

# **RUSSO-GEORGIAN RELATIONS, 1991-98**

Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the award of the Degree of

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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**2006**

*Dedicated To.....*

*My Parents*



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## CERTIFICATE

I declare that the dissertation entitled "**Russo-Georgian Relations, 1991-98**" submitted by me in the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this or any other university.

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# CONTENTS

	Page No.
<b>Acknowledgement</b>	i
<b>Preface</b>	ii-iii
<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	
<b>Russo-Georgian Relations: Historical Background</b>	1-23
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	
<b>Impact of Abkhazia and South Ossetia Conflicts</b>	24-47
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	
<b>Geo-politics of Caucasus and Caspian Region</b>	48-70
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	
<b>An Overview of Russo-Georgian Relations since Independence, 1991</b>	71-94
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	95-102
<b>REFERENCES</b>	103-113

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*I am deeply indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Tulsi Ram, for his guidance, suggestions, constructive remarks, and above all the exemplary support in producing this work.*

*The blessings of my Loving Parents, Di, Bhai, Mamu, Babu Bhai, Maa and wishes of Tulu, Micky and others were a constant source of inspiration which stimulated me to keep on working on this dissertation. This work would not have been possible without the support of Neeraj.*

*I would also like to thank the staffs of Central Library, J N U, IDSA Library, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library and British Council Library for their kind co-operation.*

*I can not forget to express my gratitude to my best friend Aradhana & well wisher Fani for their support and help. Finally, I acknowledge the cooperation of those people, who might have helped me at some point of time, but their names are not appearing here.*

## Preface

The world of international relations is replete with the examples of conflict, misery and peace-making. Ever since the establishment of Russian Empire, the history of Russo-Georgian relationship has reflected several kinds of continuity and change. What makes this topic an interesting horizon to explore is the multiplicity of domestic factors like ethnic divisions, shared history across the geographical regions, dynamism of political environment on both the sides and a whole range of external factors like the impact of regional Blocs along with some very influential powers. The depth of Russo-Georgian relationship can be measured by looking at the rich treasure of Georgian history and culture and the transformations it underwent. The changing nature of diplomacy and international behavior, specially in the case of Russo-Georgian relationship, has been something which became a characteristic feature of this bilateral relationship. The policy options and discourse adopted by the different leaderships have also been an influential factor in defining the course of Russo-Georgian relationships.

For the sake of convenience I have, divided the topic into five chapters. The chapter deals with the historical specificities and their role in shaping the Russo-Georgian relationship and to also trace any element of change in its dynamism. I have discussed the special cases of the two conflict zones of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in their entirety. This chapter has tried to cover all the analysis based on facts and data. In my third

chapter the importance of the Geo-political scenario of the Caspian zone has been highlighted as to how it affects the course of Russo-Georgian relationships. The Geo-political climate is something which has the power to drastically alter the bi-lateral and multi-lateral relations. The role of external players has again been substantiated in this chapter. In the penultimate chapter, the path of Russo-Georgian relationships has been traced over the regimes of Zvaïd Gamsakhurdia and Eduard Shevardnadze. The final chapter makes an adequate summery of the previous ones.

## **-Chapter-1**

# **Russo-Georgian Relations: Historical Background**



In order to look into the details of any bilateral relations, we must inquire into the history of the concerned countries. The details provided by the history lead us to various clues and points of references so that our task of analyzing the relations in the present times becomes easier. How a country came into the present existing form has a lot to do with what kind of geography, history, society and political arrangement, the country had in the remote past. Sometimes it is also said that history repeated itself; it is because that things which are happening in a particular way in the present times might have occurred in the past also at some point of time. So that how the examination of history is so important for any contemporary inquiry.

Having a very, very rich history, Georgia has some two thousand years of mature history behind it but the realistic and some substantial relations with Russia began in late 18<sup>th</sup> century and thereafter, a series of experimental phases came to identify Russo-Georgian relations. Georgian history is full with the example of external aggression and intrusions spanned through several countries which really enriched the Georgian culture and the overall civilization. Dating back to 331 AD, Georgia started its journey of state-formation although on the basis of religion but religion in the past has never been, a static factor in identifying the Georgian nationhood. Rather language has been a dominant factor in identifying the Georgian nation; ever since that time.

The majority of Georgian converted Christianity in the third and fourth decades of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. This clearly shows the impact of religion on the life and times of people in Georgia at that time. Christianity was adopted as a state religion in the Kartili Kingdom in 331 AD; and rapidly spread westward (Cornell, 2002: 130). Religion was showing a real comeback force in the organization of Georgian polity at that time. Georgia also adopted Greek orthodox faith in seventh century. This also signifies the important place of orthodox Christianity in the formation of Georgian nation. Georgia has throughout its long history been characterized by difficulties in the internal cohesion on

the one hand, and hostile international environment on the other – this fact has found its adoption in meaning and spirit both ever since that time to the present one.

The roots of present day Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflict can also be seen lying in it's oldest format of geographical distribution of Georgia. It's not new that a divide between East and West Georgia has been created. This division was there ever since Georgia came to be recognized as a geographical and political entity. In the western Georgia, Colchis and it's successors paved the way for the establishment of "Abkhazian Kingdom", which expanded all over western Georgia in the ninth century AD (Cornell: 2002, 130) Kartuli used to be the language of then Abkhaz people and not the presently spoken "Apsny". Today's "Ajaria" province and Samtskhe- Javakheti and north-eastern Turkey all exist in Southern part of Abkhazian kingdom of that time (Cornell, 2002: 131).

In 978 AD, the kingdoms of Abkhazia and Georgia became unified under the rules of dynastic succession and thus was formed Georgia of almost present appearance. And the new states name was pit as "Sakartvelo" (the place of kartveli speaking people). In the midway of 11<sup>th</sup> century, the confrontation between the Seljuk Empire and Byzantine Empire escalated. In 1071, Byzantine emperor was captured by the Seljuk's and thereafter, the Georgian state was continuously forced to pay an annual tribute to the Seljuk sultan, Malik Shah (Cornell, 2002: 131). Later on, David –The Rebuilder unified Georgia in 1089 AD, and again establish the royal authority over the Church. In 1122 AD, Tbilisi was announced as being the capital of Georgia. The expansion of Georgian state went on till they reached inside the present day Abkhazia and Armenia. This happened during the reign of Queen Tamar- (1184-1213) when the Mongolo invasions began in 1220 AD; this expansionist Georgian state suffered the setback. By 1243 AD, the Georgian state recognized the overlordship of Mongols. Imeretia broke free from the Mongols in 1260; Georgia was again broken up into Western and Eastern kingdoms. Eastern kingdom was being ruled by Mongols. Not only this, Georgia was again broken into several pieces of autonomous regions. In 1327, since Mongol empire was weakening somehow because of it's internal pressures, the then king Giorgio -V (Giorgi-the brilliant) successfully freed Georgia from Mongols' clutches. In 1386, Amir Timur very much

destroyed the capital city of Tbilisi after repeated invasions (Suny, 1994: 45). We can see that Georgia has never remained free from foreign invasions for a long or, substantial period of time and that proves so many divisions in the society of Georgian nation today and that is why the Georgian society is very much prone to conflicts and violence on the basis of ethnicity. By the end of fifteenth century, Georgia was divided into 3 kingdoms (Kakheti, Kartli and Imereti) and a number of autonomous regions.

Gradually, the geographical situation in Georgia came to see the rise of Persian powers and their empires in the eastern Georgia and the rise of Ottoman Empire in the western Georgia. And thus, started a long tryst with the confrontations and oppositions. This all was very much helped by the factor that, the local rulers of these autonomous regions often changed sides in favour of any of these two empires. Ethnic bases and religion were once again not given any undue importance (Cornell, 2002: 132). During sixteenth century, a whole lot of events of conflicts occurred in Georgia between the two mighty empires namely – Ottoman and Persian. In fact, the “Treaty of Amasa” in 1555 once again reflected the division of Georgia into two influential areas – east and west. The second half of 16<sup>th</sup> century almost saw the rise and further expansion of ottomans stretched till Iran and nevertheless, Iran also offered some resistance but at the end of 16<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Empire had a lot of problems in its face and had even the rest of Georgia against it.

During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it was the very first time that Russian empire dawned upon the stage in Georgia and the fight for survival began among these existing empires. Russian empire in order to get the hold over much of the southern Caucasus wanted to gain the control over Georgian areas and it succeeded in accumulating some crucial support from a number of Georgian kings and people of some influence in Georgian society but the Russians never fulfilled their promises done to Georgians and the Persian empire did not allow any further expansion of Russians there and tried to regain the earlier positions almost successfully. All the warfare and concurring conflicts between the Persian Empire and the Russian empire almost destructed the economy of Georgia and resulted in the loss of people and in several other bad practices.

Beginning in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Russian empire once again raised its mindset to conquer the Caucasus. But the ottomans always proved mightier and till 1735 AD, they reigned in south Caucasus. Georgia having several problems and ego clashes with ottomans, tried to gather support from all the possible corners. Iran, which was at that time under the rule of Nadir Shah, proved to be a friend in time. This was an excellent opportunity to thrash out the ottomans from the Georgian territory once and all. The Georgian princes supported the capture of Kakheti and Kartli by him but after the demise of Nadir Shah in 1747, the region of Kakheti and Kartli became fully independent, and later became united remaining so till the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century. The depth of Russo-Georgian relations can be understood by the Georgians increasing the relationships with Russia during the second half of 18<sup>th</sup> century under the rein of King Erekle II of Georgia (Cornell, 2002: 133).

The king of Georgia perfectly recognized the heat of the time and always in favor of Russia's closeness to Georgian affairs. Some betrayals were also done to Georgian interest during the rein of "Catherine –the great" in Russia. One very important instance of the treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji in 1774 can be given here, where at the cost of Georgian interest, Russia tried to favor Turkey for the sake of its own long time interest in the southern Caucasus. But with the signing of the treaty of georgievsk in 1783, when Kartli- Kakheti kingdom was placed as a protectorate under Russians, the Russo-Georgian relations once again gained a new prominence (Cornell, 2002: 133). Later when the Russians waged the war against the ottomans during the last years of 18<sup>th</sup> century, no apparent strengthening could be provided to Russo-Georgian relations. Ultimately the annexation of Kartli-Kakheti happened in 1801 by Russians.

In a series of events, gradually almost all the regions of Georgia came under the direct control of Russian rule. Before the Russian rule was established all over Georgia, the events of war and the storm of destruction totally ravaged the country and everything was totally appearing unstable. One thing that could be said to be an achievement for the Russian empire regarding their adventure in Georgia is their effort

towards the unification of Georgian territories politically was a great success. Regions like Imeretia, Samtskhe, Meskheta and Javakheti all were annexed in 1810 and in following years. All the principalities were also acquired under the Russian rule. In 1828, Guria also lost its autonomous status. Samegrelo and Svaneti in 1857 & 1858 and Abkhazia in 1864 came under Russian rule (Cornell, 2002: 133). In a nutshell, we can say that the treaty of Turkmanchai came with a range of annexations and allied gifts for the Russians. In the treaty of Berlin in 1878, the southern province of Ajaria was also made a part of the Russian imperial rule. But ironically the official announcement and recognition of one whole unit like a Georgian nation was never made by czar in Russia and that is probably one great strategic backwardness in the Russian side, has been observed in many scholarly works.

The current crisis in Abkhazia has a lot to do with the demographic situation of the region which was heavily balanced in favor of Muslims before the Russian rulers annexed Abkhazia. After the annexation occurred, the Muslims from Abkhazia were forced to flee and the minorities Christians were uplifted to be heir of all what was left by their predecessors. Now Christians becoming the main population in Abkhazia came to become totally cut off from the main Georgian population. Thus the project of social engineering led by Russian rulers almost came to destroy the ethnic harmony in Georgia and that is how the Abkhazia problem has its maximal roots lying in the deep ethnic divisions and socially diversified classes in that contemporary Georgia. It would not be any exaggeration that Russo-Georgian relations never had a smooth sail through last some centuries.

Russian's rein in Georgia was not without any opposition. The instances of uprisings by several classes of Nobilities through out Georgia are very much in large numbers there before us. In Kakheti in 1802, in Mtinleti in 1804, in Imereti in 1819, all the uprisings stalled the Georgian nation in the face of Russian empire. In 1829, a secret society was also formed with the aim of restoring the Bagratid dynasty, which ruled the Georgia intermittently for almost a thousand years. This society planned to murder all

Russian officers in Georgia but owing to the betrayal by somebody inside its own ranks could not see the successful accomplishment of its plans (Cornell, 2002: 134).

Russian seizure of Georgia was very much influential regarding the development of a large scale intelligentsia which amalgamating the western and Russian education totally tried to bring the fruits of justice and equality to the Georgian society. The values of the democracy often tied together and reflected themselves in the literature developed by the newly forming intellectual class in that time's Georgia. Although the russianisation was happening there and this is reflected specially when we look at the prominence of the Russian language even over the native Georgian language and its native speakers but the newly developing educated men of Georgian origin were returning home with really some beautiful packages of modernization.

We can say that russianisation never overwhelmed Georgians. The cultural heritage helped by and protected by nobility in Georgia had always been sustained there by intellectuals like Alexander Chavchavadze, Nikoloz Baratashvili and Grigol Orbelliani (Cornell, 2002: 135). People often accused that Georgia has been totally modeled upon Russian designs and to some extent it is true also. But patternising the Georgian society as such would be totally amoral. There had always been a mission of Georgian intellectuals who tried to seek evaluations from the western countries and not only Russia. The impact of socialist ideas also were on the rise in many areas at that time but it is very interesting to observe that a true proletariat class was quite absent at that time. Russians were controlling much of their infrastructure in Georgia at that time; and at many times the perceptions of Russian colonization of Georgia was very much apparent there. During the last decades of 19<sup>th</sup> century, the socialist movement, an essential part of the Russian social-democratic worker's party, was increasing in strength. But, interestingly, they were the followers of the Menshevik trends of socialism. This could be perhaps the reason of later years' drastic changes at the hands of Bolsheviks during the time of Russian revolution. Except a few areas, almost all over Georgia, the rule and influence of Mensheviks was highly influential there.

When we compare the influence of socialist movements and nationalist ones, we find that nationalist sentiments in Georgia were not very strong as in the case of socialism, in Georgia. It was all possible because of the Mensheviks who were having very good links with the land-owning class and the nobilities of Georgia. Russians were often seen as the exploiters who came with their unjustified motives. Georgia was a completely different case than others, this statement is usually held true because of the perceptions and facts sometimes that being a largely a Christian state, the cultural similarities of Georgia and Europe pulled Georgia towards the European sphere of influence rather than its probability of sliding down to the Persian culture. The type of Georgian population can also be termed as largely rural one. Russo-Georgian relations at that were thus, marked by such similarities and dissimilarities. Besides that the geopolitics of both the countries very much affected the relations (Cornell, 2002: 136).

Georgia was often made a kind of negotiational asset by Russia specially while Russia dealt with the third party. This big brother attitude of Russia towards Georgia is omnipresent since its inception of bilateral relations. The continuity of such an attitude today has heavily defabricated the cordial relations between Russia and Georgia which was never ever cordial at all.

Since Bolsheviks were very much weaker in the Caucasus and probably this is the reason as to why the two factions, namely-Bolsheviks & Mensheviks-cooperated with each other for some time. The Bolsheviks were also opposed to the continuation of the war effort and ultimately they separated on several issues besides this. When the Bolsheviks won in Petrograd on 25<sup>th</sup> October, the Georgian Mensheviks disarmed the Bolshevik soldiers and gained control over Georgia (Cornell, 2002: 137).

With the greater threat of ottoman forces always looming over Georgian state, they always wanted to secure the protection from somewhere but asking for some international protection was very much risky and bargainsome also. That is why they (the Georgian leaders) decided to declare the formal independence of their state as soon as possible. The trans-Caucasian federation which had been established earlier was

dissolved and on 26<sup>th</sup> may 1918 they declared their formal independence. Although their inter-ethnic relations were sure to emerge in a worsened shape there but in their declaration of independence, it was clearly mentioned that the new Georgian state will be a multi-ethnic state but even then the conflicts among various ethnic groups could not be totally suppressed. There were several indications of such events coming to light in Georgia of that period.

Even after gaining independence, the Georgian leaders were worried about whether they will be able to sustain their independence or not. In the last days of World War-I, Germany was defeated and any question of getting help from them in order to secure itself from Ottomans and Russians proved baseless. After that no power was ready to come on the side of Georgia and rescue it from the threats lying there. Even when the British forces established their control over the Georgian territory, they were not ready to recognize these new states as the full-fledged members of the international community. The League of Nations also denied them the permission to join the organization. Ultimately the Entente powers recognized these republics in 1920, but no troops were ready to defend them against the Bolsheviks' threat. Later on however a treaty was signed between Menshevik Georgia and the Bolshevik Russia. As per the provisions of this treaty, Georgia was granted recognition and the diplomatic relations were established between Georgia and Russia (Cornell, 2002: 140). But in reality, the Bolshevik never wanted to leave Georgia independent and the red army finally attacked Georgia in 1921 and in early days of 1921 the Menshevik rule was totally finished by red army in Georgia.

There was always an impression in the eyes of Georgians that Russians are making an unwanted entry into Georgia through secret methods. This impression was created because Russia for the sake of north Ossetia was often making intrusions into the territory of Georgia. The use of minorities of Georgia as a tool of weakening the country by Russia has been a fact in continuity in Russo Georgian bilateral relations. There are also the instances of peasant revolutions taking place in Abkhazia and Mingrelia in 1920. The root of Abkhazian conflict can be seen in some remnants during this period. The



Menshevik rule never wanted to provide total autonomy to the Abkhazian territory. Whereas no mention was made of Ossetia, the territories of Ajaria and Abkhazia were recognized already by the Menshevik government. The sovietization efforts and the Georgian control of the three regions was almost running parallel and which often resulted in conflicts (Cornell, 2002: 142).

With the passage of time Georgia came to be integrated into the Soviet Union and from the very beginning was reluctant to be a permanent part of the same which almost went against her wishes. It was Lenin who always defended the sovereignty of Georgia and was in the favour of a Georgian nation separate from the Soviet Union. Georgia which was very much poor at the time of revolution now was having good growth in the field of education and in many ways refused to get into Russia's shoes. Georgia openly flaunted the rules which she deemed illegal and illogical, imposed by Moscow. After its integration into the Soviet Union, Georgia till the nationalists movements were running high maintained its free stance on the issues of significance. Sovietization changed the elite relationship between the minorities and the Georgian state. In Abkhazia the new communist leadership was showing a great deal of inclination towards Moscow as in the case of South Ossetia (Cornell, 2002: 142).

In 1922 a federal Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of Transcaucasia was constituted. As far as Georgia is concerned three autonomous republics were created on the territory of Georgia which was under the final supervision of Georgia. These three republics were Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Ajaria.

The main debate was always hovering around the leadership question over Georgia as to whether Georgia should be placed under the total control of Russia or not. Stalin and Lenin were the main proponents of the separate views over this question. Stalin suggested that the three republics be joined to the Russian socialist federative soviet republic as autonomous republics. Whereas Azerbaijanis and Armenian Bolsheviks on the whole supported the idea, the Georgian leaders were very much against this kind of proposal. While supporting the economic integration they underlined the need of

preserving Georgia's sovereignty (Suny, 1994: 215). Ultimately according to some kind of Stalin's plan, the Transcaucasia was created as a single republic which later joined the Soviet Union in 1922.

Gradually, Stalin came to be recognized as the true leader in the Soviet Union and his dictates were regarded as the wish of the state. His ascendancy to the power raised many doubts in the minds of the communist hierarchy which most of the times felt marginalized in the debates over autonomy. The control of the Mensheviks in Georgia was a difficult thing to get rid of but the policies of Stalin made this task an easier one given the fact that Mensheviks since a long time enjoyed the popular support in Georgian society. The image of chauvinism was easily thrown back by Stalin to the Georgian communists. There was also a secret committee for the independence of Georgia known as *Damkom* which was led by anti-Bolshevik forces in Georgia. The Mensheviks knew that the revolution to be a success, the widespread support of whole Georgia was needed, which in turn was not an easy task to prove (Cornell, 2002: 144). The efforts to raise the rebellion were there but finally they gave up the idea and which in its consequence was almost disastrous. Several thousand were massacred and for many days the scene in Georgia was not conducive for people to enjoy their rights. In a nutshell, we can say that the revolutionary attempts like these remained very much localized for want of widespread support base.

The benefits in terms of economy and other ones were in fact important if we see at the sovietization programme in Georgia and the agriculture and industrial sectors were given a new push from the soviet administration in Georgia. Nevertheless, the rise of Georgia in true way to a larger extent can be attributed to the policy of openness and broad-mindedness of the communist leadership in Russia. The rise of Georgians in their own native country can also be understood given the fact that they were very often encouraged in the running of their day to day administration which was ensured by their wider scale participation in the Georgian affairs. The policies of soviet rule in Georgia helped the Georgians to georgianize Tbilisi but also the Ossetians to ossetianise Tskhinvali which had not been a primarily Ossetians settlement before.

Georgians were very much able to get their education in their own language and this all was possible because of the primacy accorded to the native language that was Georgian in this case (Cornell, 2002: 144).

The residents and the native citizens of the three autonomous regions were almost over represented in their respective regions. The process of agricultural collectivization was a great practice in the year 1929 in Caucasus where the rate of collectivization jumped from 4% to 60% in six months which shows the high popularity and mass scale support of the program in Georgian republic. But this collectivization of agriculture was a success with variations also. For example, South Ossetia showed a higher level of collectivization of about 92% whereas Georgia was below 77%. This shows the kind of democratic variation and choices available before the population in Georgia of 1920s (Cornell, 2002: 145).

