Locating Georgian Security

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Georgia is a weak state in a fragmented region. Since its secession from the Soviet Union in April 1991, observers have repeatedly questioned the ability of this newly independent state to overcome the threat of anarchy and to establish sovereign statehood. In security terms, Georgia and its South Caucasus neighbors, Armenia and Azerbaijan, are part of a region—the wider Caucasus region—where these three weak South Caucasus states have a difficult time coexisting with three stronger neighbors—Russia, Iran, and Turkey. Three "de facto"

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states—Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia[1]—survive in this unstable region, which is largely due to external support from neighboring countries. This situation is indicative of the extent to which the political relations between all these nations are fractured.

The introduction to this volume described "the security of statehood" within a deeply "insecure neighborhood" as the twin security challenge Georgia has to address. Its state leadership still has to prove that it is able to deliver basic public goods to its citizens. Such a performance is inextricably bound up with the creation of a secure regional environment.

Some chapters in this volume primarily addressed the "domestic" security concerns in Georgia, such as the consequences of the 1991–1992 civil war, the emergence of secessionist movements in the autonomous entities South Ossetia and Abkhazia, or civilian control over the military. Other chapters focused on international relations in the South Caucasus. They dealt with the involvement of neighboring countries, external powers, and international organizations, or explored the question of whether the South Caucasus can be called a region in its own right or if it should be conceived of as part of a larger regional entity. Domestic and international perspectives presented in this volume converge in the thesis that the divisive history of the region finds an expression in the fault lines and conflicts within Georgia itself and that any progress in regional integration is undoubtedly connected to the domestic process of state- and nation-building in the South Caucasus.

Security studies on Georgia are generally based on a broad definition of security. They assess the vast range of threats to state institutions and regional stability, ranging from the breakdown of cease-fire agreements in secessionist conflicts to the proliferation of small arms and the penetration of organized crime into state structures. The last years of the Shevardnadze regime were dominated by public discussions about how corruption and the failure to reform posed a threat to the development of the economy and to the survival of the Georgian state.

One of the most worrisome aspects of the late Shevardnadze years was the abandoning of all serious attempts at improving state efficacy. External pressures from "friendly" forces, particularly the U.S. govern-

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[1] Chechnya has been destroyed as a de facto state as a consequence of the Russian military intervention of 1999. This does not mean that this war has erased the Chechen independence movement or the conflict over sovereignty.

ment, on the Georgian government to restructure its armed forces or its financial policies did not have any significant results. Georgia ceased to be perceived as merely temporarily weak because of particular circumstances, such as the transition from a planned to a market economy, tensions with Russia, or the failure to reach a peace settlement concerning the political status of the breakaway entities. Its failure to perform was increasingly perceived as having an enduring character for structural reasons. There were increasing fears that the transition to the post-Shevardnadze era would not be peaceful and that it might reproduce many of the features Georgia had exhibited earlier in its independence.

In the first half of the 1990s, Georgia had not only been a "weak state" with respect to the various performance criteria of statehood—such as the capacity to extract the necessary resources for performing core state functions, to regulate social relations, to use public resources in purposeful ways, and to establish legitimate rule[2]—but had at certain moments moved into the subcategory of weakness known as "failing states." This happened when it confronted breakaway movements in South Ossetia and Abkhazia and when civil unrest erupted at the time of Zviad Gamsakhurdia's ouster, its first democratically elected president.

The concept of a "failing state" indicates an institutional profile where the political institutions are threatening to collapse entirely. Such a total collapse, turning Georgia into a "failed state," could have been the consequence of a struggle for succession to Shevardnadze's presidency. It could also have been the result of a spillover of the Russian–Chechen war into Georgia or of a breakdown of the fragile cease-fires in Abkhazia or South Ossetia. Furthermore, protest movements against poverty and corruption could have led to popular uprisings, fueling public disorder and mass violence. But these worst-case scenarios did not happen. The dramatic events of November 2003 following rigged parliamentary elections resulted in another type of regime change. Georgia's incapacity to reform

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[2] Ghia Nodia's definition of "weak state" in this volume draws on Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State–Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 4. For my analysis, I am also including some of the criteria of the efficiency of state performance presented by Byungki Kim at the conference "Comparative Regionalism: Cases in Europe and East Asia" organized by the Renmin University of China, Beijing, April 8–9, 2005. See also Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *When States Fail. Causes and Consequences* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

did not generate anarchy and state failure. To the contrary, it produced a well-organized democratic revolt against the government and the replacement of a large part of the political elite.

In this chapter, I will draw some conclusions from the contributions to this volume concerning the interplay of factors that have been shaping Georgia's national and regional security relations, particularly in the multi-faceted transition from Eduard Shevardnadze to Mikheil Saakashvili. As stated by Robert Legvold in the introduction to this volume, the many dimensions that bear on national and regional security policy come together in Georgia in a highly complex fashion. This concluding chapter makes a systematic attempt to unravel the most salient elements of analysis presented in this book, particularly concerning the relationship between Georgia's security policies in the domestic and international fields.

For this purpose, I will make use of the concepts of "center" and "periphery," and consider Georgia from the perspective of both a center and a periphery. As a sovereign state, Georgia is expected to exercise its authority over its whole territory. From this perspective, the Georgian state may be seen as a center in relation to particular peripheries. However, Georgia is also a small state confronting stronger states active in the region as it strives to be recognized on the international legal level as an equal among others. From this perspective of international relations, Georgia may be seen as in the position of a periphery. The concept of sovereignty—both as the control of a state over a particular territory and its population and the right to claim equal legal status with other states in the international arena—is crucial to both types of relationships.

