular. The definition and discussion of solutions was the secondary goal as it was primarily based on the explanation of local problems, rather than their solutions. The current investigation was

limited by the lack of accessibility of literature published only in indigenous languages. It also should be indicated that the study did not focus equally on all three ethnic and territorial conflicts of the Caucasus, but rather provided a picture of the region based on examples related mainly to Georgia. One reason for that is my extensive experience regarding Georgian conflicts, another being the linguistic limitations of materials in local languages (Armenian and Azeri). However, the decision not to leave out the Armenian-Azeri conflict was made intentionally as it shares the majority of characteristics with Georgian conflicts and helps realize an immanent and holistic regional approach. Without analyzing the Armenian-Azeri conflict, it would be hard to activate the media rhizome.

The current research was not specifically designed to make a detailed evaluation of factors related to the transformation of the media producer and its audiences, but tried to lay the foundation for future research focusing on specifics related to media production. The issues that were not addressed in this study are the potential topics for media production, time frame, method of media dissemination, and discussion.

This research has brought out many questions in need of further investigation. Further work needs to be done to describe the process that transforms perceptions of the media producer and its audience as a result of media production. Ideally, further research should be undertaken on the following stages of media production: 1. Subject/topic research; 2. Storyboarding; 3. Material gathering; 4. Editing; 5. Fine-tuning; 6. Dissemination and discussion. Further experimental investigations are needed to estimate how radically a media producer's perception on a prejudiced issue can change. On what stage(s) does the change occur? Does the similar transformation of viewpoints happen

amongst the audience? At what stage? How can online discussion further foster dissemination of alternative ideas?

What is needed now is a cross-Caucasian study involving citizen journalists and traditional media producers and their audiences who are at the same time in the process of becoming content producers. More broadly, research is also needed to determine potential strategies better realizing rhizomatic networks of media production and avoiding aforementioned downfalls of media activism. Further research regarding the role of constructive, creative media activism would be of great help to developing NGO work in this field and empowering media activists for reaching social change, which would deactivate war machines. If the debate is to be moved forward, a better understanding of the opportunities, needs and possible risks has to be developed. This information can be used to develop targeted interventions aimed at decreasing one-sidedness, belligerence, and mythical approaches to the conflict resolution in the Caucasus.

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