The Stalinization of Georgia can be said to be an important affair that was to stay there for a long time till the death of Stalin and interestingly beginning with the advent of Lavrentii Beria who became the head of communist party of Georgia in 1931. Beria was a personality who followed the style of Stalin and his personality cult. He was at that time having the power to supervise all the affairs of Georgian territory and in fact he was a leader who used to have some clear cut bases among masses. It was the Georgian origin of Stalin which made the personality cult to become so popular in Georgia during those decades. With the adoption of a new constitution for the Soviet Union in 1936 the configuration of Georgian soviet socialist federative republic became loose and it became dissolved resulting in the independence of the three separate individual member republics under the control of Soviet Union. Beria at this point of time became powerless in Georgian region but his power bases were intact in the other two regions, which were Abkhazia and Ajeria. He then started to get rid of thousands of people from his party bureaucracy. In 1951 with Stalin taking too much interest in Georgian affairs created a sort of indifference and reluctance in the stance of Beria and a resulting factor was the appointment of Mgeladze in place of Beria (Cornell, 2002: 146).

The death of Stalin in 1953 and the execution of Beria in the same year were some events which started with the immediate de-Stalinization efforts of the new heir Khrushchev in Soviet Union. An interesting thing was the popularity of Stalin in Georgia which was at its height and people were almost ignorant of the crimes of Stalin whose radical policies often went against masses and people deemed them a bit whimsical. Khrushchev after some years heavily suppressed the efforts of Georgians to create an iconic image and celebrate such cults publicly. The protests in favor of Stalin were also tackled. There was also an attempt to attack and capture the parliament building in Tbilisi by Stalinist forces but was foiled by Khrushchevian plan of executing all the attackers which also in turn created large scale rifts within the ranks of communist party of Georgia over the question of support to such a policy adopted by Khrushchev.

What we can see is that the constant disintegration efforts of Georgian masses in favor of a separate Georgian nation was always present there which with the same force was also suppressed by Soviet Union. The rise of nationalist movements can be traced back to these very days in Georgia. In 1956 the movements took a very different shape and this almost became a defining point in Georgian history of international affairs. Georgian reluctance to remain with the Soviet Union was apparent with the indicators like language preference. The majority being largely in favor of their own native language 'Georgian' created a kind of public opinion there in Georgia that the ethnic groups in Georgia now wanted to live separately from the old patronage of soviet union and they now actually want to have a region ruled by their own people in Georgia. The trends towards immigration also show that the maximum numbers of Georgians living in their own territory did not want to move away in search for a better future or something else. The instances of inter-ethnic marriages were also very minimal in Georgia during those times.

Another trend was also there very much present in Georgia and that was the over representation that is to say the dominance of the native people in the sectors of political sphere and in economic sphere like in industries. There were other people also there but the control through the major holdings was ever present in these areas. This was

no only the case in Georgia only but also in the regions like Abkhazia and Ajeria. The population of natives was a factor which could be said to have ensured the thrival of nationalist sentiments in Georgia and other regions in the decades of 1950s and later decades.

The influence of language was a very very important factor in the Georgian history because the population in Georgia was largely a speaker of Georgian language and the question of higher education was also a very significant one. Thus, given the fact that the georgianisation of education almost established the primacy of Georgian language making this the language of preference and more importantly the medium of communication for all the academic purposes there in Georgia so it created a kind of distraction in the minds of people from Ajeria and other regions like Abkhazia where Georgian was not the language of communication. The students enrolling for the higher education in Georgia had to go either to their Armenia, Azerbaijan or Moscow in search of their education in higher standards (Cornell, 2002: 148).

The demonstrations of 1981 were a testimony to the importance attached to language as a symbol of nationhood and its result gives some indication of the seriousness with which the state regards nationalism in the republic. The rapturous applause which greeted the speech of novelist Revaz Dzhaparidze at the 8<sup>th</sup> congress of the Georgian union of writers in April 1976, in which he condemned the directives from Moscow as likely to lead to the russification of education, provides further evidence of national feeling on the issue (Parsons, 1982: 557).

This is a debate as to whether this was a policy deliberately chosen by the Georgian authorities to insulate the native students and to push for more hardcore Georgian nationalism. The minority had to learn either Georgian or to fall back on other language options to pursue the courses in higher standards. This is also proved by the records which show that at one point of time there were 92% students being Georgian in origin in university education in Georgia. The reports of official discrimination can not be denied if we look at these figures which finally got official sanction accepting this trend

of natives dominating the stage in the field of higher education. But this was not all. The importance was also given to other languages and other departments in the later years were also opened in Georgian institutions of higher studies (Cornell, 2002: 149). The reforms were undertaken by the authorities to revive the culture of multi-ethnicity and cross cultural communications.

The economic assimilation of Georgia was not happening as per the aspirations of the soviet unionist one because the kind of economic policy which was adopted by the unit was a different one of a kind of pseudo-capitalist system and the economic indicators showed that the savings and the growth are not accruing as could have under any given circumstances and was nowhere matching the data of other federal units in soviet union. This totally meant that Georgia was resisting attempts at incorporating her economic system into the soviet planned economic system. This situation attracted increasing attention from Russia undermining Mzhavanadze's power base and finally his ouster and being replaced by Eduard Shevardnadze who was till that time the minister in charge of the internal affairs and had full fledged support from Moscow. Shevardnadze turned the official figures around and he showed that he came with a mission in his hands and he really wanted to see the corruption coming to an end and was prepared to see a new Georgia in the coming days (Cornell, 2002: 149)

The origin of nationalist movements in Georgia can be traced back into the days when the 1956 riots broke out in Georgia and under the heavy soviet repression; the nationalism often raised its heads reflecting itself through several media like literature. The famous litterateur of Georgia was Konstantin Gamasakhurdia at that time whose son Zviad Gamasakhurdia came to rule the free Georgia during 1990s.

The seeds of Georgian nationalism were actually sown in those very days. *Gorgasliani* was a secret group which started its own kind of nationalist activities in Georgia of which student leaders like Gamasakhurdia were main proponents. Later on when the whole nationalist spectrum began showing itself up on the political front in 1960s, several other facets of nationalism came to be included in the discussion forum.

The destruction of Georgian architectural monuments and symbols was heavily condemned by such forums. Human rights watch group was also formed which later came to be known as the Helsinki watch group in 1975 (Suny, 1994: 309). What could be an interesting thing to know about this nationalism is the tactics adopted by these groups in favoring the cause of nationalism in Georgia. These leaders like Gamasakhurdia specially emphasized that the rift within minorities need to be avoided and the inter-ethnic tensions must not be allowed to crop up if they are to gain the independence. The attitude of these Georgian leaders was increasingly becoming anti-Russian and they were also becoming more religious in their orientation (Cornell, 2002: 150).

These nationalist movements were also carried out by the several underground organizations which are usually called *Samizdat* in Russian literature. The Russian spy group KGB started looking for such underground forums and also found many operating there. They were severely punished but they could not have been silenced completely. Georgian chronicle was one such newspaper which used to carry full scale propaganda of nationalism in Georgia. The Georgian government also planned to accord the equal status to Russian language as done to the native Georgian one in Georgia itself but this move was suppressed by soviet union. This was tried to be done through the amendment in Georgian constitution in 1978 which also became a full fledged mass movement in Georgia. This was a turning point on the nationalist platform when several thousand people took to streets in Georgia and they stood united against the repressive state policy (Cornell, 2002: 150). What could be seen here as an interesting point is the enthusiastic student class was now becoming more educated and aware of issues of national concern and they were the major carriers of nationalist programmes towards its implementation.

It is not so that Shevardnadze was not criticized for failing to curb all this happening before him but for the sake of better economic conditions of Georgia he was not disturbed much by the authorities from Soviet Union. There were several instances when the credibility of Georgian leaders were put at stake specially we can see the example of Gamasakhurdia declaring his nationalist decisions as the error of judgment on

the televised national programme in 1979 and thus being pardoned. Such events only weakened the position of leaders on a personal level and this nowhere weakened the nationalist movements otherwise the independence could have come much more late. However leaders like Kostava were also there on the nationalist scene who although heavily punished by the soviet authorities never ever pretended otherwise and thus remained the hero of Georgian nationalism. In 1983, a large historic anti-soviet demonstration took place in Georgia which almost shook the soviet belief in imperialist motives (Cornell, 2002: 151).

Nationalism was an issue which could not have been relegated to backyard but there were other issues like inter-ethnic relations which were perhaps gradually becoming more important than any other. Given the fact that the soviet rulers never liked any form of nationalism to be strengthened in any form, the series of nationalisms like in Georgia, Abkhazia, Ajeria and several others in the Caucasus were emerging out. These could be termed as minority nationalism but the effect they used to produce in the minds of Russians is unimaginable. At the same time, Great Russian chauvinism was also condemned with the same force but that was to no avail. National sentiment, although denied political outlets, is undoubtedly strong and widespread but official responses to its various manifestations are no longer as clumsy or brutal as in 1956. Moscow is aware that repression can have exactly the opposite effect to the one desired. Some feel that it gives the republics considerable powers as pressure groups. In Tbilisi, for instance, rumours suggested that Shevardnadze realized that dropping Georgian as the state language would provoke an angry reaction (Parsons, 1982: 564).

The decision to back down and restore the status of Georgian language shows a pragmatic approach to nationality affairs. The state remains committed to the acculturation of the Georgian population but it is not prepared to risk direct confrontations with national feeling. When strong opposition has been met as over the status of Georgian language, the central authorities have backed down. It is understood that nationalism is a potential threat to stability in the republic but that so long as the



population does not feel its national identity is threatened and it will stay dormant (Parsons, 1982: 565).

The question of minority becomes significant if we see at the status of Abkhazia in the Georgian republic. From the very beginning the relations between Georgia and Abkhazia were not cordial. The Abkhaz people were always living under the impression that they are not living with what they should have been with. They thought their position was bargained in 1931 itself and which was worsened by the leader of Georgia, 'Beria' in 1937 after the proposal to submit itself under the RSFSR was thrown into the cold storage. Gaining autonomy was an important step which could have successfully turned the fate of Abkhazia. The request to transfer Abkhazia to RSFSR was already made in 1957 but the situation there remained volatile and full of intermittent conflicts. The era of Stalin and Beria can be said to be highly responsible for the bad deeds done to Abkhazia. The kind of strict norms which were put up before the Abkhazians could not be regarded as any democratic one. One can accuse Stalin and Beria that being the originals of Georgia they could not see the regions like Abkhazia seceding from the main Georgian state. There are numerous data to show the kind of discrepancy which was deliberately performed while conducting the census operation in Abkhazia during Stalinist era. This is shown by the comparison of the census data of 1926-1959 and the census data of 1959-89 (Cornell, 2002: 152). In 1886, 42% of Abkhazia's population was Abkhaz. In 1926 it was 27% and in 1959 they were only 15%.

These data show that the anti-Abkhaz drive of leaders like Beria and Stalin not only degraded the position of these regions but they also imposed unjustified demands upon the population of these regions. The imposition of Georgian alphabets even over the Abkhaz language and the establishment of Georgian schools and other institutions of learning at the cost of local and native institutions were some measures which was very much deplorable. With Beria starting an anti-Abkhaz drive in 1937, which included the forcible migration of several thousand people of Mingrelian origin into Abkhazia's Gali region, to the ethnic Georgians taking over the administration; the

whole lot of anti-people and anti-democratic changes was brought into these regions (Cornell, 2002: 152).

Scholars argue that the region of Abkhazia was not under that much repression as were the minorities of north Caucasian regions. They have their own arguments about this which says that since Georgians were always protecting the ethnic Abkhazians from the evil designs of Russian imperialist policies. But this can not be taken as granted and moreover this is a point of debate. Even the Georgians raised many times a voice concerning the rights of Georgian minorities living in Abkhazia. These issues kept on playing in the minds of politicians and leaders from both the sides and till present times no substantial gain has been achieved in the conditions in Abkhazia specially in the context of bilateral relations between Georgia and Russia.

Though the Georgian nationalism was at its pinnacle, the opening of the political climate at the centre could not fail to affect Georgia. Though many organizations that were formed had an environmental and cultural cover, a great number of them were clearly nationalist in nature and worked on promoting Georgia's self determination and against its links with Moscow. A number of dissident leaders were released from prison in 1987, adding impetus and leadership to the nationalist movement (Cornell, 2002: 154). The Caucasian railway project was proving to create a sort of failure for the nationalist leaders of Georgia. The environmental consequences like the distraction of architectural places, historical monuments were proving to an apple of discord. The nationalist leaders of Georgia thought that once this project is completed it will tie Georgia to Russia more and more (Aves, 1991: 10).

The increased popularity of the radical movement in Georgia became obvious as over two lakhs of people demonstrated in the Georgian capital in November 1988 against the amendment to the Soviet Union's constitution which proposed to curtail Georgia's internal sovereignty (Aves, 1991: 14). As the Georgian nationalist movement gathered spread through 1989, the minority in the region started to react. They were affected by political freedom and nationalist agitation that was all present over the Soviet

Union. In fact the minorities were directly threaten by these extremes of nationalist movement. The relationship between Russia and Georgia were reflected by the new development between the regional centre and the ethnic minorities. It was very much Abkhazia which caused some developments that led to the independence of Georgia.

The election on the basis of multiparty democracy were held on October 28 1990 in a tense environment with the most prominent figure Gamsakhurdia campaign with a motto to save the Georgians living in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. They owned a landslide victory having 53% votes and around 155 seats in the house of 250. With the exception of communist party, all other parties now represented their commitment to market economy, democracy and rule of law and more importantly the commitment to Georgian state independence.

Gamsakhurdia was elected the speaker and the parliament began working on dismantling the Soviet structure of Georgia and carrying it towards independence. The republic was now simply the 'republic of Georgia' omitting all references to socialism and Soviet. The Soviet military forces in Georgia were declared to be occupying forces, and Georgia prohibited its citizens from participating in the March 1991 all union referendum on a new union treaty proposed by Gorbachev. Georgia's transition to independence was catalyzed by the March 1991 referendum and preservation of Soviet Union. Of all the restive Soviet republics, Georgia was among the most troublesome for the Soviet Union. Although Georgia did not declare independence, the new parliament acted quickly to change the official flag, the national anthem and the national emblem. The new Georgian Supreme Soviet quickly acted to begin removing the militia and KGB from Soviet control and to create a Georgian army. Young Georgians ready for military service could choose between the Soviet and the Georgian armies. On 31 March 1991 voters in Georgia voted on the question: "Do you agree that the state of independence of Georgia should be restored on the basis of the independence act of 26 May 1918"? More than 92% of those eligible voted, and preliminary results of the balloting indicated that 99.6% of the voters favored separation. There was no early official response from Moscow to these developments (Nelson, 1992: 688).

The overall posture of Georgia seemed to be more militant than that in any of the Baltic States. Many believed that a show of force by Soviet troops might be resisted. Georgians were not entirely united in their political vision, however. In December 1990 it was rumored that the National Congress, an unofficial opposition group, had an armed band of some thousand men who were prepared to confront adversaries from within Georgia. South Ossetia has been a centre of particularly heated controversy. On 28 November 1990, just after the new Georgian Supreme Soviet had begun meeting, representatives of South Ossetia declared that a new South Ossetian Soviet Republic had been formed. That is why, he said, the South Ossetian Autonomous Region wanted to become a republic. Many Georgians, however, believed that the South Ossetian action was being orchestrated by Moscow.

On 11 December 1990 the Georgian Supreme Soviet responded to the South Ossetian declaration by unanimously abolishing the South Ossetian Autonomous Region. Amidst these actions, different groups began competing for political advantage, and political violence increased. The eventual outcome of South Ossetia's bid for its own variety of independence from an independence-minded Georgia remains uncertain. As in centuries past, Georgia in 1991 is a land caught up in both internal conflict and pressure from beyond its borders (Nelson, 1992: 688).

During the last years of Soviet Union, nationalism became a terrific thing which defines the political course of action in Georgia with its two main characteristics and these were first, refusal to compromise on several issues and second the increasing intolerance towards Non-Georgians. The event of 9 April 1989, was an event which showed that the current of nationalism is perhaps looking for a revival. A leading group of Abkhaz intellectuals sent a petition to Moscow which demanded the status a republic to be given to Abkhazia. Abkhazia in this context also gathered support from the Ossetian National Front. To protest this demand the Georgian radical groups organized several demonstrations in the Georgian capital.

Very soon these demonstrations developed into massive high level anti-Soviet form of protest for Georgian independence. The population across Georgia went

on strikes and closure was observed allover the nation. The shutters of industries were downed allover Georgia. Ultimately the troops dispersed the demonstrators living several hundred people dead in nationalist leaders like Gamsakhurdia were arrested. The results of this repression were highly counter-productive. The use of repression filled in its purpose of keeping the prohibition on nationalist mobilization in Georgia (Cornell, 2002: 156). The very immediate consequence of this event was the increase in severe criticism of the communist party in Georgia. The opposition became very much radicalized.

Now the demand was raised for total independence for Georgian nation. The event boosted the radicals who rejected a compromising position with the Soviet authorities and they also boosted those who demanded the total independence. The class of people which tried to follow the liberal approaches towards seeking the solution for Georgian nation, was finding it in troubles and among less popular surroundings (Aves, 1997: 162). What is interesting is that the public opinion also went behind these radicals in criticizing the Soviet authorities and the communist party. Later on nearly 89% of the Georgian population supported the idea of Georgian independence. Another consequence was that these events totally distracted the possibility of creating a popular front which were suppose to be the supporters of the official policies of Perestroika and democratization and hence avoided the demands for independence and the overturning of communist rule.

These events show that there was no scope of any compromise with the authority through Georgian Popular Front. The emergence of more radical nationalist organizations totally subjugated this Popular Front. Another very crucial consequence of event of 9 April 1989, was the emergence of several paramilitary groups. One prominent group was *Mkhedrioni*. This organization was voluntary in nature which sought the participation of the Georgian nationals. After this event the membership of this organization went on increasing. The Georgian nation lost its major share of population in the form of women in this event so this fact worked like a back fire and the youngsters of Georgia started to defend the common Georgians from any hostility shown to them (Wheatley, 2005: 45). This organization was nationalist and anti-Soviet in nature and often symbolizes the hardcore nationalism through its various appearances.

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By the early months of 1990, the main Georgian opposition was divided and some groups participating in the official political sphere after the party line had moved closer to their demands showing that the current power holders could be influenced. Several radical nationalist groups tried to alter the situation by unilaterally holding election to a national congress that was supposed to lead the country to independence. In fact this body had no legitimacy and others like Gamsakhurdia instead focused on holding early elections to the constitutional organ that was the republican Supreme Soviet (Cornell, 2002: 157).

It was now well known that the communist leadership was trying to portray itself as a defender of the Georgian national interests. The elections to the Supreme Soviet held on 28<sup>th</sup> October 1990, saw Gamsakhurdia's round table block winning a massive majority with 54% of votes and winning 155 out of 250 seats. The communist party stood second with nearly 30% of votes and 64 seats. The popular front, despite gaining only 1.9% of the vote won totally 12 seats in the election. At the last place came the Democratic Georgia bloc. The results of the elections to the Supreme Soviet showed the extent to which the Georgian population had become radicalized. Georgia was perhaps the only republic in the Soviet Union where the radical opposition won the first free and Democratic election (Wheatley, 2005: 52).

The victory of the radical opposition group clearly manifested that the changes which had occurred during the last some months were taking the Georgian nation towards the new era of assertiveness and transparency. The communist party in the election to the Supreme Soviet had lost all the ability to control the elections and public opinion was molded in such a way that there was no scope for manipulating the electoral process itself. Of course the period between the 1989 elections to the congress and the 1990 elections to the Republican Supreme Soviet was marked by a substantial newly discovered transparency and accountability of the electoral process in many republics and the shift from totally controlled and dominated elections in 1989 to totally free elections in 1990 did not occur in any republic of the Soviet Union except Georgia. This is what the event of 9<sup>th</sup> April 1989 had brought before the Georgian nation which for the first

time radicalizes the public opinion against the Georgian communist party and the Soviet rule (Wheatley, 2005: 53).

Georgia's transition to independence was catalyzed by the March 1991 all-union referendum on the preservation of the Soviet Union. Gamsakhurdia's government in Georgia was one of the six republics to refuse to participate in the referendum. Abkhazia and South Ossetia both against the path followed by Georgia, did participate in the referendum. The results were very much predictable if we look at the ethnic polarization and the boycott offered by the Georgian government. 99% of voters in Abkhazia and South Ossetia voted in favour of the preservation of the Soviet Union.

Gamsakhurdia wanted that this referendum result can be falsified only if they hold another referendum on the issue of the restoration of Georgia's independence, which was recalled back to 1918. This time again such a referendum date was set on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1991. Although Abkhazia and South Ossetia boycotted the referendum in some parts, yet nearly 98% of the voters voted in favour of Georgian independence. Hence it was very much under the leadership of Gamsakhurdia that Georgia finally declared its independence on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1991 (Cornell, 2002: 161).

## **Chapter-2**

### **The Impact of Abkhazia and South Ossetia Conflicts**



After independence in 1991, Georgia reverted back to its past which was full of disintegration of central authority, inter-ethnic conflicts and economic turmoil. The government controlled only the capital that is Tbilisi and it was almost incapable of ensuring its citizens the economic and other security. Beginning in 1991 in South Ossetia and in 1992 in Abkhazia, the Georgian government went to war with separatist movements backed by Russia. Georgia's poorly organized army was forced to quit from Abkhazia and in South Ossetia it was dejected in a dilemma over the victory. Moreover the demise of Soviet Union which came with the overthrow of Gamsakhurdia- regime found the Georgians stunned. The transition to independence in Georgia almost passed through a bitter phase of turmoil pain and lot of conflicts.

From the very beginning of the movement for independence in Georgia, the movement was weakened by personal clashes that led to the formation of rival organizations. At the same time, growing national awareness tended to degenerate into a chauvinism pointed at the ethnic groups in particular, Abkhaz and Ossetians, who constituted about one third of the total population of that time's Georgia. In Abkhazia the tension between Abkhaz who form around only 18% of the population of half million people of the whole region and Georgians who form around 46% of the population in Abkhazia have existed for decades with each ethnic group convinced that it has been discriminated against by the other. In 1978 and again in 1988-89, the Abkhazians lobbied in Moscow without any success for their republic to be made a part of Russia which exists today. A resolution from Abkhazian parliament declared that now it has become a sovereign state and has nothing to do with what Georgian leaders say about it.

In June 1992, the Abkhazian parliament submitted to the Georgian state council a draft treaty on federal relations between Georgia and Abkhazia. In July 1992, in the absence of any response from Tbilisi the Abkhazian parliament voted to restore the constitution of 1925 which designated Abkhazia a union republic. Although this stand of Abkhazian parliament was criticized by the Georgians as a separatist move, the negotiations on an equal ground were kept continued. Shevardnadze, Boris Yeltsin and Abkhazian parliament chief Ardzinba tried to sign a ceasefire agreement but that

collapsed due to some reasons, and ultimately Abkhazian control of an area known as coastal town of Gagra put the entire control of Abkhazia in the hands of Abkhazian fighters (Fuller, 1993: 344).

Similarly in South Ossetia, the catalyst for the outbreak of inter-ethnic violence in South Ossetia was Gamsakhurdia's arbitrary decision in December 1990 to abolish the regions autonomous status within Georgia. The local parliament which like its Abkhazian counterpart, had attempted without success to declare independence from Georgia began campaigning for the unification of South Ossetia with the North Ossetian Autonomous Republic, which lies inside Russia. A series of fighting continued throughout 1991 and as a result, thousands of refugees became homeless. In January 1992, the south Ossetians voted in favor of seceding from Georgia and becoming a part of Russia in a referendum held there. In June 1992, Yeltsin and Shevardnadze signed on an agreement on the deployment of a tripartite (Georgian, Russian and Ossetian) peacekeeping force to be added and supplemented by a short force from OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) (Fuller, 1993: 344).

The progress towards a political settlement has since that time been very much minimum in fact. The South Ossetian leaders always lobby for Russian support to gain a kind of mileage to prevent any eventuality and to remove all the fears of any possible deal over South Ossetia between Russia and Georgia. However that seems almost impossible because the majority of population in South Ossetia is now totally willing to become a full fledged citizen of Russia and in many cases they are now the holders of the Russian passport (Fuller, 1993: 345). Looking into the question as to how far has the question of South Ossetia and the much repeated question of Abkhazia been a factor in Russo-Georgian relations since the genesis of the problem itself is a very interesting task. But the query into this kind of problem not only reveals the deeper facts of the problem under our consideration it also throws light on the dynamics of bilateral relations of the concerned countries. However the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia can be dealt separately but treating them each with their own particularities will be a very insightful job and will be full of the academic worth.

A short history of South Ossetia provides us the information that during 1917-21, most Ossetians cooperated with Russia in its confrontations with Georgia. As a result in 1918, the new Bolshevik government recognized the desire of Ossetians to separate from Georgia, created the Ossetian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. This territory became a part of the Mountain Autonomous Republic in 1920 and later South Ossetia declared its independence from Georgian control. Georgia sent its army to suppress the revolt and after too much of violence the region was divided in 1922 with the area north of the mountains becoming North Ossetian Autonomous Republic within the Soviet Union's Russian Socialist Soviet Republic and the area south of the greater mountains becoming the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast within the Soviet Union's Georgian Socialist Soviet Republic (Pirchner, 2005: 15).

South Ossetia started again its efforts to secede from Georgia with its 1989 declaration that South Ossetia was a part of the Russian Republic and again it reiterated its position in its 1990 declaration. In a sharp reaction, Georgian Republic ended the autonomous status of South Ossetia after this declaration of sovereignty. And at last Georgian forces invaded the region of South Ossetia. In 1989, Georgia's census had showed that in South Ossetia, around 70% population was of Ossetian origin, 30% of Georgian origin and rest from other nationalities. But due to heavy fighting the normal population's 60% moved to other parts of Ossetia which led to a huge demographic change in the region (Pirchner, 2005: 16).

For most Georgians, serious consideration of their own claim to independence from the Soviet Empire always took a primary importance over other interests. The interests of minorities within Georgia (some 30% of the population) were accorded a second place, and it was even lowered in the order of priority. The Georgian parliament and government went on to take highly discriminating measures in September and November 1989 to make 'Russian' and 'Georgian' the official languages in South Ossetia and to strengthen the position of the Georgian language within the would-be new republic.

The Ossets in January 1989 had renewed their claim to be transferred to the Russian republic (setting up their own Popular Front organization to pursue this goal). Open clashes between the two groups thus began to occur during the course of 1989, becoming particularly marked by 1990 (Aves, 1993: 21). The South Ossetian regional soviet declared its sovereignty as a republic independent of Georgia on 20 September 1990 and, at the same session, declared the region the 'South Ossetian Democratic Republic', and to see their autonomy snatched by the Supreme Soviet of Georgia on 21 September 1990. South Ossetia nevertheless went ahead, rejecting Georgia's decisions on 16 October 1990, creating an executive committee and calling elections. Despite further Georgian Supreme Soviet rejection of these measures, the elections in South Ossetia were held on 9 December 1990. Two days later, Georgia declared the abolition of the autonomous region. Gorbachev, in a decree of 7 January 1991, sought to cancel all of these decisions.

In March 1991, the Georgian authorities threatened to withhold Georgian citizenship and hence ownership of land—from the whole population of districts where the majority of the population voted against Georgian independence in the forthcoming referendum on that issue. The Georgian parliament, the Supreme Soviet, had already followed their lead and had adopted an election law in August 1990 which debarred the participation of groups and parties concerned with only a special area of the republic (Aves, 1993: 24). Consequently, Ossetian groups were unable to compete in the election the following October 20. Many South Ossetians certainly had come to believe that it was now a quite consciously applied Georgian policy to drive them out of Georgia and have them concentrated in North Ossetia. Such fightings continued through 1991-92 but there were some major events that occurred in between. In early days of 1992 the population of South Ossetia voted in favor of secession from Georgia and integration with Russia's North Ossetian Autonomous Republic within the Russian federation. Again in April 1992, the Georgian government proclaimed the re-establishment of the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast.

In the war of words between Russia and Georgia before the agreement of 24 June 1992 between them over Ossetia the refugee issue also played a part, with Russia's parliamentary chairman Khasbulatov accusing the Georgians not only of genocide but, through the refugee problem, of creating preconditions for a social explosion. He proposed that all exiles on Russian territory, without exception, should be returned to their homes (Aves, 1993: 26). While South Ossetia had been *de facto* largely ethnically cleansed by the Georgians, Russia had indicated its unwillingness to accept this as something which can not be changed, mainly because of the unacceptable burden this was placing on the country. Instead both Russia and, later, the OSCE sought a more effective and overall negotiated solution.

After that in July a ceasefire agreement ended the fighting which had been continuing since last eighteen months. Later on an OSCE-mission was constituted in 1993 to look after the affairs of South Ossetia. It is also predicted that almost 98% population of South Ossetia will become a Russian citizen in the very near future. The stand of Russian president has been a very much diplomatic and tactical in this regard and on this particular issue it stated like this: "We respect the territorial integrity of Georgia but understand at the same time that the population of South Ossetia is not secure" (Pirchner, 2005: 16).

Georgia's President Gamsakhurdia was replaced quickly by a more conciliatory Shevardnadze, who proceeded to lay blame for a good deal of the conflict on his predecessor. South Ossetia's leadership also evolved with the removal, in August 1993, of ardent nationalists, Alan Chochiev (founder of the Popular Front and deputy chairman of the parliament) and Oleg Teziyev (Prime minister and leader of the militia). The March 1994 elections to the South Ossetian Supreme Soviet, in which the Communists triumphed, also saw the replacement of the speaker, Torez Khulumbekhov by Lyudvig Chibirov (Pirchner, 2005: 17). With these changes in place, the way was opened up for at first a low-key meetings of delegations of the two sides in 1994-95, later to be followed by the meetings of senior officials and summit meetings of the respective presidents from

1996 onwards. The OSCE entered the process in early 1994, and eventually set up an office in Tskhinvali on 22 April 1997.

The international borders throughout this region had never been particularly stable or watertight at maximum times. The 1992 agreement included the positioning of a joint Russian, Georgian and Ossetian peacekeeping force along a buffer zone in South Ossetia. This did at least prevent any large scale resumption of hostilities from occurring in 1992 up to the present time. The Progress on an actual political settlement was to prove far more possible especially when the South Ossetian supreme council voted in November 1992 to secede from Georgia and join the Russian Federation. Russia did a lot of work to get Georgia fully included into the CIS by backing the reintegration of South Ossetia, while at the same time looking for a reason for linking the two territories within the framework of the Russian federation (Rubin and Snyder, 1998: 45).

Eventually in October 1994, a four-sided commission made up of representatives of the two Ossetia, Georgia and Russia set the task of creating a comprehensive peace settlement. The OSCE established three basic principles for the settlement of the dispute: (i) the preservation of the territorial integrity of Georgia; (ii) the broadest possible autonomy for South Ossetia; and (iii) the joint and separate competences of the two sides. The proposal of autonomy within Georgia was, however, rejected by both sides in December 1994. Just a year later some movement was visible as Shevardnadze, in the November 1995 presidential election campaign, seemed to offer autonomy as a basis for further talks.

In 1996 South Ossetia was indicating a very remote possibility of its union with North Ossetia and a willingness to join a Georgian federation. Building upon this new development, the Chibirov–Shevardnadze talks in Vladikavkaz produced an agreement to establish authorized delegations to settle conditions for the autonomy of South Ossetia, despite Chibirov’s continued negligence to the idea of independence (Rubin and Snyder, 1998: 47). In November 1996 South Ossetian presidential election, North and South Ossetia went ahead and signed a treaty of cooperation and friendship as part of what was

presented as a process of integration. The election had gone ahead against the advice of Georgia, Russia and the OSCE, and resulted in the election of Lyudvig Chibirov. Unlike one of his electoral rivals—Vladislav Gabarayev, who campaigned on a unification with North Ossetia platform—Chibirov declared that ‘uniting the two Ossetia is unrealizable at the present stage’. Although he insisted on republican status and referred to contacts with Georgia as part of South Ossetia’s foreign policy, he immediately came out in favour of an early resumption of the talks with Shevardnadze.

The year of 1997 started with Shevardnadze declaring it the year of reconciliation between Georgians and Ossetians and the speakers of the parliaments in South Ossetia and Georgia making visits to one another in January. The next month, however, in response to Georgian proposals to enlarge a neighboring region with parts of South Ossetia, Chibirov raised doubts about the survival of Georgian enclaves in any future independent South Ossetia. The situation was worsened in June by Nodar Natadze of the United Republican Party, who fully rejected concessions to the Ossetians such as autonomy and full secession. The path of reconciliation was not to run totally smooth, although in February the Chairman of the Youth Affairs Committee of South Ossetia did reiterate his leadership’s support for a peaceful settlement of the whole issue and the Joint Control Commission adopted a number of key documents on the maintenance of peace.

The March 1997 Moscow talks, under the auspices of the OSCE, resolved that the peacekeeping troops should remain until a full resolution was achieved, although the number of peacekeeping checkpoints, which had played a significant part in maintaining peace, should be considerably reduced (Rubin and Snyder, 1998: 48). This proposal was also backed by the Joint Control Commission, although Georgian experts believed they would still be needed for some time to come. The Commission also proposed handing over some law enforcement functions to local bodies and this too was begun. The state of emergency in the area, which had been regularly renewed since 1991, was allowed to lapse in July, to be replaced by a self-imposed one to deal with more straightforward criminal activity.

In 1998 Georgian invasion into South Ossetia were to lead the parliament of the breakaway province to vote against any withdrawal yet of the (especially Russian) peacekeeping forces. Indeed, it called for an increase in their numbers in view of the prevailing situation. Despite this level of agreement, the Georgian–South Ossetian summit at Java in South Ossetia in 1997 decided that the issue of the political status of the area would again be left until later (Rubin and Snyder, 1998: 48). Following his election as North Ossetian president in January 1998, Alexander Dzasokhov was also to take up the task of mediating between the actual, but still unofficial, leadership of South Ossetia and the Georgian government to restore a more formal relationship between them.

Even after Seven years of the conflict and the actual separation of South Ossetia from Georgia, no agreed solution has been achieved till yet. Smuggling of alcohol, cigarettes and drugs constitutes a considerable proportion of the economic activity. The Russian rouble prevails as the currency of exchange despite the existence of the Georgian lek. Not only are no Russian banks, trading companies and industrial enterprises operating there but also no western enterprises. Still no permanent solution has been found. Concluding the facts of border disputes and such alignments we are at much ease over predicting these following arguments about the crisis in South Ossetia. In the views of many a scholars, the South Ossetian problem has been developed and transformed but not resolved yet. After the loss of at least seven hundred lives and the consequent creation of a large number of refugees, peace had been achieved but a long a way to get any permanent solution. Separatism and anti-Georgian sentiments remained alive among the South Ossetians. Russo-Georgian differences over Abkhazia continued to divide those two powers and in the view of Georgians, served to encourage the Ossetians in their long term aspiration. This calm has now been internationally kept controlled with some considerable success for many years.



Table-1

**Key events in South Ossetian conflict:**

January 1989	Founding of Osset popular front
November 1989	Armed confrontation in Tskhinvali begins
March 1990	Georgia declares sovereignty
October 1990	Gamsakhurdia elected chairman of Georgian parliament
November 1990	In South Ossetia region soviet attempts to upgrade region's status to autonomous republic decision annulled by Georgian govt.
December 1990	Georgia annuls autonomy of South Ossetia, and emergency declared
January 1991	Gorbachev calls for Georgian withdrawal from South Ossetia
December 1991	USSR dissolved
December 1991-	Gamsakhurdia driven out of Tbilisi, Military council takes power
January 1992	
March 1992	Shevardnadze returns to Georgia as chair of military council
June 1992	Renewed Georgian offensive in South Ossetia, Russian-Georgian agreement on regulation in South Ossetia
October 1992	Deployment of mixed Georgian-Osset-Russian peacekeeping force in South Ossetia
December 1992	Deployment of OSCE long-term mission to Georgia

(Macfarlane: 1997, 513).

In a report on 24 July 2006 *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* said that Russia and Georgia, both are amassing their army on the border areas. The Georgian authorities have indicated that they will be deploying their forces on their borders with South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Russia could find itself on the brink of war if, as mediator in peace talks for South Ossetia, it does not find a way to ease the tensions on our southern borders. Georgians have stopped permitting even reporters who want to go inside South Ossetian region on routine tasks. Such movement of forces alongside the border areas is certainly making the situation more volatile (The Current Digest of Post-Soviet Press, 2006: 15).

With Russian-Georgian relations at a historic low, Georgia has accused Russia of using political and economic tools - such as paying salaries, appointing Russian officials, and issuing Russian passports - as a means to annex South Ossetia in order to prevent Georgia from joining NATO, a key goal of Georgian President Saakashvili's administration. International observers have long said that any conflict here has the potential of spilling over to the rest of the unstable region. The referendum to decide on the fate of South Ossetia, whether she will become independent or not is to be held on November 12 2006. This decision will be a major landmark in the history of the region.

What peaceful means are possible is yet to be fully known. In the most likely scenario South Ossetia will declare independence which would be recognized by Moscow. And after a period of time they will ask for the much discussed Russian annexation. The path towards lasting separation from Georgia however will be harder for South Ossetia than in any other case. This is because of a long pending OSCE pressure on Russia and Tbilisi's consideration to fight harder to keep South Ossetia intact and now more significantly to be decided by the referendum on independence because approximately 30% of South Ossetian population is ethnically Georgian.

The Abkhaz people have always been worried about their ethnic existence and they have never accepted their loss of acceptance. The various instances of uprisings against tsarist Russia occurred throughout 19<sup>th</sup> century. The exile of Abkhazians was a forced one and the exodus of Abkhaz people towards turkey in the aftermath of fighting

has been regarded as something which could not have been reverted back given the situation prevailing at that time in Abkhazia. After the civil war in Russia came to an end and thereafter with the formation of Soviet Union, the formation of autonomous Abkhazia Soviet Socialist Republic within the Georgian SSR came to be a reality which existed till 1931 (Pirchner, 2005: 12).

The next forty years was the period when the attempts to fully georgianize the territory of Abkhazia were pursued with full enthusiasm by the Georgian authorities. The secession attempts of Abkhazian rulers existed there since those decades. The demographic engineering done during the days of Stalin and thereafter the efforts of de-Stalinization totally changed the position and overall public opinion in favor of Abkhazian SSR totally free from the control of Georgia. By the end of 1989 the ethnic Abkhaz population remained a mere approximately 20% which was far far less than what used to be in soviet days and especially during pre-Stalin era. The rest of the population was composed of 46% ethnic Georgians and 16% Russians and about 20% other nationalities (Pirchner, 2005: 13).

After the overthrow of Gamsakhurdia in a prolonged fight in Tbilisi during the last days of 1991, he fled back to Mingrelia in the western part of Georgia and launched a new rebellion there. In retaliation to that event, the Georgian National Guard entered into the area in order to counter the attacks there. Supporters of Gamsakhurdia were using the territory in Mingrelia to tackle the Georgian authorities and their forces. After the appointment as the premier, Shevardnadze went on to get the approval of Abkhaz authorities and started for the operation in the Gali region of eastern Abkhazia.

When the Georgian forces entered Abkhazia, they found that it will be easy to capture the capital Sokhumi, and then they moved on in violation of the informal agreement with the Abkhaz authorities. When they arrived in the capital, the Abkhaz parliament was deciding on the constitution of 1925 to be reinstated in the region. And without any provocation, they attacked the parliament building and captured. In the month of September ultimately, the Georgian army forcibly evicted the Abkhaz rulers

from the area of capital. The Abkhaz reconsolidated their position in the northern part of the region and began a counter-offensive thus capturing Gagra in the last days of 1992 and then advancing Sokhumi by the end of mid-1993 (Macfarlane, 1997: 514).

At this stage, Russia acted as the mediator in this crisis and posed as the guarantor and deploying the monitors to ensure that its disarmament and other provisions are respected by other parties. The United Nations responded to Abkhazia crisis by deploying a small observer group UNOMIG (United Nation's Observers' Mission in Georgia) to Abkhazia during 1993. The ceasefire failed and even before the UN mission could be totally deployed, the Abkhaz forces with the support of Russian and North Caucasian forces re captured the capital city of Sokhumi in the same year (Macfarlane, 1997: 514). Abkhaz forces within a few days also thrown out the ethnic Georgian population of Abkhazia which was around 46%.

The supporters of Gamsakhurdia started a new campaign in other parts of Georgia which almost threatened the total collapse of the Georgian state. At this very stage Shevardnadze flew to Moscow and agreed that Georgia will be joining the CIS very soon. Russian forces intervened in the conflict in Mingrelia and also suppressed it. In June 1994 the CIS acting on the basis of an agreement between the parties in May, legitimized this deployment as a regional peacekeeping operation based on the consent of the parties. The Security Council in turn accepted this decision in July 1994. The ceasefire agreement which had held since the end of 1993, with the exception of limited exchanges of fire in the Kodori valley-the only part of Abkhazia that had not been fully evacuated by Georgian forces in early 1994. The incidents of violence did not disappear totally. The return of the refugees to the Gali region in 1995 and in 1996 also was accompanied by the repeated instances of violence targeting the local officials of Abkhazia. The violation of human rights was also reported on a large scale there in the region and the security zone established by the peacekeepers. At the same time, very little progress has been made as regarding the problem of refugees in Abkhazia and the matter seems to be lingering since that time. The exact policy which could provide some directions in these areas seemed to be totally invisible (Macfarlane, 1997: 520).

Table-II

**Key Events in Abkhazia till 1994**

May 1989	Anti-government riots in Sukhumi
May 1990	Mountains peoples congress in Sukhumi demands exit of Abkhazia from Georgia
August 1990	Abkhaz government declares sovereignty
July 1992	Abkhaz government restores 1925 constitution and this decision annulled by Georgia
August 1992	Georgian forces enter Abkhazia and hostilities begun
September 1992	Russia mediates ceasefire
October 1992	Abkhaz offensive against Gagra. Georgian request for UN Peacekeeping force
May 1993	Second ceasefire agreement, also fails
July 1993	Third Russian-mediated ceasefire agreement
September 1993	Ceasefire collapses, deployment of UNOMIG suspended
November 1993	Security Council authorizes full deployment of full observer force
February 1994	Shevardnadze and Yeltsin request UN peacekeeping force
April 1994	Russia-Abkhazia-Georgia-UNHCR agreement on refugee return this was never implemented
May 1994	Abkhaz-Georgian agreement on peacekeeping operation
June 1994	CIS agrees to provide peacekeeping force
July 1994	Formal deployment of CISP KF and UN Security Council Resolution 937 recognizes CISP KF decision, expands UNOMIG and extends it mandate.

(Macfarlane: 1997, 513).

Questions of Abkhazian settlement occupy a special place on the Russo-Georgian agenda while Georgia is constantly complaining about the alleged Russian policy to weaken Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Georgia's integrity is being preserved largely because of Russia's efforts. Russia has been helping Georgia in two major areas and that is 1. In stopping the escalation of the conflicts and 2. The help in peacekeeping job by providing and pooling the forces for this purpose (Claurusso: 1995, 79). The Russian government has been saying that it is largely because of her efforts that the separatist movements in Georgia have not been able to break the country. The UN Security Council understands the situation in Georgia and it appreciates the role of CIS peacekeeping forces and operates in the zone of conflict a small observer mission in close contact with the CIS collective peacekeeping forces.

The leadership of Abkhazia is not in favor of returning to the system where it had to take orders from Tbilisi as was during pre- 1992 days. Abkhazians are adamantly demanding the independence from the Georgian rule. Georgia has been gambling all these years on weakening Abkhazia economically and isolating it which has resulted in an extremely difficult situation in Abkhazia. Russia has considered it on humanitarian lines also and has proposed to provide the pensions and other facilities whatever logical and feasible to its citizens living in Abkhazia. On the contrary, Georgia has not stopped to threaten the use of force while dealing with Russia (Chepurin: 2003, 129).

In the present circumstances Georgia is not able to restore its confident grip on the territory of Abkhazia. Its armed forces could theoretically defeat Abkhazia once they are now modernized with the American aid, but general power in terms of military economy and other areas is totally insufficient for any military solution to the problem which would compel the Abkhaz forces to use different methods of warfare. There is absolutely no military solution to the crisis in Abkhazia because Georgia has a lot of preparations to do before it could plan for such kinds of efforts. It will have to take international trust in its favour which is a very difficult task.

Any invoking of UN charter or any change in the use or pattern of peacekeeping operations will be fatal for the Russo-Georgian relations. The efforts are still on regarding the solution of the problem so that the peace could ultimately prevail there in the region (Chepurin: 2003, 130). The proposed division of constitutional powers can be one great step in the right direction. The question of the exact status of Abkhazia is a very crucial one and that defines the relationship and its various dimensions.

Russian peacekeeping was integrated as a policy instrument in a wider strategy seeking to advance Russian interests in Georgia. The changes in peacekeeping have left the Russian government hostage to its previous policy. Tensions have emerged over the policy objective this instrument should serve. The Abkhaz perceive the operation as away of freezing the conflict in circumstances propitious for the preservation of Abkhaz independence, by maintaining a buffer zone between the Abkhaz region and Georgia proper (Baev: 1997, 116). The Georgian government seeks to use peacekeeping as a way to ensure the return of Georgian internally displaced persons to Abkhazia and to restore Georgia territorial integrity in Abkhazia.

After the Georgian government acceded to Russian demands in 1994, the Russian government has sought to ease the operation in order to avoid becoming fixed in fighting beyond its borders. The main dilemma facing Russia now lies in the problem of delinking the issue of conflict resolution in Abkhazia from Russian-Georgian military cooperation (Baev: 1997, 116). The Georgian government now consistently maintains this linkage. Present tensions in Russian-Georgian relations, and between Georgia and Abkhazia, have resulted from this disharmony in the perceptions of the conflicting parties and the principal third party over the role of the peacekeeping operation, highlighting a deep clash of interests between Russia and Georgia, and Tbilisi and Sukhumi.

At the CIS summit of heads of state in Moscow in April 1998, the Russian government accepted once again Georgian guidelines regarding peacekeeping in the conflict, the decisions on additional measures for resolving the conflict in Abkhazia, if implemented, would have extended peacekeeping functions to Gali, and the creation of a

temporary administration in this area. The Abkhaz authorities rejected this decision raising again the possibility of increasing combat on this unstable front line. The Russian government accepted this decision, as it had in March 1997, in order to force the pace of negotiations and force compromise from the Abkhaz authorities. This policy shift concords with the broader shift in thinking about Russian policy towards the near abroad and an awareness of the imperatives of military reform.

The government cannot afford to become involved in another Caucasian war. In addition, Russian government does not want to become entangle in an open-ended and costly peacekeeping operation. The Russian government seeks to delink broader Russian-Georgian relations from the Abkhaz issue. Russian responses to this conflict have underlined bureaucratic and some other major differences between the policies of its own different departments. It is undeniable that the policies of different ministries were divergent in 1992-3. Given the shift in ministry of foreign affaires policy towards more exclusive approaches to the near abroad, it would be misplaced to assume that a gap has divided the two ministries. Both ministries agreed on certain first principles in Russian strategy, aiming to re-establish Russian hegemony in the region. Differences in the pursuit of this constituted a real approach.

The course and outcome of Russian strategy has been and will continue to be deeply affected by factors external to Russia, that is, political development in Georgia, and the Abkhaz determination to secure independence. Shevardnadze has played a crucial role. In 1993-4, he was willing to accede to the Russian compulsion of necessity, and mediate Russian demands to the Georgian polity (Baev: 1997, 118). However this rapprochement was predicated on the condition that Russia restored Georgian territorial integrity. Enduring Abkhaz independence has produced a nationalist response in Georgia against Russia. Russia's use of persuasion has now created dilemmas of present Russian policy. The reality of Abkhazia's independence may run counter to the Russian interest in a strong Georgia and stable North Caucasus.



By 1996, the Russian government had realized that it might have become hostage to its previous strategy, and recent shifts in Russian policy represent attempts to neutralize this dilemma. While Russia remains the predominant external actor in this conflict, the increasing involvement of other actors and international organizations in Georgia highlights a trend that will displace Russia (Macfarlane: 1996, 521). Most importantly, the prospects of increasing Western support to Georgian military development will reduce Georgia's dependence on the Russian military. Until 1996, Russia's strategy was not deeply affected by resource constraints, given its already extensive military presence in the region. However, such constraints now affect Russian policy fundamentally. The core problem in Russia's strategy towards Georgia has been its over-reliance on military tools. In 1996, Georgia represented only 0.5% of Russia's trade with the CIS, while Georgian trade with Turkey has increased dramatically. Moreover, in 1995-6, Georgia received substantial financial assistance from the international monetary fund and the World Bank, which has assisted in the country's overall macro-economic stabilization.

Combined with the consolidation of state power and Shevardnadze's political position, Georgia has increasing room for trying to be independent of Russia. Given the extreme difficulties facing the Russian armed forces, Russian over-reliance on military tools in relation with Georgia has been short-sighted (Macfarlane: 1997, 521). With the ongoing absence of progress in conflict resolution, Russian-Georgian relations are likely to deteriorate further. Combined with severe resource constraints, the Russian government faces a new military retreat from this state. In March 1998, Sergeyev admitted for the first time that Russia might withdraw its forces from Georgia.

This shift is in line with the Russian focus since 1997 on military developments in the north Caucasus, on deepening military ties with Armenia, and on the pursuit of economic-strategic rather than military-political objectives in the Transcaucasia (Macfarlane: 1997, 521). However, despite these broad trends, the Abkhaz conflict remains as an enduring point of leverage for Russia over the Georgian government. As seen in the instability that occurred in 1998, the new Georgian state is

still undergoing a process of consolidation. This enduring weakness of Georgia has been, and will remain, the primary focus of Russia.

The talks began in 1993 showed no progress on the issue of Abkhaz sovereignty. The Abkhazians want independence from Georgia. The Georgians will not accept any reduction in their sovereignty and will not even consider relaxing the blockade or addressing the refuse question until Abkhazia returns to the fold. UN security council resolution 1096, enacted in January 1997, support Georgia's claims of sovereignty over Abkhazia. Russia, however, shows no signs of cooperation. Quite to the contrary, they have kept open eventual option of annexing Abkhazia by granting Russian citizenship to the majority of Abkhazians- a policy declared by Georgians president Shevardnadze in July 2002 as disguised annexation, opening, in December 2002, the rail link between Sochi and Abkhazia, thus economically interesting Abkhazia with Russia and keeping their military on Abkhazia soil.

If Russia gives the Abkhazia population of joining Russia or having Russian troops withdraw, the Abkhaz may choose to be a minority in Russia rather than a minority in Georgia. Their path would likely be an election in which the Abkhaz people would opt for sovereignty. Then after a period of time, a second vote would be held to request annexation by Russia. While one of these options is the most likely outcome, it is not inevitable. Vakhtang Rcheulishvili, a deputy chairman of Georgian parliament, believes that a closer relationship between Tbilisi and Moscow could pave the way for Moscow to accommodate Georgian interest in Abkhazia. In his view, the question may ultimately be whether it is better for Russia to have solid Georgian cooperation on their Muslim problem than to have Abkhazia. Abkhaz foreign minister Shamba, however, as openly dismissive of this idea, telling the author that, the Georgians have nothing to offer Russia.

The renewed fighting that would inevitably accompany any Russian withdrawal would have a destabilizing impact on existing Russian territory in the Caucasus, as well as on Muslim-dominated areas within Russia. Russian annexation of

Abkhazia would be mixed blessing on other fronts as well. It would make future expansion of Russian territory an easier move in Moscow, but at the same time it would complicate relations with other countries having potential border problems with Russia. Further, the resulting precedent of secession would be harmful to Russia.

Georgia is a multiethnic state where, since its first days of independence from Moscow, ethnic and cultural divisions have resulted in open conflicts. The soviet maintained law and order in Georgia by coercively suppressing conflicting parties. During their rule, a number of latent conflicts within country were unresolved. During the first of disintegration of the Soviet Union, these ethnic and political tensions erupted into open conflict. Rather than searching for solutions to these conflicts, politicians and public representatives prepared ways to suppress the conflict. These efforts were unsuccessful, however, and resulted instead in an escalation of the conflict (Cornell: 2002, 180). Violent and destructive tactics used by Georgians, Abkhazians, south Ossetians and other ethnic groups living in Georgia have resulted in the expulsion of populations from their homelands, forced assimilation, and repression of the different ethnic groups in various regions of Georgia.

These wars are a powerful sign of the deep, internal division within Georgian society. The struggles between ethnic and national ideologies present a crisis of multiethnic state building that is seen in many other areas in the region as well. The state government official and representatives of various groups within Georgia have failed to hold a constructive dialogue that analyzes conflict issues and builds a mutually acceptable future of the country (Cornell: 2002, 181). In the aftermath of the soviet system, the newly independent central and autonomous governments in Georgia developed policies that were not sensitive to the diverse needs and values of the various populations. The new political elite's failure to promote democratic values and norms of power sharing, nondominant plurality, and civil society contributed to the current political instability in the country. In fact, the dominant political leadership in Georgia attempted to address the problems of dissatisfied groups through ineffective and biased policies derived from the previous authoritarian traditions. In most cases, these policies

included a dogmatic and uncritical application of military pressure to achieve short-term political and economic goals.

People who are skilled in conflicts resolution approaches were present in Georgia at that time. Unfortunately these people did not take the initiative to mediate between their own and other groups in the growing conflicts. This missed opportunity for early intervention, and the lack of trained domestic facilitators, limited the forums and possibilities for the parties in conflict to address the issues that divided them (Cornell; 2002, 182). Instead the parties developed competitive strategies and goals for engaging in the conflict and violence related to political, ethnic and social divisions within the country increased, resulting, finally, in civil war. The unstable political infrastructures and increasing internal divisions within the newly independent Georgian state attracted the attention of Russia as a large regional power. Russian intervention in these conflicts however, complicated the situation and ultimately resulted in conflict escalation rather than de-escalation within Georgia. Russia used the ethnic conflicts in Georgia as a tool to manipulate domestic politics and to ensure Russia's military, geo-political pressure in the region (Cornell; 2002, 182).

The various groups within Georgia are currently quite frustrated with the results of these ongoing conflicts and their inability to reach a satisfactory resolution. The resettlement of refugees in their homes located in conflict zones is impossible, and people live with the daily fear of military escalation. The current progress for reconciliation between the divided groups and the establishment of a stable, multiethnic Georgian state are not very hopeful.

There has been the element of unity and division among Georgians and Abkhazians. The languages of both these regions are not mutually understandable and the language issue formed an important part of the Abkhazian's grievances against Georgians. The claim that a Georgianization of the Abkhaz population is being done since the era of Stalin has been a major factor in the conflict between Abkhazia and Georgia. Yet there are instances of common Caucasian identity which shows that these

two regions are not totally separate. In terms of religion also the church holds a strong position in Georgia whereas in Abkhazia the religion is not a factor. The Abkhaz are in fact a religiously divided people between Muslims and Christians which show that at least religion is not a factor which can catalyze any conflict situation in Abkhazia (Cornell: 2002, 173).

The sense of national conception in the minds of Abkhazians and Georgians both is very much stronger. That is to say that a Georgian can never be recognized as a member of an Abkhaz community simply because he is not a native of Abkhazia. At the same time an Abkhaz also does not get recognized as a native Georgian in Georgia because of his Abkhazian origin. But what is very liberal about Georgia is that the Georgian authorities at least recognize the concept of a separate Abkhazian identity. The policies of the Georgian government have at times fostered fear among the Abkhaz for their cultural as well as political autonomy and indeed even for their physical survival. The exclusive character of the national conceptions of the two ethnic groups was a factor increasing the distance between the two communities (Cornell: 2002, 174).

The case of Abkhazia is very much different from Georgia as its demography is concerned. The domination of minority ethnic group in a particular area increases the chances of the conflict. Similarly the presence of large communities of other ethnic groups is likely to lower the possibilities of conflict. The demographic situation of the Abkhaz and the conviction that Georgia was trying to deliberately alter the demography of the region created the fears of massacre of Abkhaz population and thus it might have cause to change their political situation. If this the case then it goes against the theory that the minorities predominating in a particular area will trigger the ethnic conflict. This can at least lead us to a conclusion that the mediocrity of the demography in favour of any ethnic group will not lead to any ethnic conflict (Cornell: 2002, 178). As far as economic conditions are concerned both the regions were very much productive during Soviet times. In fact the Georgian economy was at its zenith in 1970s. At the same time the Abkhazian economy was highly dependent on agriculture and services. Abkhazia being a hot tourist spot very much attracted the Russians and in this way it attracted the money.

The economically viable position of Abkhazia and Georgia both indicates that the economic factor had a very little role to play in the conflict.

The leadership of Abkhazia had always been well-connected with the Soviet bureaucracy and hierarchy. The pattern of ruling in Soviet Union was based on personal ties and the same was followed in the Caucasus also. The connection between the Abkhazian ruling elite with the same in Moscow provided for a policy co-ordination. The attachment of Russian military with the region of Abkhazia had also its bearing regarding the Russian support to Abkhazia which could have stimulated the conflict there. The close connections between Ardzinba's Abkhaz leadership and rapid Russian response from October 1992 onwards provide for strong evidence that the leadership in Abkhazia had received assurances of military support for Abkhazian independence. We can say that the external support as in the case the history of the international relations all over the world has always been a very crucial factor in the escalation of conflict (Cornell: 2002, 183).

The provision of autonomy has helped sustain the separate group identity of the Abkhaz. The Abkhaz people finding themselves in between Georgia and Russia specially in the absence of autonomy have been vulnerable to Russification regarding language or to Georgianization. The autonomy provided to Abkhazia enabled the Abkhaz elite to create mono-ethnic defence units and to arm them by appropriating the assets of the Soviet military in Abkhazia and to make laws concerning the state symbol and the status of Abkhazia. Laws on the flag and symbols of Abkhazia were passed in 1992, itself and the constitution was also adopted in the same year which instigated the conflict. The autonomy-providing institutions also provided the leadership to the Abkhaz population. Abkhazia's autonomy presented the probable nationalists leaders with a readymade power base which included decision making bodies, the financial resources and the media outlets to the people. Autonomy also played very crucial role in protecting and promoting the ethnic identity of the Abkhaz. This shows the crucial role played by the factor of autonomy (Cornell: 2002, 186).

As in the case of Abkhazia, the South Ossetians also retain a strong characteristic of pre-Christian and pre-Islamic religious beliefs. South Ossetians share the same religion with the Georgians, but they belong to a different ethno-linguistic group. And this is the case where the factors like language and religion play an important role in the convertibility of the tense situation (Cornell: 2002, 190).

The situation in Abkhazia was quite different and the same in South Ossetia is something which shows how crucial can be the national conception in determining the status of a region. It is well-known that the autonomous status of Abkhazia was never ever snatched whereas the South Ossetians autonomy has always been an issue of serious concern among the Georgian authorities and at many a times, this much cherished autonomy of South Ossetia has been taken back by the Georgians. The Georgians never recognized the separate identity of South Ossetians as was in the case of Abkhazia. Georgia always accepted the native Georgians and the Abkhaz as their native and indigenous people but they never accepted the South Ossetian population as their own native. Hence this difference making between the South Ossetian and Georgian people on whatever lines based on the criteria of native and non-native population, the conflict in South Ossetia grew stronger, hence, the occurrence of much repeated conflict in South Ossetia. Unlike the Abkhaz population, the South Ossetians did not have to resort to strong affirmative action policies in order to control the institutions of South Ossetia.

External support clearly contributed to the escalation of the conflict in South Ossetia. The Ossetian side during various stages of the conflict received support from Moscow first in the form of the Soviet authorities, but later in the shape of the Russian government. In 1992 at one occasion, Khasbulatov, the parliamentary chairman in Russia, declared that Russia might find itself forced to annex South Ossetia (Cornell: 2002, 194). The support from Russian side has always been in an apparent form to the South Ossetian leadership but to what extent has it been available is a matter of debate because at several instances, we have not been able to find the fit evidences.

On the factor of autonomy, it can be said that without the support of autonomous institutions, the conflict in South Ossetia would not have emerged in any way. The secessionist movement in South Ossetia flared up because of the presence of oblast Soviet, parliament, the state-controlled media and an entrenched Soviet nomenklatura. The radical agenda of the nationalists won over many hardships. The role of the intelligentsia can also be not denied. The radicals possessing all the institutions with the constitutional base and a perceivable degree of legitimacy strove towards the implementation of their agenda (Cornell: 2002, 195). Thus we can see that the autonomy factor how much contributed in this South Ossetian case. The case of South Ossetia and Abkhazia are the cases which have been vexing the international platform as well as the Eurasian one for a long time and still unresolved finally. And this is the real irony.



## **Chapter-3**

### **Geo-politics of Caucasus and Caspian Region**

There is no clear definition of what constitutes the Caspian region. Even after gaining so much of prominence the Caspian area has no clear cut definition so that one can have at least an idea as to how far will it be good to declare a particular zone as Caspian zone. Whether it comprise the newly independent states, the riparian states, states within the catchment area of Caspian sea, states with huge hydrocarbon reserves and the routes to transport oil and gas or something else? The irony is that the area is not even viewed as an integrated whole but rather as a collection of isolated geographic fragments. The new emphasis on the Caspian region is because of the regional development potentials this region is having. In the past the regions were used to be defined on the basis of culture, religion, colonial legacy and like criteria. Today they are defined on the basis of economic requirements and prospects of development. The Caspian region today may be defined as comprising Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey, Georgia, Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan (Amirahmadi, 2000: 2).

The political and economic factors underlie this grouping of countries. One very interesting fact about the region is that although this region is predominantly Muslim, but never ever the religious tag is reflected without any reason. In fact this grouping of these countries constitutes an economically viable grouping of states with common developmental interests and an awareness of their capacity for development.

There are three bases, first, capital second, transportations and third, economic requirements which determines the development in this Caspian region. The growing world demand for hydrocarbon fuel will guarantee the capital to be distributed among all the countries. The network of railway and other transportation facility will guarantee that the networks are facilitating the interaction. The regional co-operation agenda has been set but it has so many obstacles also. But there have been organizations like the organization for regional cooperation of the Caspian states (ORCCS), which have often been inhibited by the narrow interests of some particular countries (Amirahmadi, 2000: 2).

Since the region is heavily inter-connected and the problems in one state spread easily to another. This is specially true within the two sub-regions of the Caspian basin-the south Caucasus and central Asia. Trans-Caspian ties are rapidly growing stronger, driving all the eight states to greater interdependence. More than ever before, the solution of one state's problems will probably involve all the problems. This is the time to develop a new wisdom to be followed by these states of the Caspian basin region, one that better recognizes the social weakness as well as potential economic power of the region (Amirahmadi, 2000: 3). The development of the oil and gas reserves to be facilitated by the foreign direct investment is a thing which will ultimately benefit the overall development of Caspian region.

No one thought that the economic transition which will become a necessity after the end of communist rule, the citizen will start expecting that the oil which their country has will alleviate their problems. But soon their dreams got the test of reality and the political vacuum, which was created in the wake of the dissolution of Soviet Union, highlighted these weaknesses and made these states the breeding ground for ethnic violence and extremism. Although the conflicts seem Abkhazia, Azerbaijan and the civil war in Tajikistan have almost cooled, the potential for violence in the Caspian region did not disappear completely. The instability of the region has been a factor which proven all the calculations wrong. In 1991, the international community was frightening by the likelihood of the instability of the region. The inter-ethnic disputes emerged in all the South Caucasian states and there after the Caspian region saw the debate between development and conflict for the first time (Olcott, 1999: 306).

The discovery of vast oil and gas resources beneath the Caspian waters and shores has led us to believe that the regions importance will now be restored. Representatives of various multinational world companies, various lobby leaders and several government officials have been going through the Caspian region in order to gain access to its energy resources. The prospect of billions of dollars in possible foreign investment has raised several expectations.

Since many such projects are still in their early stages, their viability and their development remain uncertain. Growing poverty has made a very positive trend in the deal of narcotics and other illegal arms (Olcott, 1998: 96) Given this situation, the competition for the control of the Caspian's oil and gas deposits is likely to lead to the developments that will not only make the exploitation of the reserves more difficult, but also will create a zone of instability and crisis. We can cite two examples of soviet legacy which have halted the process of state building in the Caspian region. First is, the deep ethnic divisions have left each of these new states finding themselves in the grip of separatism. Even as native nationalities saw their new states as homelands, the minority communities alienated from the process of independence-gaining felt cheated and they never liked their second class status.

Hence, the Armenians and Azerbaijanese have been fighting over the status of the karabakh region and in Georgia, the Abkhaz continue to struggle for freedom. Not only is Georgia unstable, but Azerbaijan's other export alternatives to send oil north to the Russian port at Novorossiysk, means going either through Chechnya or Dagestan, the later a volatile region inhabited by more than a dozen competing ethnic groups. Second, the soviet republics' government created a false expectation that these new states had all the structures to meet the challenges of development (Olcott, 1998: 97).

The future of the Caspian region depends greatly on the development of its oil and gas resources. This development can proceed only under conditions of extensive international cooperation, involving all riparian states as well as outside powers and business interests. All the riparian states have a vested interest in assuring that transportation of Caspian oil will provide them with special economic and political rights and advantages. The collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in the creation of several new systems of regional and international relations. The Caspian and Caucasian region is one of the most important among them, in terms of its natural and human resources. To a considerable extent the future of the region depends on the development of Caspian oil and gas resources. This process proceeds under complicated political conditions,

including ongoing territorial and ethnic conflicts, clashing interests and perspectives of Russia and other new independent states, as well as Iran, Turkey, China, different Western powers, and others (Amirahmadi, 2000: 56). It is becoming more and more apparent that effective exploitation of Caspian resources may be possible only under conditions of wide international cooperation, involving all concerned states as well as outside powers and business interests that have substantial expert and investment capabilities in managing large-scale projects.

In view of the complicated geographic and geopolitical situation, one of the most difficult tasks so far unresolved is how to transport the crude oil produced in the Caspian Basin, specifically in the Azeri zone, toward possible markets in Europe and elsewhere. All local players have a vested interest in assuring that transportation of Caspian oil is arranged in such a way as to provide them with special economic and political rights and advantages. International players in large-scale investment projects are eagerly awaiting the outcome of regional contests to make appropriate decisions on the extent of their commitments (Adams, 1999: 146).

It is only a few years ago that the majority of Caspian riparian states (i.e., Azerbaijan, the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan) acquired formal independence. These newly independent states are still going through an intense and difficult process of nation and state building, defining their national goals and priorities, and assessing ways and resources needed for their development. Second, even though all these states have a lot in common, they work hard to assert the uniqueness of their own historic, demographic, linguistic, religious, and other experiences and traditions. Third, they continue to bear the effect of decades of authoritarian rule, expressed in poorly defined administrative and state borders, inconsistent legislation defining the ownership and use of land, water, and natural resources, and so forth. Fourth, complicated processes of the internal socio-economic and political development have led to the emergence, in each of the above states, of influential special interest groups, that are entering into complicated relationships among themselves and with other such groups outside national boundaries. Particularly intense is competition of various oil interests, as well as government and private companies and other related institutions (Olcott, 1999: 315).

Oil in the Caspian region is to be found both on land and the sea- shelf and sea bed. Land deposits are clearly falling under the ownership of appropriate states and are not subject to any controversy. A much more contentious situation exists with respect to marine oil and gas resources. The riparian states express considerably different opinions on the legal status of the Caspian Sea. Each perspective is intended to suit particular economic and political requirements. The predominant Russian view is that the Caspian as a body of water has unique characteristics, therefore its status has to be regulated on an exceptional basis. Russia insists that the Soviet-Iranian treaties of decades back still should be regarded as valid and providing the main legal base for this status (Olcott, 1999: 316). No wonder Iran supports the Russian view that basically allows the two states to have special privileges in the Caspian zone. Azerbaijan insists that the Caspian is nothing but a lake, with each riparian state having the absolute right to an appropriate sector of the whole.

Different opinions also are expressed on the resource potential of the Caspian. Some littoral states tend to entertain a fairly optimistic view on Caspian energy reserves and occasionally compare the Caspian Sea to still another Persian Gulf that would be able to play a crucial role in the world energy situation in the next century. However, according to a more realistic, if not pessimistic view, Caspian oil reserves remain fairly limited, compared to what is available in such known oil-producing centers as the Persian Gulf and the Russian Federation.

Central Asian countries along with Iran and Russia border the Caspian Sea. This particular kind of geographical setup is very much favorable to the development of trade across the sea among the riparian states. The importance of sea trade cannot be substituted by any other alternative. One solution to the problem can be achieved if we link all the republics and Afghanistan to the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman by road railway and pipeline networks. The importance of Iran is in its availability as a global market and a link to other parts (Amirahmadi, 2000: 177). In 1991, the central Asian republic were helped by an agreement which were signed between Iran and Kazakhstan, which strengthened their railway network and spread their reach till Persian gulf. In 1995, Iran, Turkmenistan and Armenia signed a tripartite agreement which provided for the

expansion of over land trade. In 1996, the Iranian rail network was also linked to central Asian region. Iran is a very important link which has connected the Caucasus, Caspian and central Asian regions to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. Iran- India in oil and gas trade can be facilitated by India funding a seven hundred kilometer railway connection between Bafk and Mashhad which will shorten the central Asian-Persian gulf connection by several hundred kilometers (Amirahmadi, 2000: 178). This would give India a competitive edge over Pakistan in central Asia.

A pipeline which will connect the Caspian region across Iran to the Persian gulf will be the most attractive pipeline because this will offer the nearest route from the Caspian to the oil markets of Japan and far east countries where the consumption of energy is on a constant increase besides that Iran's developed infrastructure, refineries and existing network of pipelines offer technical advantages to the exporters of Caspian oil and gas. Iran's existing gas pipeline is connected to Azerbaijan and any proposed pipeline connecting Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to this network will be much cheaper for the trade till black sea and Mediterranean.

In 1994, also Iran and Turkmenistan agreed to the construction of a gas pipeline from central Asia to Europe via Iran. In recent years china has also shown considerable interest in getting involved in the geo-politic of Caspian-central Asian region. It has signed a number of political and economic cooperation agreements with Russia and Iran, a gas pipeline deal with Turkmenistan in 1997, and has also offered a deal to Iran which will boost up its oil and gas business in the Caspian-central Asian region (Amirahmadi, 2000: 180). Russia has great influence over the Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union. Russia's economic support, military and connections with political establishments of these republics serve as an obstacle to outside power in this region like Iran and United States.

Iran and Russia in 1995 forged a co-coordinated political front in their approach to issues facing the Caspian and central Asian regions. Russia supported Iran's nuclear and technological projects and in the same year the two countries decided to set

up an oil company in the Caspian region. Iran's role as a broker of regional conflicts has always strengthened its image in the region (Amirahmadi, 2000: 180). The recent agreement of cooperation among Iran, Armenia, Greece and Georgia will provide a balance to Iran's position in Caucasus which will create a counterweight to the United States' inroads through Turkey, Azerbaijan and other technologically dependent countries in the region. Iran, Russia, and china are yet to finalize an agreement in the Caspian region.

For the sake of commercial and strategic benefit, the availability of alternative routes of transporting oil and gas from Caspian region is a must. Even the foreign policies of several external players like US and European Union will have to ensure that they have the access to secure suppliers. The development of Caspian oil fields till now was totally neglected by Russia because it never wanted to create a competitive environment for the players of its own country and for the sake of the oil which was already coming from its Siberian region. It has been the attitude of Russia to view the Caspian region under its own sphere of influence and to have the control over the access routes for the region's resources. In pursuit of what is believed to be the countries third largest energy deposits in the world after the Persian gulf and Russia's deposits in Siberia has now become the modern version of the old great game which Russia now pits against America on the one hand and on the other, the four other littoral states of the Caspian, to seek secure additional suppliers via overland routes which would lessen its dependence on sea-born supplies from West Asia (Shams-ud-din, 2000: 18).

America and its various oil companies have always tried to get rid of the hegemony which Russia owns over the Caspian resources, by providing for the transport routes to the South and the East bypassing Russia. The quest of these companies is to take all the resources to the Western market. On various occasions the Russian authorities have insisted that the main pipeline to export Azeri oil would pass through Russia and have guaranteed for a new pipeline by passing the conflict zone of Chechnya. But at the same time America would like to be in favour of the pipeline taking oil to the West via Georgia and Turkey. Here again one can see the closeness of Georgia to America in the



wake of pipeline politics. Interestingly the multinational oil companies have never preferred for the pipelines which start through Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, running under Georgia and Turkey to the Mediterranean coast. Instead they have opted for the Southern route through Iran or northern one via Russia to the black Sea.

Iran has also been pressing hard to convince the Western companies and the central Asian countries about the ease it can provide regarding the transport of oil and gas resources. But America would never like to include Iran into any trans-national pipeline project. In fact it wants to isolate Iran and find an alternative route in lieu of Russia (Shams-ud-din, 2000: 19). The position of Turkey regarding the export routes is against these oil resources to be carried through Russia and has actively campaigned against it. Turkey has proposed its own pipeline option from the Caspian to Mediterranean. Currently around 10 different long-term export route of the Caspian regions are under consideration by the countries involve in the region. One alternative is to start through Russia or the Caucasus and then through Black Sea and Turkey to the Mediterranean. Another one would pass through Afghanistan to Pakistan. Besides that route through Iran or through Kazakhstan to China has not been accepted by the oil companies in the concerned authorities because of the several complications involved in the project (Shams-ud-din, 2000: 20).

When we consider regarding the problem in the way of extraction and transport of oil and gas from the Caspian region, we come across the huge **environmental and legal problems** of the Caspian region. In the aftermath of the break up of the Soviet Union and birth new sovereign bordering the Caspian Sea, the legal status of the Sea has emerged as one of most contentious international problems facing the region. The discovery of large off-shore oil and gas deposit in the area has added urgency to the need to resolve the twin issues of the legal status of the Sea and the corresponding mining rights (Mehdiyoun, 2000: 179).

The position of Iran on the legal status of the Caspian Sea states that because its unique geographical characteristics, which distinguish the Caspian from other Seas,

the international law of the Sea is not applicable to it. Economic, political and geographical realities makes Iran's opposition to dividing the Caspian Sea-bed resources among the littoral states on a sectoral basis. The position of Azerbaijan says that this division of the Sea among such states is fully supported by the rules and practice of international law. The waters and the Sea-bed must be divided by means of an equidistant line. In fact Azerbaijan is in favour of dividing the Caspian into several national zones. The position of Russia states that the Caspian Sea must not be dictated by the general rules of the international law of the Sea. The latest position of Russia in contrast to the earlier held one supports the sectoral division of the entire Sea-bed of Caspian (Mehdiyoun, 2000: 187).

In a total contrast from the position of other states, Kazakhstan is willing to apply the UN convention on the law of the Sea to the Caspian region, therefore it supports the establishment of internal and territorial waters and an exclusive economic zone. The last but the very important littoral state Turkmenistan fully agrees with the position of Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. In a nutshell it can be said that the question of the division of the Sea-bed now hinges upon the technicalities of how to divide the Sea-bed. But the geo-strategic concerns of these littoral states are bound to determine the future of the Caspian region (Mehdiyoun, 2000: 189).

The Caspian Sea has its own kind of environmental problems and the available international institutions lack at several places in order to provide for the solution of Caspian's concerned area. Funding and procedural difficulties have very much neutralized the initiative taken under the United Nations development programme 1993, known as Caspian Sea Environmental Initiative. This initiative tried to stop the degradation of Caspian Sea environment but in its way came across funding problems because at that time all the littoral states were not the members of the Global Environmental Facility, the funding agency of the United Nations Environmental Programmes. The economic impact of environmental degradation must not be underestimated because the Caspian region offers the significant Non-oil economic potential (Amirahmadi, 2000: 10).

The Caspian Sea is a very unique eco-system. The major factors which contribute to the degradation of Caspian's environment include flooding, pollution and over-exploitation of natural resources. The report of the rising level of water in the Caspian Sea has created a sort of international concern. The lands beside the Caspian Sea are also being inundated. The pollution levels in the coastal areas are also higher than usual. The dangers associated with the hydrocarbon resources and the dumping of the industrial waste has contributed to the degradation of the Caspian environment. There has been a kind of assessment of the Caspian environment which seeks for the development of a comprehensive information system as the primary stage of solution seeking. All the littoral states will have to make a collective effort towards the solution of such problems. Finally, the geo-political considerations have also created an environment of distrust for the involved states which must be removed if the region has to be made fully productive and the area to be fully peaceful (Namazi, 2000: 133).

In the age of globalization the role of state and Non-State actors converge at some point. It is the usual case that the state employs the Non-State actors for the greater facilitation of the tasks which will be implemented after the policy making. In the geo-politic of the Caspian and Caucasus region there have been a number of Non-State actors which have been active and had their impact felt on the geo-politics of the region. These actors are many a times labeled as ethno-nationalist, multinational corporations, provincial entities, entrepreneurs, criminal groups, international organizations and Non-Governmental organizations. The role of these Non-State actors is important because many a times the trade and business needs several kinds of lobbying, pressure tactics and other negotiations and then only these Non-State actors become fully active and ultimately mould the way decisions are made (Dekmejian and Simonian, 2001: 150).

**Multinational corporations** constitute a very important link where the politics and economics interact with each other and have their impact on the society as a whole. In the case of Caspian region the multinational corporations because of their financial and technological strength become very much significant in the regions like the

Caspian. With respect to the Caspian region and specially during the later years of 1990s the old pattern of oil company-government relations began to change. Soon after the president of united states Bill Clinton 1996, got reelected, America adopted a pro-active policy towards the Caspian region. Driven by its own calculations about American interests in the region and after much pressure from Turkey, Americans started taking a lead role through their multinational corporations which they owned in the Caspian region.

A very good example is Baku-Ceyhan pipeline. The politics played by America on the shoulders of multinational corporations in the Caspian region can be best illustrated by the Baku-Ceyhan project (Dekmejian and Simonian, 2001: 161). This project even after being declared commercially unviable, the American government started the project to be finished as soon as possible. Here comes to light the dilemma between the power and the profit. And ultimately this confrontation came to limelight which showed that these corporations are nothing but the tools of state policy it also reflected the victory state power over company profits.

The same thing can be seen happening in example of Russia's Caspian policy. The post-Soviet meltdown of the Russian state apparatus and the dramatic rise in importance of the oil and gas complex for Russia's economy set the stage for a contentious state-company relationship. Given its ties to government leaders, the powerful oil company Lukoil openly defined positions expounded by the Russian foreign minister by participating in various Azerbaijani projects, including the contract of the century. Another conflict of interests involved Gazprom's exclusion of Turkmen gas from its pipeline network, which went against Russia's national interest by alienating Turkmenistan and forcing it to seek Non-Russian export routes (Dekmejian and Simonian, 2001: 162). The relationship between the multinational corporations and host countries include several complex issues such as corruption, political disputes, and culturally undesirable practices. Similar problems can also be observed in the Caspian region also. In Caspian countries also the cases of high level bribery has been recorded and the usual practice of oil companies has been to support the officials from the

government side. There are over 80 companies doing business in the Caspian region, for example, Chevron, BP-Amoco, Royal Dutch Shell, Exxon-Mobil, Lukoil, Texaco, and others.

**Non-Governmental organizations** like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Eurasia Foundation, the Harvard Negotiation Project and others have proliferated in the Caspian region which seeks to prevent any kind of conflict and extend humanitarian assistance. Given their generally authoritarian nature, Caspian governments have often obstructed NGO operations (MacFarlane, 1999: 25).

**International organizations** have always played a crucial role like various UN agencies, regional security organizations and global financial institutions in the Caspian region. Besides that the supra-national organizations like the UNDP and the High Commissioner for refugees (UNHCR) are also active in the regions like Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno Karabakh and other conflict zones in the Caucasus. The role of global financial institutions is very much significant regarding the development in the Caspian region.

Oil and gas has been one of the chief reasons behind the activity of Georgia to manage the affairs of Caspian region which is also supported by the fact that Georgia has been the key link between East and West. Several projects across Georgia will have to involve the transport of oil and gas from the neighborhood. The Georgians are very much aware of the fact that in order to gain the Western advantage in terms of finance and technology it will have to persuade the West by exploiting the advantage it has got because of the transportation facilities and pipelines passing through its territory. What has been ailing Georgia is their political instability and ethnic destabilization. This political instability is because of several factors like history, geography and to some extent the circumstances around.

The zones of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are two such territories where the ethnic violence and disruptions have totally defabricated the socio-political and

economic order. The blame game between Russia and Georgia has been continuing since time immemorial. Georgia has been accusing Russia of instigating ethnic disturbances among its population. While it is true that Russia is taking undue advantage of the chasm between Georgia and its break-away regions it cannot be said for sure that the problems in Abkhazia and South Ossetia is due to Russia giving clandestine support to Georgia's break-away regions. Russia wants to control Georgia by taking it inside its own sphere of influence because of the geo-strategic location of Georgia beside the black sea. Georgia in order to exploit its geo-strategic locational advantage has joined GUUAM grouping (Dekmejian and Simonian, 2001: 112).

In addition Georgia has also discussed the formation of a special troop to protect the planned Georgian and Azerbaijani section of the Baku-Ceyhan gas pipeline. Due to well-known Russo-Georgian conflict over the status of these breakaway regions Georgia secures for itself the security from Turkey in case of any war or conflict. Turkish and Georgian strategic and economic interests have so many similarities. The essential factors which can boost the role of Georgia in Caspian affairs include the reduction of endemic corruption, improvement of the depressed economic status of its people and the final solution of Georgia's ethnic conflicts. Thus, it appears that the role of Georgia is a very important one in Caspian affairs because of its locational advantage and manipulating capabilities on the geo-strategic platform (Dekmejian and Simonian, 2001: 113).

The Russian federation began to focus its attention on the Caspian region during the start of 1990. The geo-strategic location of Russia and the Caspian Sea region both are such that they both cannot live independently and ignoring the realities of ethnicity, language and religion. The ethno-political and religious nationalism on both the sides have created a sense of vulnerability. In the Russian military doctrine declared in 1993, these concerns were duly reflected. It said that in the coming future Russia would most likely face the threat of local wars and armed conflicts, which can escalate into a wide scale regional war. In the western part of the Caspian region, Russia has military presence in Armenia and Georgia and its military ties with the former are substantial.

Azerbaijan and Georgia are trying to limit and reduce Russian influence from their countries by trying to forge friendly ties with Turkey, America and other external powers (Shams-ud-din, 2000: 33). Azerbaijan and Georgia firmly believed that Russia has played dubious role in the ethnic conflict of their territory. The Georgians believe that the Abkhazia problem arose because of Russian support. In their quest for external support in order to counter Russia, Azerbaijan and Georgia have received a favorable response from Turkey, USA and others. In the search for allies the oil factor has played a decisive role.

Russia threatened to give support to Abkhazian military operations which would destroy Georgia, while Armenia completely depends on Russia for energy and support against Azerbaijan and Turkey. Thus Armenia and Georgia had no choice but to bow before the Russian demands given their internal weakness and international isolation. Georgia also depends on Russia for 85 percent of its energy and has the most severe energy problems of any post-Soviet state (Herzig, 1999: 72). Russia combined its economic weapons with direct force to compel Georgia to surrender, adhere to the CIS and a Russian economic plan, negotiate with Abkhazia and South Ossetia over their sovereignty or autonomy within a much less sovereign Georgia, and accept Russian military bases there.

In the end Russia seeks to tie Georgia more firmly into its orbit even though Georgia is trying to gain energy independence from Russia by diversifying its supply network. In addition, Georgian pipeline routes offer a convenient way to reduce the cost of shipping energy from Azerbaijan and Central Asia and control local oil flows. Georgia's case highlights the importance of pipeline routes (Herzig, 1999: 73). But it also shows that international aid and the ability to resist Russian encroachments are decisive factors in maintaining energy and overall independence for the CIS states. Even with diminished economic, political, and military potential Russia still is trying to play the role of a hegemon in the Caspian and Caucasian region. Ever since Azerbaijan and other minor concerned states declared their intention to start extensive activities on the Caspian, Russia raised the issue of its special rights in regulating and controlling this

process. In effect, this was done in the best tradition of Russian big power omnipotence, a concept that has been fueling Russian policies toward all neighboring peripheries from time immemorial. Russian ultranationalists insist that the new Russian state should continue the fight for traditional spheres of influence.

After independence Russia began to experience growing difficulties in dealing with regional challenges (Adams, 1999: 18). The defeat in a civil war in the rebel Chechen Republic was the most striking, but not the only, manifestation of Russian failures in the Caucasian zone. In a general sense, an unhappy feeling was being felt in high places in Russia that Russia was being pushed out of the vast and important regions adjacent to its borders, i.e. the Baltics, Central Asia and the Caucasus. Russian traditionalists, currently the most ideologically and politically influential in the elite class, have little doubts that most Russian problems still are being caused by the Western plans just like during the cold war. In their opinion, Western monopolies are prepared to plunder the Russian Caspian Sea and Russian Turkmenistan in an attempt to transform Azerbaijan, Chechnya, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan into pumping stations of the global network of Western pipelines (Herzig, 1999: 74).

In the eastern part of the Caspian region, the situation for Russia is not as complex as it is in the western part. Kazakhstan is a modern partner of Russia although there are differences over some issues like language policy and citizenship (Shams-ud-din, 2000: 36). Uzbekistan is a country which has ties with America and such developments can hamper the Russian attempts for integrating the region. Turkmenistan has neutral relations with Russia. America and turkey have complicated the situation for Russia. America has declared that Russia alone cannot claim the whole geo-political platform in the post-Soviet era. America has through its western oil cartels has already made its presence in the region and different routes to transport the oil and gas are being worked out. Interestingly Russia is believed to have five military bases in Georgia and when Azerbaijan and Georgia turned to turkey and America in order to offset Russian military presence on their territory, it became clear that a war over the resources has began in the Caucasus (Shams-ud-din, 2000: 37). Azerbaijan is willing to provide its



territory to western forces in order to ensure the security of the new transport routes being built.

Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan may not be confronting with Russia but they are interested in reducing Russian influence in the Caspian region. The example of such a stand is the revival of earlier silk route. Moreover the NATO expansion and the effort of all the Caspian countries in joining the partnership for peace programme of NATO is giving an impression that Russia is being continuously marginalized. In 1998 also, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan met to discuss the route of oil and gas transportation (Shams-ud-din, 2000: 38). Here again Russia was not represented thus, depriving it of influence in the Caspian region. Regarding the matter of energy transportation, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan would never like Russia to monopolize their energy calculations, but it would be very important to know that given the strategic geo-political importance of Russia, these countries cannot alienate Russia. At present the geo-political and security interest of Russia are perhaps far more important than its economic requirements.

Besides diplomacy, and regardless of its current economic, political, and other weaknesses, Russia retains several important instruments to influence the situation in the Caspian in its favor. It has the only infrastructure in place that may allow relatively safe and cost-effective transportation of hydrocarbons produced in the Caspian zone. Moreover, the Russian Federation possesses residual power projection capabilities allowing it to influence the military-political situation in a unique way. Russia has established its military presence in Armenia and in Georgia. Russian troops are stationed on the borders of Georgia and Armenia with Turkey (Herzig, 1999: 75). The Russian Federation also is trying to develop a joint anti-aircraft system together with the two above-mentioned Caucasian states.

From the very beginning, Russia was claiming the right to play a central role in managing regional local conflicts. Russian contingents were turned into the backbone of the CIS peacekeeping force in Abkhazia. The activities of the force were continuously criticized by the Shevardnadze regime in Georgia, trying to reestablish its sovereignty

over this province. Various ambitious plans for expanding Russian forces both in the Near Caucasus and Transcaucasia are being promoted. Besides that, Russia is using various economic and political tools from withdrawing raw material supplies to manipulating internal oppositions, in order to pressure local regimes and power groups.

While the breakup of the Soviet Union started a renewed struggle for influence in the region among the Russians, Turks, and Iranians, it also witnessed the emergence of major outside powers onto the regional scene. With an eye on Caspian oil, a host of industrialized nations have pumped billions of dollars in investment into Azerbaijan and other Caspian riparian states. Indeed, oil companies representing the national interests of Norway, France, Italy, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Japan are active in the Caspian Basin. A handful of European nations also have been active diplomatically in the region through such fore as the NATO and the OSCE. The external power most interested and active in the region, however, has been the United States (Amirahmadi, 2000: 188).

The American policy toward regional states has been more or less consistent since the breakup of the USSR. America has supported democratic, market-oriented reforms among the former Soviet states, encouraged their rapid integration into international political, economic, and security institutions, promoted conflict resolution and nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and forwarded American business interests in the republics. The thrust of American policy has been to promote the rise of peaceful, stable, democratic states on the territory of the former USSR. In the oil-rich Caspian Basin, American interests hinge around the emergence of truly independent, pro-Western democratic regimes with market-oriented economies (Amirahmadi, 2000: 189). The rise of such states not only would facilitate the unhindered development of Caspian oil and the creation of new export opportunities and jobs for American businesses, but also would strengthen the region against domination by a single power.

American corporations are by far the lead players in the Caspian, reflecting their predominance in the international oil industry. American firms hold substantial percentages of nearly every major Caspian consortium agreement, and have rights over

almost every major field presently under exploration or development. The American government's role has been more susceptible. America's stated Caspian policy to promote the independence and democratization of and, the creation of free markets in, the transition states differs little from its approach toward the rest of the developing world (McGuinn and Mesbahi, 2000: 189). But southern Caucasus' facts are very different. These states are independent only at the margins, they are privatizing by and for small networks of nomenklatura, and they are far from democratic.

The issues that have really driven America's Caspian policy have less to do with the Caucasus and Central Asia than with the relations with key countries outside the Southern Tier-Iran, Turkey, and Russia. Economic interests in the region aside, American policy has been determined by pre-existing approaches toward countries with longstanding business on the American agenda and related to the Caspian. The United States has vigorously opposed Iranian influence in the region. As part of America's dual containment of Iran and Iraq, American companies are forbidden from engaging in any investment that involves Iran. She does not want Caspian oil to pass through Iran.

Meanwhile, America has strongly promoted Turkey throughout the Caspian region as the ideal outlet for foreign trade, portraying the NATO ally as a secular model for Islamic nations and as a gateway to the West (Dekmezian and Simonian, 2001: 133). It has also encouraged Turkey to establish closer relations to the Southern region. Clearly, America wishes Caspian oil to pass through Turkey. America's stance on Russia is more confusing. One analyst explains America's Russia first policy thus: "The policies of a democratic Russia in the Caspian region are assumed to be benign, so the Clinton administration has given Moscow a free hand there." Another takes the opposite view: The United States has made a foreign policy priority out of making sure that Central Asia's oil and gas are transported via alternative non-Russian routes.

America's Russia policy is contradictory. This is less the result of an ideological divide in the United States and more the result of competing interpretations of the nature of the Russian regime. On the one hand, Russia has been America's primary strategic interest in the region. And a healthy Russia is essential for the future stability

and prosperity of the Caspian region. On the other hand, Russia is a competitor for regional influence and harbors imperialist notions about its southern flank (Dekmejian and Simonian, 2001: 134). The exception to America's unique Caspian focus has been landlocked and resource-wise poor Armenia. The reason for this is the powerful Armenian-American lobby which has succeeded in keeping the plight of Armenia before officials in America. In consequence, Congress has earmarked large-scale financial aid for Armenia and has passed Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act, which prohibits humanitarian aid to Azerbaijan because of its blockade of Armenian territory. Therefore, America desires Caspian oil to pass through Armenia (Dekmejian and Simonian, 2001: 134).

America's overall strategy has accordingly shifted over time. Originally, the United States equivocated on its pipeline preferences, opposing Iran but otherwise supporting a multiple pipelines strategy. But more recently America has favored the Baku-Ceyhan route, which crosses Armenia as well as Georgia, as the primary route for moving big oil. American policy towards Caspian is full of unclear intentions and interests. Armenia and Turkey are more problematic allies than America thinks and her thoughts about Russia need to be replaced by a policy of cooperation and support.

The American engagement in the Caspian Basin was hectic in 1997 when, at Azerbaijan's urging, the United States joined France and Russia as cochairmen of the so-called Minsk Group attempting to negotiate a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Although a cease-fire has been in place in the conflict zone since May 1994, peace talks have been at a virtual standstill due to the parties' unwillingness to compromise on key issues. Whereas the American role in the Karabakh negotiations was a secondary one prior to its getting over to this role of the Minsk Group, America has now assumed a more active role as mediator (Winrow, 2000: 24).

Despite encouraging signs of increased American activity in the region, the strategic importance of the Caspian Basin demands far greater and more sustained priority in her foreign policy. The outcome of the current tussle for influence in the region will determine not only the degree of Western access to a major new source of oil,

but also the very geopolitical makeup of Central Asia in the next century. In light of these problems, the United States must aim to promote free and open access to the Caspian's energy reserves and encourage cooperation rather than confrontation among the powers now struggling for control in the region. The United States can best forward these interests by formulating a new, more proactive policy toward the Caspian states and their neighbors.

The United States should seek to clarify its interests in the region with Russia. Recognizing that Russia is a major regional power with interests of its own, Washington should continue to welcome and encourage Russian participation in Caspian oil development. However, it must be made clear that strong-armed tactics aimed at dominating surrounding countries are not acceptable. The cost of Russia's inclusion in Caspian oil matters must be the abandonment of its aggressive policies toward the states along its southern flank (Kerr, 1998: 1129). At the same time, Moscow must be assured that the West's objective is not to turn Transcaucasia and Central Asia into a bloc of anti-Russian states, but to promote real independence for the peoples of those regions.

Moreover, it should promote true sovereignty and independence for the southern former Soviet republics. America's recent stand in favor of sectoral division of the Caspian Sea was a necessary step in this regard, because national jurisdiction will enable Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan to make independent decisions on the development of their natural resources and speed their acquisition of oil wealth. In addition, the United States should continue to lobby international investors for the adoption of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline as the primary means of shipment for Caspian oil.

A Turkish pipeline would deny Russia sole control of the Caspian energy and force Russia to mitigate its behavior in the region. When hydrocarbons begin flowing in significant quantities with the participation of international oil companies and neighboring states, the southern republics' drive for genuine independence will be accelerated (Kerr, 1998: 1130). The rise of prosperous and independent states on the borderlands of the Caspian would enhance greatly the West's access to regional energy reserves and lessen the chances of conflict.

Furthermore, the United States should make a vigorous effort to bring a just end to the multiplicity of ethno-territorial conflicts that affect the region. From Tajikistan in the east to Georgia in the west, Russia's southern flank has been torn by violent interstate and intrastate disputes since the demise of the Soviet Union. The most important of these for American interests is the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The United States must reconsider its policy toward Iran. Situated beside both the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf, Iran has a large role to play in the development and export of regional energy reserves. Indeed, it is almost universally recognized among Western oil experts that the ideal route for a Caspian oil pipeline is through Iran (Amirahmadi, 2000: 213).

However, the current Iranian regime's hostility to American interests in the Middle East and Central Asia led America to adopt a policy of containment against Iran. This policy has failed in practice due to the continued willingness to do business with Tehran on the part of most countries, including the former Soviet republics. Although the American policy has prevented Iran from participating in the largest oil development and pipeline ventures in the Caspian, Iran continues to play a significant role in the region while challenging the American interests in the Middle East. The United States therefore should undertake a more active policy aimed at exploiting the domestic weaknesses of the Iranian regime and expediting its removal from power.

The downfall of the Islamic Iranian regime would have positive geopolitical consequences for American interests not only in the Caspian Basin, but throughout Central Asia. Given the Caspian region's instability, and the tendency of today's friends to become tomorrow's enemies, multilateralism is the key to the interests of the Southern Caucasus states. This means that the United States must recognize its strengths and limitations in the region. It can and should uphold international standards when Russia attempts to impose its idea of the Caspian dream. The United States may be the world's only superpower, but it is not the only major power in the Caspian. Russia, Iran, and China all have critical roles to play, and American involvement through negotiations can only enhance regional security.

A new power in the Caspian region is Turkey, in whom growing disillusionment with Europe and the collapse of the Soviet empire rekindled Ottoman dreams of a new Turkish sphere of influence. But despite Turkey's natural advantages over many of its regional rivals, its ambitions to lead the states of the south Caucasus and Central Asia have gone largely unfulfilled. Indeed, Turkey has cautiously pursued its regional agenda and maintained a low profile (Dekmezian and Simonian, 2001: 107).

Several factors continue to limit Turkish influence in the region. First, Turkey's own domestic problems, including Kurdish separatism, the Islamic political movement, and economic weakness, divert attention from any major foreign policy agenda. Second, Turkey remains preoccupied with pressing security threats from Syria, Iraq, and Iran, instability in the Balkans, and ongoing disputes with Greece over Cyprus. Third, Turkey's geographic distance from Central Asia makes it difficult to exert power in the region. Fourth, Turkey lacks the capital to provide large-scale economic aid and investments in the region. Fifth, Turkey's chauvinist attitude towards leadership of the pan-Turkic cause is likely to offend the sensibilities of many Central Asian leaders. Finally, many of the Central Asian countries have developed their own relations with Western countries, lessening the need to rely on Turkey as a bridge to the West.

History also suggests the wisdom of stronger states bearing the responsibility, when possible, to secure against the perils faced by the weaker states in the region. States could gain from respecting and assisting each other in developing their comparative advantages. In a region where the advantages of interdependence are prominent, focusing primarily on competitive advantage is inappropriate. The approach should be to gauge the competitive advantage of the region as a whole, and within that, to address the comparative advantage of its parts. The interdependence destinies of the Caspian region and the oil industry mean that both will suffer if problems are addressed unilaterally. Regional cooperation is necessary not only for environmental management, but also for the installation of pipelines among other development projects (Amirahmadi, 2000: 9). The Caspian region could once again become a strategic crossroads of the world. It is reopening as a frontier for energy and development is, however, associated with serious challenges, imposed by the varied interests of different players and their own internal

transformations in a new world order. The potential for growth and development is rich, but so is the prospect for serious impediments of a political-economic and strategic nature. Past metaphors and understandings for engaging the area in world affairs will not realize its substantial potential (Amirahmadi, 2000: 24). A fundamental pre-requisite for development and stability is mutual respect by the different players for each others' interdependent interests and needs.

The question why did the Caspian become a centre of international attention in the last decade of the 20ieth century and why was the Caspian accorded such a prominent position in the crowded policy agendas of the United States and the west? The answers to these questions could provide insights into a larger and more controversial discourse about the structure and the evolution of the international political system since the cold war. The west's decade- long involvement in the larger Caspian region was motivated by the interrelated political and economic interests, which were both mutually conflicting and complementary.

Thus the great oil rush of the early 1990s was driven mainly by the oil companies in their struggle to secure participation in a potentially energy-rich region. It was only natural for western governments to lend support to oil companies in their quest for new sources of energy and the pursuit of profitable ventures. In a sense, the companies were lending the way, letting the flag follow in their wake. By the late 1990s however, the situation was very much reversed with the governments taking the lead in setting the plans for them (Dekmezian and Simonian, 2001: 171). If oil and gas riches begin pouring in soon, the Caspian basin states could well face a bright future. But promises of riches don't become a reality in the form of security. The slow development of the region's energy export capacity means that negative conditions for the future has to be considered. It also indicates that the countries of the region must deal with their social problems first, and they should wait for the benefits from this export of their energy to solve those problems for them.



## **Chapter-4**

### **An Overview of Russo-Georgian relations since Independence, 1991**

Georgia's independence came after much negotiation and the debates around the autonomy to be provided to regions like Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Azeria. The status of autonomy which was several times provided and snatched from the region of South Ossetia has been a major obstacle between the government of Georgia and leadership South Ossetia region. This South Ossetia crisis was the first challenge which Gamsakhurdia faced after the declaration of independence. In September 1990, the South Ossetia regional Soviet had declared South Ossetia an independent republic within the Soviet Union and had planned the election for 9<sup>th</sup> December. The Georgian ethnic population of South Ossetia boycotted the election and after two days the Georgia Supreme Soviet cancelled South Ossetia's declaration of independence and even abolished its autonomous status, making it a part of another of Georgian region (Wheatley, 2005: 53).

The period of time between 1990 election and Gamsakhuria's downfall in January 1992 was marked by an eradic one man role, an increasing violence and the outbreak of war in South Ossetia. The fallout of the elections of 9<sup>th</sup> December was the civil war within the region of South Ossetia and the mass killing of ethnic Georgians and Ossetians both by each other. The fact that the Georgian independence was brought during the rule of Gamsakhurdia makes it very much ironical that the crises like in Abkhazia and South Ossetia were the part of the legacy which the Soviet Union provided to Georgia as an independent republic.

The Georgian government's response was to declare a state of emergency in South Ossetia and in January 1991, the Georgian forces entered Tskhinvali. In January end 1991, the Georgian police arrested the newly elected chairman of the South Ossetian parliament. This led to more than a year and half civil war that resulted in hundreds of deaths and the expulsion of thousands from their homes. The appointment of joint peacekeeping forces of Georgians, Russians and Ossetians to control the crisis situation in July 1992, put a brief restriction over the conflict (Wheatley, 2005: 54).

Gamsakhurdia since his active days had taken an interest in the rights of Georgians in the autonomous regions of South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Azeria. The experience of these

years shows that he did not have too much experience in dealing with such matters. During Gamsakhurdia's rule, the erratic character of the leader became a problem and this can be seen in the fact that Gamsakhurdia equated Georgia with himself. His controversial statements were not only creating the problems on the domestic front but were also irritating the neighborhood and the other foreign states. His criticism of American president attempted to prevent the dissolution of the Soviet Union and his Pro-Armenian comments on the region of Karabakh alienated the Americans and Ajarbaijanese.

Although Gamsakhurdia by his deeds was not a person who could be criticized so vehemently but his statements and oral speeches were enough to trigger the inter-state divide and sustain them. Even after banning the communist party in August 1991, his erratic mindset often resulted into his political incompetence (Cornell, 2002: 165). "A very shameful act of Gamsakhurdia was of self-glorification. He viewed himself as the last person in a long line of Georgian national heroes, who embodied sacrifices on the altar of the fatherland. The struggle for Gamsakhurdia was between good and evil.... Comparing himself to Charles De Gaulle, Gamsakhurdia argued that a strong presidency corresponded to the historical laws and the characteristics of the Georgian people" (Jones, 2005: 165).

When we talk of Gamsakhurdia's priorities, he tried to accumulate maximum power in his own hands and his knack for centralization of power was reflected in December 1990, when he became the executive president by convincing the Georgian parliament. At the end of the January 1991, he established Georgian national guard which was suppose to be Georgia's own armed forces. Kitovani, a friend of Gamsakhurdia, was appointed as its chief. Through a special law on the prefecture, Gamsakhurdia provided for the special prefects to the regions who were to wear considerable power in their hands. In the same year in April one more law provide for the much widening of presidential powers. This law specified that the president would be able to dismiss the cabinet with the agreement of the Supreme Soviet. And finally on 26<sup>th</sup> May 1991, Gamsakhurdia own with 86% of vote in the presidential elections which were alleged to

be biased towards Gamsakhurdia. What was very interesting and problematic for other parties at that time that Gamsakhurdia's popularity even penetrated into their cadres. It was not so that Gamsakhurdia did not have any obstacle. The *Mkhedrioni* which prove to be his one of the challenges and which supported the national Congress and staged a hunger strike to demand for Gamsakhurdia's more accommodating approach. *Mkhedrioni*'s stance was often proving to be against Gamsakhurdia and ultimately with the formation of the new party in February 1991, they had already denounced Gamsakhurdia (Wheatley, 2005: 55).

The era of Gamsakhurdia started to take a downturn soon after the attempted coup in Moscow that took place on 19 August 1991. Gamsakhurdia totally rejected the replication of the coup that had occurred in a separate country saying that it was none of his business. Later under pressure from the coup leaders, Gamsakhurdia sub-ordinated the Georgian national guard to the ministry of internal affairs. He also lost many of his popular followers like Kitovani refuse to obey his order and left Tbilisi. He also lost his prime minister after criticizing and forcing him to resign. On 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1991, Gamsakhurdia called a state of emergency. In lieu of several concessions Kitovani asked for a safe passage for his forces. At that point of time Gamsakhurdia was quite convinced that Moscow was trying to make the matters worse for Georgia by helping these breakaway factions covertly.

In the last week of December 1991, the fighting between the National Guard and government troops in Tbilisi took an ugly turn when on 26<sup>th</sup> December Gamsakhurdia was forced to quit the seat. And finally he did so on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1992. Later it was reported that he went onto exile in Chechnya on modern times (Wheatley, 2005: 56). What causes the failure of Gamsakhurdia was an interplay of multiple factors. "The failure of Georgia to be transformed into a viable state was caused by reasons like poor decision- making by Gamsakhurdia, his unwillingness to compromise being a factor behind the outbreak of conflict in South Ossetia, his decision in a moment of weakness to capitulate to the coup leaders in Moscow and reduce the status of the national guard resulting in the defection of Kitovani and his authoritarian tendencies to alienated both

allies and the current supporters. In sum total we can say that Gamsakhurdia's orientation was against compromise and to alienate his supporters caused his failure" (Wheatley, 2005: 60). Regarding the crisis in Abkhazia the Abkhaz and Georgian leadership had managed in late 1991, to agree on a special scheme for the Abkhaz parliament. Surprisingly, Abkhazia remained totally calm during the rule of Gamsakhurdia. A serious attempt at reconciliation was made in August 1991, when Gamsakhurdia reached a power sharing deal with the Abkhaz leadership to be effected in the new 65-seat Abkhazian parliament. On 29<sup>th</sup> September 1991, elections were held to the Abkhaz Supreme Soviet on the basis of the new law. Thus, the overall policy of Gamsakhurdia was very much tactical regarding the problem of Abkhazia.

In February March 1992, when the leaders of the coup in Moscow decided to invite Eduard Shevardnadze, back to Georgia to assume the responsibilities of the head of the state, and to invite all political parties and leaders except Gamsakhurdia into a proto-typical parliament called the 'state council', it began a new Era in the political development of Georgia. The decision by the military council to invite Shevardnadze resulted in his return to Georgian political scene on 7<sup>th</sup> March 1992. Initially Kitovani and Sigua were opposed to the return of Shevardnadze but later following the power sharing agreement that was eventually struck between Kitovani, Sigua, Ioseliani and Shevardnadze agreed on making him the head of the state. Sigua was made prime minister, Kitovani remained the head of the National Guard and Ioseliani remained the leader of the Mkhedrioni (Wheatley, 2005: 70).

The state council consisted of the parties which opposed Gamsakhurdia as well as the people from intelligentsia and ethnic minorities. Even after the state council became the governing body of Georgia the crucial decisions were always taken by Kitovani and Ioseliani. Shevardnadze remained a mere puppet. Several wrong and blatant decisions were taken by Kitovani in second half of 1992, like the decisions unilaterally taken in the matter of Abkhazia which totally disbalanced the relationships between Georgia and Abkhazia. During the elections of October 1992, the Pro-Shevardnadze bloc was the peace bloc. Initially Shevardnadze decided to join this bloc but later reversed his

decision. Another significant Pro-Shevardnadze bloc was unity bloc. The main winners of the elections were the peace bloc, the October bloc, the National Democratic Party and the Unity bloc in their decreasing order of the seats. Around 21% of seats were owned by the peace bloc (Wheatley, 2005: 75).

The new administration consisted of Sigua as the prime minister besides the four deputy prime ministers. A separate defence minister was also there and things were becoming very much apparent that now Shevardnadze needed it to consolidate his power and authority in his hand. The parliament was highly limited in its effectiveness and progress on legislative activity was minimum. The parliament was mainly divided with respect to two issues one was the attitude towards the head of the state and the other was about relations with Russia. Some sections in parliament demanded the immediate withdrawal of Russian forces from Georgian soil and criticized Shevardnadze for being too compromising towards Russia. These sections were also radical at some point as we can see that in June 1993 its leader asked Shevardnadze to resign and announced the acts of public protest in order to force him to do so.

While Shevardnadze had considerable power on paper, this was not entirely reflected in reality. The formal organs of power that is the parliament and the cabinet of minister were relatively ineffective. The power to suppress was totally with the National Guard and the Mkhedrioni and this was reflected in the establishment in November 1992 of the national security and defence council because this council had four deputy chairmen. Actions in the battle field of Abkhazia were still dictated by Kitovani and Ioseliani. Both the organizations, Mkhedrioni and the National Guard were mafia type organizations that resorted to extortion to obtain their resources (Wheatley, 2005: 78). Shevardnadze did not yet have either the power or the resolve to restore law and order to the country and during the first part of 1993, he sought to capitalize upon his association with Ioseliani to marginalize Kitovani. Kitovani had become critical of Shevardnadze because of several reasons. Later in May 1993, with the backing of Ioseliani, Shevardnadze dissolved the National defence council. The Abkhazian troops with the covert support of Russian forces captured the Abkhazian capital Sukhumi in September 1993

which led to the exodus of the entire Georgian population of Abkhazia as refugees. The move of Shevardnadze to erect his own kind of state was prompted by the degenerating state apparatus and the overall degradation of systemic infrastructure with absolutely no power in the hands of Shevardnadze himself. The central organs of the state were rendered ineffective and a very few number of organizations erected undemocratically took the hot seat (Wheatley, 2005: 79).

Georgia was rendered ungovernable by war, economic collapse, rampant crime, and the primacy of warlords in affairs of state. Yet within a year and a half, Shevardnadze managed to begin consolidating centralized political power and reconstructing state institutions. His strategies highlight the indispensability of political hegemony and intelligent leadership in stitching a state back together. The Georgian state project is far from complete. The State reconstruction will undoubtedly take generations (Demetriou, 2002: 877).

Shevardnadze acquired hegemonic authority over a wide range of political actors and key nodes in the power networks embedded in society and the economy. The main vehicles for this were the Citizen's Union of Georgia (CUG), a broad-based political party established by Shevardnadze in 1993, and a widespread purge of the ministries. United around the leadership of Shevardnadze, the CUG consisted of key reformers from the former pro-independence movement; regional, city and central apparatchiks from the Soviet era; directors of major economic enterprises; and leading figures from the intelligentsia. This organizational gathering in of political actors was facilitated by Shevardnadze's genuine popularity and by the channels that the CUG provided to key posts in the government administration. Shevardnadze roped-in party members by manipulating inter-personal rivalries and official appointments.

The creation of a system of political order between 1994 and 1998 put an end to conditions of anarchy. This was due largely to Shevardnadze's success in establishing and institutionalizing hegemonic authority within a reconstituted state structure. Shevardnadze's approach which corresponded to the three processes of consolidating

hegemonic political authority consisted of: (1) destroying the numerous paramilitaries and hence centralizing the means of violence; (2) creating a broad-based political party as a vehicle for subordinating previously autonomous political agents; and (3) adopting a constitution that institutionalized both his power (in the form of the presidency) and the relations of power cross-cutting Georgian social and political relations. Shevardnadze's political consolidation began with a crack-down on crime and political violence that eventually became a method for rooting out criminals and warlords embedded at the heart of Georgian political institutions. Taking advantage of defeats suffered by the irregular armed formations, Shevardnadze gradually removed their leaders from power through a series of Machiavellian political maneuvers.

By early 1994, Georgia's independence had been a complete disaster, with two ethnic wars and two civil wars ravaging the country. Georgia had failed to retain its factual independence, and seemed to have returned to Russian domination. It now controlled only half of South Ossetia and had almost lost its control over Abkhazia. It had a large refugee population which became a hotbed of nationalism. Shevardnadze was now left with a very difficult task of picking of the pieces and putting the nation back on track. With Shevardnadze announcing a new cabinet in September 1993 itself, no single political force dominated and the cabinet remained a balanced one. The crucial appointment in the new cabinet of ministers was that of minister of internal affairs, which Shevardnadze reserved for himself. Shevardnadze later announced that his taking charge of such a ministry has everything to do with the suppression of Gamsakhurdia's supporters and insurgents in the western Georgia. However, the events in western Georgia and emerging polarization of views with regard to Georgia's joining the CIS would appear to have changed his mind on the matter (Wheatley, 2005: 85).

The establishment of the citizens union of Georgia as the most powerful political party was a major achievement for Shevardnadze. From 1994 onwards and by 1995, this party gathered the support of all the sections of society and by 1995; it became characterized by a well-organized party with a strong youth organization. In June 1994, the Republican Party, the Popular Front and Charter' 91 decided to merge and form a



new party called the United Republican Party, which became the second largest bloc in parliament after the Citizens Union of Georgia (Wheatley, 2005: 91). The Georgian parliament in the 1993 itself had formed a state constitutional commission to draft a new constitution for Georgia that was to be based on the constitution of 1921. The progress on this work was delayed by fundamental disagreements on whether Georgia was to be a parliamentary or presidential republic. In November 1994, a compromise constitution based on a semi-presidential model was drafted by a commission working group after consultations with international experts.

However, this compromise was rejected out of hand by Shevardnadze on the grounds that it did not give sufficient power to the president. In later month this year they adopted a model almost resembling Russian model having two-chamber parliament and a cabinet of ministers responsible only to the president. But the opposition of Shevardnadze rejected this draft and later a compromise was proposed by Bakur Gulua where by Georgia would become a US-type presidential republic with the president as the head of the state. In the final draft which emerged after much persuasion and bargaining, there was no cabinet of ministers as such and individual ministers were to be responsible only to the president (Wheatley, 2005: 94).

There was certain feeling of optimism in Georgia which had never been experienced in before. Abkhazia and South Ossetia remained for their most of the time out of the control of Georgia. The regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia had achieved their independence as a result of armed conflict and thus they were not recognized by the international community. After the Georgian authority lost the war in Abkhazia, the region had been ruled by two governments. A new constitution for the independent republic of Abkhazia was drafted and endorsed by the leaders of the separatist regime in November 1994. At the same time, Ardzinba was made president of the breakaway region (Wheatley, 2005: 121).

Shevardnadze used the opportunity to appoint the persons of his choice on various posts of significance in order to fulfill his dream of establishing a sound Georgian

state. The pace of his appointments to local posts increased during 1994, as well as appointing more mayors, he also created the unofficial posts of governor whose domain area will cover the historical regions of Georgia which no longer formed the part of official Georgia. Nine provinces were established and each supervised by a governor, although the governor's duties were not defined by law (Wheatley, 2005: 88). Shevardnadze's maneuvering in forcing his opponents to resign and then imposing a state of emergency and taking personal control of internal affairs, had allowed him to consolidate the considerable power in his own hands. By mid 1995, Shevardnadze was the most powerful player on the Georgian political scene.

In 1995 an assassination attempt at Shevardnadze was done but that was a failure. The most important consequence of these events was the defeat of the Mkhedrioni. Besides that there were several other examples of the disintegration of social forces which the opposition of Shevardnadze had installed. The assassination of Shevardnadze would have had a devastating impact had it been successful. Power would either have returned to the various paramilitary groupings, resulting in a protracted period of conflict between rival mafias, pro-Russian forces within the so called power ministries may have made a bid for hegemony and brought Georgia closer within the Russian orbit. His removal at this point of time would have threatened the very survival of the state (Wheatley, 2005: 96).

This process of making a wholesome overhauling of the administrative set up by appointing persons of his own choice, which culminated in late 1995, involved the disbanding of smaller paramilitary formations by the Mkhedrioni; the demotion of both Jaba Ioseliani (Mkhedrioni) and Tengiz Kitovani (National Guard); their arrest (together with the entire leadership hierarchy) in connection with the 1995 attempted assassination of Shevardnadze; and, finally, the disbanding and disarmament of both the Mkhedrioni and National Guard. By the end of 1995, Shevardnadze had consolidated coercive power in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, State Security and Defence. As a result, law and order were restored and the more obvious criminal structures were dismantled (Demetriou, 2002: 878).

In 1994 itself the Georgian parliament had officially dissolved the Supreme Council of the autonomous republic of Abkhazia but in February 1995 had passed a new resolution reestablishing the body and giving a mandate to those who had been elected to the Supreme Council in 1991 but had subsequently been forced to flee. In June 1995, the Georgian parliament had decided to introduce the people elected to the parliament in 1992 from Abkhazian region. Thus there was an officially recognized parallel power structure which was also known as the Abkhazian government-in-exile. When the Abkhaz military units went inside Gali region and expelled most of the Georgian population living there in May 1998, the Georgian side claimed that the Abkhaz were supported by Russian peacekeepers that were in Abkhazia since the end of the war under the supervision of CIS (Wheatley, 2005: 122).

Under Shevardnadze the governments' inherent weakness was exacerbated by a dysfunctional political system. Parties appeared and disappeared. Elections were falsified. Corruptions became rampant, police officers extracted fines for imaginary crimes and government officials misappropriated international aid and helped sell off state industries to their cronies. In the end nothing became Shevardnadze in power like the living of it. The secessionists in Abkhazia and South Ossetia will look no more kindly on the new leadership than they did on the old. There are signs in fact that they may be even less inclined to cooperate with energetic reformers than they were with the generally accommodating Shevardnadze. As soon as Shevardnadze fell the renegade regions appealed to Russia, their long time protector, to dissuade the new Georgian leadership from making aggressive moves. Elsewhere local elites have become accustomed to running their own affairs, and efforts by the central government to rein them in may produce conflict. We can look at the largesse and laxity of Shevardnadze rule which benefited the bureaucrats and the business class (King, 2004: 16).

Following the 5 November 1995 parliamentary elections, in which the CUG won a plurality of the votes (23.71 per cent), it was institutionalized within the framework of the state. This consolidation of political hegemony was deepened by the

institutionalization of a discourse on Georgian statehood through the 1995 constitution (Demetriou, 2002: 878). Beyond providing a blue-print for the Georgian state, the constitution stressed its socially-inclusive nature. Its adoption signified the institutional entrenchment of political order and the beginning of a flurry of decrees establishing the groundwork for many post-Soviet state institutions. This process had clearly positive effects on the economic situation. The reorganization of economic ministries, international assistance, and a series of structural reform policies permitted the successful introduction of a stable currency, the lari, in 1995.

Georgians say that the country's biggest problem is Russia. The Russian government has never denied that it has taken a keen interest in its neighbor and Georgia's secessionist leaders welcome Russian support; they even visited Moscow just days after Shevardnadze resigned. Russia has effectively cemented the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as the protectorate by maintaining preferential visa and passport regimes with them and making it easier for their inhabitants to obtain Russian citizenship. Russia also operates military bases in Georgia, in contravention of international agreements to close them down. To balance Russia's influence, Georgia's central government needs outside help specially from the United States which has been the country's most generous backer for a decade. A stable and democratic Georgia is the linchpin of US policy in the Caucasus and in turn is a critical part of the strategic future of Eurasia and the Middle East.

Georgians hope that their country needs to establish the right pressure gradient in its foreign policy. The rule of Shevardnadze also had substantial amount of aid from the Clinton administration which helped Shevardnadze to stay in power for a long time. Georgians also hope that the United States and its allies will put pressure on Russia so that Russia in turn will put pressure on Abkhazia and South Ossetia to give up their quest for independence (King, 2004: 17). On February 3 1996, Georgia and Russia signed a "Treaty of friendship, good neighborly relations, and cooperation", which later was ratified by the Georgian parliament in January 1997. In addition in September 1995 already Russia and Georgia had signed the "Treaty on Russian military bases on the

territory of the republic of Georgia". This Treaty granted Russia the access to four bases in Georgia for a duration of at least 25 years. Russia was to guarantee Georgia's border security and assist Georgia in reconstructing its military forces. During this time Russia's military practice had a monopolistic nature and the western military guidelines were also not allowed in training. This is the reason for the poor quality of Georgia's armed forces today. It is very much doubtful whether Shevardnadze would have stayed in office for such a long time as he did, had it not been the Russian support behind him in almost all the matters (Larsson, 2004: 407).

During the mid 1990, Russia had some four thousand troops on the Turkish-Georgian border. In addition, some ten thousand troops were also located at the four military bases: Gudauta, Vaziani, Akhalkalaki, and Batumi. In 1992, Georgia and Russia had the joint responsibility for the maritime border and the border to Turkey but in 1996, Georgia's parliament decided that Georgia should take full responsibility and in 1998, the Akhalkalaki section of the Turkish border came under the Georgian protection (Larsson, 2004: 408). Things are more complicated than this. Abkhazia and South Ossetia certainly depend on Russia. Their trade is oriented almost exclusively towards the North and Russian financial assistance specially via subsidised energy supplies, is the backbone of their existence. Russian bases support local economies, even outside the secessionist zones closing them down without a plan for replacing the jobs lost would be disastrous. At the same time, residence of these regions remembers the violent conflict of the early 1990s and remains wary of the central government.

Shevardnadze did little to reach out to the average people in these peripheral regions or to restore their confidence in the recognized government (King, 2004: 18). What was argued in the public opinion generally at that time was that international aid, Eduard Shevardnadze and Russian cooperation are central to the stability in Georgia. Given Georgia's economic and ethnic situation, instability is almost inevitable. Both the Abkhazians and Ossetians are resisting incorporation into the Georgian state. Russia can use these disputes at any time to destabilize Georgia. The large Azerbaijani and Armenian minorities which occupy Georgia's sensitive Southern borderlands can also

complicate Georgia's external relations with neighboring Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Turkey (Jones, 1996: 345).

In the wake of the cold war when NATO started its eastward expansion, Russia opted for democratic methods which made the central and Eastern European region a zone with lesser confrontations. The Russian federation however negatively responded to a new regional defence system in this part of the world. Russians are convinced that the enlargement of NATO in Eastern Europe and its presence in some of the post-Soviet states will draw new dividing lines in Europe and hamper the cause of security. The relations with the west could move away from cooperation to confrontation. Russia believes that a European system collective security with the OSCE playing the headline role may become an alternative to NATO enlargement (Asanishvili and Tukvadze, 2005: 138).

The NATO transformation process acquired a new trend which provided for the transition from the conception of mutually complementary institutions to the NATO-centrist model in which the alliance could claim the leading role and dealing with the security problems and which would minimize the scope of OSCE. This created certain problems for Russia. Russia felt threatened because such a provision will remove from the centers and mechanisms of decision making on issues directly related to its national interests. The west came to post-socialist Europe and together with Turkey started to move towards the Southern Caucasus. In fact not only the regional issues but there are also the global issues behind America's interest in South Caucasus. Russia has been watching America's activities in the post-Soviet expanse and all the projected energy transportation routes with much skepticism. Russia started using the agreements with CIS members to consolidate its role of the regional leader. If Russia changed its strategy for the sake of a genuinely effective regional security system, Georgia and other post-Soviet countries would have become its active partners. On many occasions Georgia described its good-neighborly relations with Russia as one of its key priorities and repeatedly stated that stable and secure Russia was the guarantor of regional stability (Asanishvili and Tukvadze, 2005: 139).

At the beginning of the post-bipolar period, Georgia was busy looking for a new place in the international system. There was no unity in Georgian political elite and there were pro-Russian and pro-western camps. Some people went on saying that Georgia should become a regional state to fulfill what they described as Georgia's historic mission. Gamsakhurdia himself had aimed to set up the Caucasian house in which Georgia would be playing the role of a link between the region's north and south. But this idea was short-lived. And it died when a confederation of the mountain peoples of the Caucasus having no emotional attachment with Georgia was set up in the north Caucasus. At that time Abkhazia was seen as a geo-strategically important region because it guaranteed the access to Black Sea and this move was seen as a step in the confederations struggle against Georgia. There are many conflict zones inside Georgia which makes the adoption of a neutral position a difficult task and moreover America, the European Union, Turkey, and Russia will find it very difficult to agree to Georgian neutrality (Asanishvili and Tukvadze, 2005: 140).

In the early 1990s, the country was pursuing its immediate goals where as its orientation was proving to be very much idealistic. Later on Georgia balanced its foreign policy. Around the last years of this decade, Georgia became entangled in major political problems like Georgia's dependence on a country which was almost undecided regarding its support to Georgia and the domestic weakness of the country which did not allow the country to go for an independent foreign policy and made it very difficult to address the problems like European integration and an effective model of regional cooperation. In 1997 the GUAM regional structure was set up and after two years the orientation of this body was shifting from economic cooperation to regional security policy. The Georgian territory was used for military exercises of Ukrainian, Georgian, and Azeri armed units. The GUAM members declared that their organization was open to anybody and Uzbekistan joined soon thus changing the acronym from GUAM to GUUAM. Looking at this Russia felt its urgency to have a strict control over the entire region. The involvement of America, Turkey, and Iran and above all Russia in this regional organization made the region a hotbed of activities. Russia's attitude towards this organization is a very

important reason for its present condition. It badly hit Georgia as the most active promoter of western values in the entire region (Asanishvili and Tukvadze, 2005: 141).

Russo-Georgian relations began in the 10th-11th centuries as uncollected episodes in which religion played a very important role. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century Georgia found itself in Christian Russia's zone of attention. Religion was not the only factor that brought Russia and Georgia together, yet it was the magnet that pulled Georgia. Christianity was more than a faith in Georgia, it was its philosophy, its way of life and its cover. It was Christianity that defended the state for many centuries against the inroads of numerous enemies who came to impose their religions on Georgia. Christianity reminded the Georgians that they should preserve their tongue, their national character and their specific features in order to remain Georgians (Panjikidze, 2005: 33).

The rules of the Russian Church were gradually imposed on the Georgian Church, and many temples started detecting in a language unknown to the Georgians and thus the Georgian Church became part of the Russian Church. The clergy was deprived of a large share of its landed possessions, which became public property. In exchange the Holy Synod gave money to the Exarchat. The sums were much smaller than the incomes the Georgian Church received from its former possessions. The Georgian clerics considered this act a robbery and were openly discontent with their bad economic situation. The Russian authorities were obviously trying to use the Christian Orthodox Church to colonize and russify the local people. It must be mentioned that the use of Russian in the Georgian Church relieved the services of their emotional impact (Panjikidze, 2005: 36).

The seventy years of soviet power deprived the church of all its rights and brought it to the brink of distraction. Its formal independence did not save it either from ideological oppression or from the Russian Orthodox Church, without whose permission it could not act independently. The current relations between the Georgian and Russian Churches can be described as very much contradictory. Russia being a huge Christian orthodox country it shapes the world ideas about the Christian orthodoxy. Since the



Russian Orthodox Church was obliged to follow the official authorities, there is no gainsaying in the fact that Russia's security services also had some influence among the clergy. This influence can be felt today, there is a group of clerics in the Georgian Church who oppose those who look toward the west (Panjikidze, 2005: 38).

The Russian federation does not want stability in Georgia and is exploiting the conflicts and difficulties it created itself when Georgian statehood was taking shape and Georgia was busy restoring its territorial integrity. Unfortunately Russia is actively exploiting the Russian Orthodox Church to preserve its influence in the Caucasus so that it can pursue its role in the great power game. The Russian clerics are actively interfering in the affairs of the regions of another country, specially in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, in an effort to spread their influence and jurisdiction to these regions of Georgia. The Church has been as aggressive as the state and is trying to hide its true intension with religious motives.

The Georgian Church has been openly protesting against this far from Christian conduct. The Georgian Orthodox Church which has become a very highly influential structure must interfere in the conflict. Since Russia has not left its big brother syndrome, its double standards, its prejudice and colonial policies are well intact there and Russians have always wanted to use force against Georgia and this the reason why there has not been any substantial progress in Russo-Georgian relations. Russia has always been exploiting religion to put pressure on Georgia (Panjikidze, 2005: 40). At one time, the great Georgian writer Ilia-Chavchavadze wrote: "for us Christianity is more than living according to Christ, it means our motherland that is Georgia; it means that we are Georgians".

Why has it become so necessary to establish some good economic relations between Russia and Georgia is determined by these factors: 1. There is a feeling to make maximum use of mutually complementary production potential created earlier, 2. To guarantee mutual access to sources of raw materials, with the possibility of joint and rational exploitation, 3. To secure mutually advantageous use of transportation

infrastructure and above all of that part of it needed to reach external markets, 4. To use the capacious market of the two countries on the basis of reciprocal deliveries of goods, 5. To solve humanitarian problems and lessen the concerns of each country for the fate of its citizens living in the other and 6. To develop the recreation complex to mutual advantage at a qualitatively new level and use the enormous potential of Georgia to treat needy Russians (Dzhantaev, 2005: 87).

Whether Russian economic interests can be fully realized depends on their compatibility with Georgian interests regarding Russia. Russia has four groups of interests in cooperation with Georgia-economic interests, geo-political interests, military-strategic interests, specific interests related to the protection of Russians in CIS countries. The small size is not Georgia's only problem, it is a poorly developed country. Georgia accounts for 0.1% of Russia's foreign trade balance while Russia accounts for 15% of Georgia's foreign trade. Russia is Georgia's main market of vital importance. Georgia owes Russia over \$320 million, the debts being repeatedly restructured and payments postponed. Russia wants not only to increase its investments in Georgia; it needs a better organized trade and economic cooperation (Chigorin, 2004: 136).

Russia's general current economic interests lie essentially in changing its ties with the CIS countries from being a risk factor into one of the most important conditions of stabilization as a necessary requirement of escape from the crisis. Therefore they can be realized over the next few years only by restoring the new mechanisms for mutual cooperation. A very specific interest of Russia in relation to Georgia has been the concern over the normal functioning of monopolist enterprises located on Georgian territory. Such enterprises include the Tbilisi Aviation Factory, the Tbilisi, Electric Locomotive Building Factory, and the Rustavi Chemicals Combine etc. Over the long term Russian interests have been concentrated primarily on optimizing economic ties. The formation of scientific-technological cooperation mechanisms, joint investment mechanisms, and inter-state associations has been a facilitating factor in Russo-Georgian trade. Russia has an interest in forming a system of highly efficient ties with Georgia, in preserving and strengthening its positions on the Georgian market, in investing in the

Georgian economy and in receiving investment from Georgia. Implementing such tasks as has been since soviet times will ensure the favorable development of political relations and the consolidation of national security (Dzhantaev, 2005: 89).

Georgia specialized in machine building, specially the labour-intensive kind and also in the production of heavy transportation and agricultural machinery in light, food, chemicals and petro-chemical industry. Georgia's agro-industrial complex has been of high importance between Russia and Georgia since Soviet times. Georgia was the source of 22% of the countries manganese ore, 7% of metal-cutting tools and 8% of its silk fabrics. Georgian manufactured main line electric locomotives, trucks, agricultural machines, instruments, automation devices and steel pipes were used in cementing the ties between Russia and Georgia. What complicates the Russo-Georgian relationships is the factor of Georgia being in a situation of continuing crisis. This crisis is usually because of the unresolved problems of the returned of the refugees, the ethnic conflicts in Abkhazia and south Ossetia and political instability resulting from unjust privatization. All these problems have weakened the national economy of Georgia (Dzhantaev, 2005: 90).

Although Georgia has good capital asserts but still they need replacements for more than two-third of their capital. The formation of a new system of Russo-Georgian relations has brought Russian interests into a conflict with the interests of a number of a state of the far abroad that also seek to strengthen their relations with Georgia by giving credits and humanitarian aid. America, Germany, Turkey, Japan and France are such states. There are still some fourteen regions of Russia which have no trade relations with Georgia. These include the famous regions of Sakhalin Oblast, the Chechen Republic, the Republic of Ingushetia, Amur, Kostroma and the Jewish autonomous Oblast. The goods that the Russian regions have been exporting to Georgia include the food products and raw material being exported from North Ossetia, Moscow, Kaliningrad, Astrakhan and Rostov Oblast. Krasnodar Krai and the republic of Tatarstan have exported minerals including fuel and energy. The chemical products have been sported by North Ossetia, Kaluga, Volgograd, and Vladimir etc. similarly the means of

transportation and machinery have been exported by Moscow, St. Petersburg, Rostov, Saratov and Samara. In some total it can be said that the economic relations between Russia and Georgia have been fairly good since the Soviet times and these economic relations between the two can be seen as the indicator of Russo-Georgian relations (Dzhantaev, 2005: 92).

The main reason for the far from normal relations between Russia and Georgia in the post-Soviet Era is the unambiguous and dilly-dallying tactics adopted by both the nations'. On the one hand there has been the desire of Georgian leadership to continue to enjoy the benefits which as the member of former Soviet Union, it was entitled. These benefits are in fact the access to low cost Russian resources, such access to natural gas for instance has permitted Georgia to save several million dollars, broad trade on the Russian market in the form of its traditional commodities. It also wanted to have the dumping facility for its access work force in Russia and it also wanted to use the Russian peace-keeping potential for preventing the resumption of internal conflicts. On the other hand such a tactics adopted by these countries was reflected in define the Russian interests in terms of being tolerant of Chechen and international terrorist on Georgian territory (Chepurin, 2004: 121).

Russian policy towards Southern Caucasus has become very much proactive and vital for the peace-building in a more just way in this zone and this policy of diplomatically and tactically handling the issues has more often been reflected in the course of action adopted by Russia towards Georgia. The Transcaucasian region with its core peoples, the Georgians, Armenians and Azeri, has been burdened by serious territorial conflicts and in Georgia, by a volatile interlocking of national territorial units. Russian policy in Georgia has been of serving the separatist forces which were opposed to national independence and territorial integrity. In this region Russia had its own clear security interests to defend. It found itself confronted with national movements with the mountain peoples, which were trying to establish itself as a confederation with a state institution of power and which were intervening in the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict by sending armed volunteers. Since the end of 80s, Russia had made its behavior in these

conflicts dependent upon the political groupings and their efforts in the two republics in the conflicts. Russia and its associated states could be assigned concrete tasks of regional conflict settlement and peacekeeping on a multilateral basis, in accordance with generally recognized and binding principles under the political leadership and control of for example the United Nations or the commission for security and cooperation in Europe (CSCE). What needs to be avoided is a conflict settlement through Russia only. The western countries must consider the seriousness they showed when they recognize the sovereignty of those states of Southern Caucasus (Halbach and Tiller, 1994: 164).

Russian strategy towards Georgia is totally different from other cases of Russian involvement in Transcaucasia. What interests us here is how Russia involved itself in Abkhazia for a longer period of time. Russian forces were deployed in Georgian territories where the conflict was occurring only when Russian interests were perceived to be safe. Shevardnadze's desire for rapprochement with Russia has been a determining factor for the success of the Russian policy and this Russian policy has been more proactive towards Georgia because of the importance of the Russian interests in this region (Halbach and Tiller, 1994: 165).

The Russian government has sought to maintain its military facilities in Georgia and to draw Georgia into the CIS. The necessity of a stable Georgia within the Russian sphere of vital interests as a bulwark against instability in the North Caucasus and in the Transcaucasia. Russian policy towards Georgia is a result of the interaction of several factors. The factors which have caused this are as follows: Russia wishes to be stable in North Caucasus, prompted by the Chechen conflict and an ongoing instability; Shevardnadze's desire for limited rapprochement with Russia, which is counter balanced by an anti-Russian nationalist opposition both inside and outside of the Georgian parliament; the development of the events on the ground like the Abkhazian determination to achieve independence. Since 1996 the collapse of the armed forces has placed very higher constraint on Russian strategy in Georgia (Lynch, 2000: 127). Russia has consistently argued that Russia needs a strong and friendly Georgia as a bastion of stability in the North and South Caucasus. Certain elements of the Russian government

and its military were already willing to raise the possibility of Georgian dismemberment in order to secure the Georgian government's agreement to Russian security demands. Hidden or unhidden support to the Abkhaz forces has been an integral part of Russian policy at that point.

A fundamental shift occurred in the Russian attitude towards the Abkhaz crisis and in overall Russo-Georgian relations. After the first half of 1990s Russo-Georgian relations are now based on a position where bargains and negotiations are the usual routine. Russia has always supported Georgians in the exchange deal for its security requirements' fulfillment. Russo-Georgian relations have once again found themselves in the midst of a tense situation and the progress on peace making has been found to be far from being satisfactory (Lynch, 2000: 128). American role in the Caucasus region has been a very crucial factor in attaching the region its due geo-strategic importance. During the post-cold war era, the shift of the Caucasian region and specially the region of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan and other Caspian states has attracted the American geo-strategic interests mainly because of the resources of energy this region is supposed to gather.

The coming century is certainly going to capture the attention of the world towards this region which is very much conflict prone and affected at the same time. The United States has since its first step in Georgia and the whole region has tried to prevent Russia from gaining any significant control in the region whether it is for the sake of control over oil resources or something else (Asanishvili and Tukvadze, 2005: 139). The geo-political plurality has been attached because of the growing economic significance of the region. America has been fulfilling its purposes by the creation of several different and purposive regional complexes. By actively co-operating with NATO, the CIS countries have created stable structures, which in turn have contributed to the region's development. The American policy in this region has contemplated several variants like direct integration of the region's states into NATO, alternative military-political projects outside NATO, a new military-political bloc compliant with the western geo-economic interests. The regional co-operation model, GUUAM being the one, has potentially

developed its political contacts to bring regional interests closer in order to become a solid foundation of the strategic partnerships with the west and America. On the whole, America has attached great importance to the strategic thinking and the corresponding projects. At the state level strategy is seen as a policy. And common actions with the other countries to secure national aims as are seen as politics, while its prospects of strategic thinking are described as strategic vision (Asanishvili and Tukvadze, 2005: 140).

Clearly, the American interests lie in the Eurasian region and specially in the western and central parts of the same and it threatens Russia's interests in this very region. The American policy also sees the control of this region as a policy tool of counter-controlling the region lying in Mediterranean and its problem of fundamentalism. Thus it is very much clear that the American policy regarding the broader problems in this Eurasian region and also the areas of Caspian Sea sees not only the immediate interests of its country but also the long-term ones and wants to solve the current crisis in this zone because of its desire to have a long lasting control in all the spheres of international relations.

The majority of the Georgians who have been living in Russia since a long time have become assimilated in Russia and this could be observed by looking at the kind of influential people from such a community in Russia at the present times. The spiritual and cultural ties, common religion, mutual enrichment, etc. are best illustrated by the role the Georgian Diaspora is playing in Russia (Chigorin, 2004: 133). The majority of these people moved to Russia in the last decade yet they never severed ties with their native homeland and that is Georgia. This could be seen as a sound logic as to why and in what way, Russo-Georgian relations are having strong relevance. Similarly, the Russian origin population living at present in Georgia constitutes a very significant role in building and sustaining the relationship between the two countries. In such a context of mutual concern the relations between Russia and Georgia has in the recent times come to acquire a very important place.

When we start comparing the rule of Gamsakhurdia and Shevardnadze for several contexts, we can observe many a parallels. Both the leaders, Gamsakhurdia and Shevardnadze, came to power personifying the national hopes of their own designs for a better future for Georgia and hopes which they could not fulfill. Both the leaders also had an international reputation as the democrats that they very soon compromised by resorting to the authoritarian methods, thereby forfeiting the support of the moderate intelligentsia (Fuller, 1993: 346). Besides that, both the leaders had to contend with the separatist aspirations of the ethnic minorities and their long pending problems which had been neglected since several decades and which was perceived widely to have been fomented by Russians.

The progress towards democracy in the eras of both these leaders was at its minimum. The opposition was also fragmented and almost ineffective and the proposals for other alternative policies were also rejected by the parliament. The level of friction between the leader Shevardnadze and the Prime Minister Sigua was at its height and this was mainly because of the incompatibility in the policy options of these two leaders so that Georgia could move a bit faster, led to the ultimate forced resignation of the Prime Minister Sigua. This policy conflict in Georgian domestic agenda also had its impact on the Russo-Georgian relationships. The control of the conflict zones in Georgia was slowly loosening away from Shevardnadze during the first half of 1990s itself (Fuller, 1993: 346).

Russia and Georgia, the two countries having different geography, economic potentials, and geo-political role of which are different still have important and objective pre-requisites for greater mutual understanding and drawing closer. A long dialogue and sharp exchange of opinions have in the past also been very much beneficial as will be in the future. The mutual interests of the two countries must be kept under consideration at all the times. Stability in the southern Caucasus has always been in the mutual interests of both Russia and Georgia. This stability has the potential to extend the economic, spiritual and other contacts, make borders between the two countries a safer zone to tread. These interests can be better harmonized. What is important is to restore normal relationships



and achieve a positive orientation in dealing with the key problems. And both the countries need this equally.

In a globalized world, the southern Caucasus will remain the sphere of Russia's vital interests. This region is actively and rapidly gaining importance and the increasing domain of several external players in this region has made it more exciting for the two countries so that they could cement their ties on a harmonized platform and could move ahead. Russia's role in the Caucasus depends on its ability to find profitable projects and become a strategic investor (Chigorin, 2004: 138). The matter of regional integration comes before the issue of globalization and on this level, Russia and Georgia both have wanted that they should keep on working to find common grounds on the themes of development and develop this zone as a zone free of conflict and underdevelopment. The integration of North Caucasus and South Caucasus must occur if the regional format has to be realized.

Moreover, Russia must employ the classical diplomatic means of conducting summits and other discussions on bilateral level over the issues of mutual and other concern while resolving the long pending issues in between them. The increasing attention to the matters like economy, finance, customs, borders, human rights and others will usher in a new era of relationships between Russia and Georgia. The matter of mutual Diaspora and their management in each others' countries are some of the issues which have always decided the warmth of any bilateral relationships. At this level, it can be said that things like mutual trust, co-operation and a positive-cum-pragmatic approach must characterize the relationships between Russia and Georgia because this alone can keep them running for their own sake or for the greater sake of a peaceful and healthy international system. And this can be very much assured by mutual respect and account of mutual interests. These alone can help sort things out, warm up the climate and create normal and mutually beneficial relations.

## **Conclusion**

The system of international relations is a matter of change and dynamism. The players of this system are placed in a game amongst them and the key players are very few in number who shape the main characteristics of the game and control them also. Negotiations, bargains and mutual tactics are some of the major policy tools of this game through which it is played and enjoyed. As regarding the relationships among them and specially the bilateral kind of them, the international system has several defined sets of rules and regulations but it is very much natural instinct of the nations to follow their own guided interests and place them before any other. This instinct often leads them to follow unjustified means of action and adventure and to break them the rules of international law and morality.

Here in this context, we must look at the two nations sharing a common history and cultural themes. Their thousand years' history and their mutual partnership has defined their future courses more than what was expected. It is often said that history repeats itself. But it is not the case always sometimes history creates afresh what appears before us. Modern Georgian nation is, of course, the creature of historical processes as usual and the characteristic it is wearing today is very much reflective of that. In the first chapter, the links of Russo-Georgian relations as has been traced shows that owing to common linguistic and ethno-cultural patterns, the relationship between Russia and Georgia can not be taken for granted at any time because the neighbors can not be chosen and in order to keep your domestic and nearby environment in a coherent and peaceful shape, you will have to be concerned about your ties with them.

The relationship between Russia and Georgia has been largely defined by what is known as the conflict zones, the politics of oil and other resources and the overall geo-politics of the region. The location of Georgia and its geographical location attach a whole lot of discussion in any discourse over Russo-Georgian agenda. The significance of controlling this geo-strategically important region is understood by each and every nation in this part of Caucasian region.

The awakening of assumed primordial identities such as tribe, ethnicity or religion has been a major source of conflict in the post-Second World War era. The very fact that this can be termed an awakening, however, implies that these identities are neither static nor innate. They are very much tied to social and political circumstances; in particular, they are mobilized and shaped by political processes. This ethnic mobilization usually takes place in an atmosphere of conflict with another communal group, in this sense we can often speak of mirroring nationalisms: people rally against a common enemy, which increases their sense of common belonging to a certain group.

Within the boundaries of a state, then, we can roughly say that communal conflict arises when one or more of its component communities cease to identify with the state due to perceived discrimination against it, political mobilization of group identity, or a combination of these factors, which often catalyze each other. Georgia is a multiethnic state where, since its first days of independence from Moscow, ethnic and cultural divisions have resulted in open conflicts. The soviet maintained law and order in Georgia by coercively suppressing conflicting parties. During their rule, a number of latent conflicts within country were unresolved. During the first of disintegration of the Soviet Union, these ethnic and political tensions erupted into open conflict. Rather than searching for solutions to these conflicts, politicians and public representatives prepared ways to suppress the conflict.

These efforts were unsuccessful, however, and resulted instead in an escalation of the conflict. Violent and destructive tactics used by Georgians, Abkhazians, south Ossetians and other ethnic groups living in Georgia have resulted in the expulsion of populations from their homelands, forced assimilation, and repression of the different ethnic groups in various regions of Georgia. These wars are a powerful sign of the deep, internal division within Georgian society. The struggles between ethnic and national ideologies present a crisis of multiethnic state building that is seen in many other areas in the region as well. The state government official and representatives of various groups

within Georgia have failed to hold a constructive dialogue that analyzes conflict issues and builds a mutually acceptable future of the country. In the aftermath of the soviet system, the newly independent central and autonomous governments in Georgia developed policies that were not sensitive to the diverse needs and values of the various populations. The new political elite's failure to promote democratic values and norms of power sharing, nondominant plurality, and civil society contributed to the current political instability in the country.

In fact, the dominant political leadership in Georgia attempted to address the problems of dissatisfied groups through ineffective and biased policies derived from the previous authoritarian traditions. In most cases, these policies included a dogmatic and uncritical application of military pressure to achieve short-term political and economic goals. People who are skilled in conflicts resolution approaches were present in Georgia at that time. Unfortunately these people did not take the initiative to mediate between their own and other groups in the growing conflicts. This missed opportunity for early intervention, and the lack of trained domestic facilitators, limited the forums and possibilities for the parties in conflict to address the issues that divided them. Instead the parties developed competitive strategies and goals for engaging in the conflict and violence related to political, ethnic and social divisions within the country increased, resulting, finally, in civil war. The unstable political infrastructures and increasing internal divisions within the newly independent Georgian state attracted the attention of Russia as a large regional power. Russian intervention in these conflicts however, complicated the situation and ultimately resulted in conflict escalation rather than de-escalation within Georgia.

Russia used the ethnic conflicts in Georgia as a tool to manipulate domestic politics and to ensure Russia's military, geo-political pressure in the region. The various groups within Georgia are currently quite frustrated with the results of these ongoing conflicts and their inability to reach a satisfactory resolution. The resettlement of refugees in their homes located in conflict zones is impossible, and people live with the daily fear

of military escalation. The current progress for reconciliation between the divided groups and the establishment of a stable, multiethnic Georgian state are not very hopeful.

The collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in the creation of several new systems of regional and international relations. The Caspian and Caucasian region is one of the most important among them, in terms of its natural and human resources. To a considerable extent the future of the region depends on the development of Caspian oil and gas resources. This process proceeds under complicated political conditions, including ongoing territorial and ethnic conflicts, clashing interests and perspectives of Russia and other new independent states. It is becoming more and more apparent that effective exploitation of Caspian resources may be possible only under conditions of wide international cooperation, involving all concerned states as well as outside powers and business interests that have substantial expert and investment capabilities in managing large-scale projects.

The zones of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are two such territories where the ethnic violence and disruptions have totally defabricated the socio-political and economic order. The blame game between Russia and Georgia has been continuing since time immemorial. Georgia has been accusing Russia of instigating ethnic disturbances among its population. While it is true that Russia is taking undue advantage of the chasm between Georgia and its break-away regions it cannot be said for sure that the problems in Abkhazia and South Ossetia is due to Russia giving clandestine support to Georgia's break-away regions. Russia wants to control Georgia by taking its inside its own sphere of influence because of the geo-strategic location of Georgia beside the black sea.

Russia threatened to give support to Abkhazian military operations which would destroy Georgia, while Armenia completely depends on Russia for energy and support against Azerbaijan and Turkey. Thus Armenia and Georgia had no choice but to

bow before the Russian demands given their internal weakness and international isolation. In addition Georgia has also discussed the formation of a special troop to protect the planned Georgian and Azerbaijani section of the Baku-Ceyhan gas pipeline. Due to well-known Russo-Georgian conflict over the status of these breakaway regions Georgia secures for itself the security from Turkey in case of any war or conflict. Turkish and Georgian strategic and economic interests have so many similarities. The essential factors which can boost the role of Georgia in Caspian affairs include the reduction of endemic corruption, improvement of the depressed economic status of its people and the final solution of Georgia's ethnic conflicts.

Thus, it appears that the role of Georgia is a very important one in Caspian affairs because of its locational advantage and manipulating capabilities on the geo-strategic platform. From the very beginning, Russia was claiming the right to play a central role in managing regional local conflicts. Russian contingents were turned into the backbone of the CIS peacekeeping force in Abkhazia. The activities of the force were continuously criticized by the Shevardnadze regime in Georgia, trying to reestablish its sovereignty over this province. Various ambitious plans for expanding Russian forces both in the Near Caucasus and Transcaucasia are being promoted. Besides that, Russia is using various economic and political tools from withdrawing raw material supplies to manipulating internal oppositions, in order to pressure local regimes and power groups.

The post-soviet Georgia has also been very much unlucky with its leaders. The first leader was very much ultra-nationalist in nature. Gamsakhurdia era can not be summarized in haste and it has not only started a new Georgia but also destroyed the very fabric of the nation by adopting a stance of not fully being interested in taking the Russo-Georgian relations to a good phase. After Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze became the chief of the state and he became to be better known as a man of compromises because of his famous approach of success-building regarding Russ-Georgian relationship. The fate of

both the leaders was that they were forcibly removed from power because of their stands on the domestic as well as foreign affairs' fronts. Their external and internal policies were generally similar. They regarded Russia with suspicion. Neither had much faith in Georgian power and they were the supporters of the idea that the western nations will come to their rescue. Russian policy towards Southern Caucasus has become very much pro-active and vital for the peace-building in a more just way in this zone and this policy of diplomatically and tactically handling the issues has more often been reflected in the course of action adopted by Russia towards Georgia. The Transcaucasian region with its core peoples, the Georgians, Armenians and Azeri, has been burdened by serious territorial conflicts and in Georgia, by a volatile interlocking of national territorial units. Russian policy in Georgia has been of serving the separatist forces which were opposed to national independence and territorial integrity.

In this region Russia had its own clear security interests to defend. It found itself confronted with national movements with the mountain peoples, which were trying to establish itself as a confederation with a state institution of power and which were intervening in the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict by sending armed volunteers. Since the end of 80s, Russia had made its behavior in these conflicts dependent upon the political groupings and their efforts in the two republics in the conflicts. Russia and its associated states could be assigned concrete tasks of regional conflict settlement and peacekeeping on a multilateral basis, in accordance with generally recognized and binding principles under the political leadership and control of for example the United Nations or the commission for security and cooperation in Europe (CSCE). What needs to be avoided is a conflict settlement through Russia only. The western countries must consider the seriousness they showed when they recognize the sovereignty of those states of Southern Caucasus.



Some observers of international relations in this part of the world have said that Georgia is relic of the cold war. Russia and America are continuously vying for the control of the region and it's all the resources. Over the past decade the US has been investing more than expected aid in Georgia per head than anywhere. Oil and the war on terrorism added to its strategic importance. The Americans also want a strategic corridor in the region via Afghanistan. Hence, observing these trends in its own backyard Russia's roles have been very much complex. They were conditioned by the loss of empire, energy interests and strategic concerns regarding military bases and the perceived incursions of Chechen fighters from Georgia's Pankisi Gorge, and Georgian desire to be integrated into the Euro-Atlantic alliance. Consequently Russia has tended to pursue vital and legitimate interests often through heavy-handed and illegitimate means.

The Russian political elite's ambivalence towards Shevardnadze-whom they blamed for squandering the geo-political assets of the soviet superpower and opening the way for the US military presence in Georgia, had produced a sense of relief after his demise. It was noticeable; however that during foreign minister Igor Ivanov's high profile mediation in the president's departure, the one person in Georgia other than the protagonists whom he consulted was the US ambassador. Russia was well aware of the new leader's pro-western stance and that was why it was adopting a very cautious approach.

The dialogue between Russia and Georgia is going ahead not only because they are close neighbors or because they are actively co-operating in a number of vitally important issues-the dialogue is fed by the still debated and debatable problems cropping up from time to time as well as by mutual accusations that create a fairly emotional background in both the countries. The range of these problems is much wider than the two issues the sides are eager to exploit: Russia insists on liquidating the threat of terror coming from the Chechen fighters and international terrorists entrenched in Georgia

while the later wants Russia to exert more pressure on Abkhazia to bring it back to the fold. This is not all: the agenda includes several other no less important issues-Russia's geo-political safety; Georgia's foreign policy course; the future of Russian military basis in Georgia and the future of the two countries' political and economic co-operation; a large bilateral treaty and regional co-operation; the South Ossetian conflict etc. These difficult or even dramatic problems defy a clear and unambiguous forecast of how bilateral relations will develop in future. In a globalized world, the southern Caucasus will remain the sphere of Russia's vital interests. This region is actively and rapidly gaining importance and the increasing domain of several external players in this region has made it more exciting for the two countries so that they could cement their ties on a harmonized platform and could move ahead. Russia's role in the Caucasus depends on its ability to find profitable projects and become a strategic investor.

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