THE CENTER–PERIPHERY MODEL

The center–periphery model can be helpful for analyzing the domestic and international conflicts over sovereignty and hegemony in which Georgia is involved. This model is traditionally used to analyze various types of processes resulting from spatial partitioning by borders.[3] It has its origins

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[3] See Jean Gottmann, ed., *Center and Periphery: Spatial Variations in Politics* (London: Sage, 1980); Georges Prevelakis, "Jean Gottmann's Relevance in Today's World," paper presented at The Earhart Foundation Conference on the State of the Social Sciences, Boston University, December 6–7, 2002, http://www.bu.edu/uni/iass/conf/George%20Prevelakis.pdf; Claude Grasland, "Center/Periphery," http://hypergeo.free.fr/article.php3?id_article=186.

in geometry, but has been applied metaphorically in many other disciplines, including political geography,[4] archeology,[5] political economy,[6] and comparative federalism.[7] In political geography, the opposition between a center and a periphery is closely related to other dichotomies such as "heartland" and "rimland." The concept of a center is also connected to terms such as "core," "nucleus," "pivot area," and the concept of a periphery is linked to "frontiers," "boundaries," and "borders." All these words evoke similar ideas and have heuristic potential.[8]

The center–periphery scheme will first be applied to Georgia's domestic order and then to Georgia's place in the international order. But center–periphery relations have a very different meaning in the literature on domestic relations—for instance, in the literature on comparative federalism—and in the literature on international relations—for instance, in the literature on international political economy. For our comparative purposes, it makes sense to standardize these meanings. I therefore make a general distinction between various types of center–periphery relations in the domestic and international fields. This distinction then is used as the

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[4] Jean Gottmann, "Confronting Center and Periphery," in Gottmann, ed., pp. 11–25; Paul Claval, "Center/Periphery and Space: Models of Political Geography," in Gottmann, ed., pp. 63–71; George W. Hoffman, "Variations in Center–Periphery Relations in Southeast Europe," in Gottmann, ed., pp. 111–133.

[5] Tim C. Champion, ed., *Center and Periphery: Comparative Studies in Archaeology* (London: Routledge, 1995).

[6] See, among many others, Raimondo Strassoldo, "Center–Periphery and System–Boundary: Culturological Perspectives," in Gottmann, ed., pp. 42–44 and Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).

[7] The use of the concepts of center and periphery is traditional in the analysis of domestic politics, especially in the analysis of federal relations. This formulation is found, for instance, in the analysis of the relationship between national governments and lower levels of governments with smaller geographic jurisdictions in Russia. See among others, Daniel R. Kempton and Terry D. Clark, eds., *Unity or Separation: Center–Periphery Relations in the Former Soviet Union* (London: Praeger, 2002). For an application in the history of sciences, see "Center and Periphery Revisited: The Structures of European Science, 1750–1914," *Revue de la Maison Française d'Oxford*, vol. I, no 2 (2003), http://www.mfo.ac.uk/Publications/Revue%20Fox/introduction.htm. For an application on the general theory of systems, see Strassoldo, p. 50.

[8] Claval, p. 64.

main conceptual instrument to describe the profound changes in domestic relations between Tbilisi and various autonomous entities in Georgia, and between Tbilisi and the main external powers active in the region under Georgia's three successive presidential regimes (Gamsakhurdia 1991–1992, Shevardnadze, 1992–2003 and Saakashvili 2004–).

It is possible to distinguish four different types of center–periphery relations. All four types can be situated either on the internal or external level and have in common a clear spatial dimension. Furthermore, they all express, on the domestic and international level, a basic asymmetry in material and normative resources leading to dependency and hierarchical relations between the center and the periphery. Concepts such as sovereignty and hegemony illustrate the point because in both cases the center exercises dominance over a periphery.

First, the term "periphery" in center–periphery relations refers to particular lines of *confrontation*—to boundaries where the center has to defend itself or to fault lines where the center has to confront external threats. Second, the terms "center" and "periphery" may be used to express processes of *integration* or even the progressive assimilation of the periphery by the center. In this case, the model reflects a constant flux in the spatial interaction between the two poles and particularly a movement toward the center.[9] Third, "periphery" may refer to something of marginal importance to the center. The center would then maintain an attitude of *indifference* toward the periphery. And in a fourth type of center–periphery relationship, a periphery is a *bridgehead*, linking one micro-region (on the domestic level) or one macro-region (on the international level) to another micro- or macro-region.

A basic inequality in material and normative resources between center and periphery is common to all four types of center–periphery relations. The meaning of the term periphery when referring to boundaries, particularly lines of conflict or fault lines along which the center confronts external threats, entails an asymmetrical and hierarchical relationship between center and periphery. This is likewise the case for the use of these two terms to express processes of integration or assimilation, or the function of the periphery as a bridgehead for the center. Indifference is another expression of an asymmetrical relationship between center and

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[9] On the dynamic character of the center–periphery relations, see Hoffman, pp. 111–133.

periphery. It may be that the periphery has a marginal importance to the center, but the reverse rarely holds true.

The asymmetrical and hierarchical relationship between both poles may reflect more than a situation of inequality. The concept of the center is often associated—both in Western civilization and in archaic cultures—with eternity, the sacred, and the transcendent, while periphery is associated with temporality, the profane, and material reality. In the modern conceptions of the state, sovereignty is at the center. The authority of the state is imposed on the whole territory under its jurisdiction. The boundaries indicate the limits of the power of the center, but also of external actors by preventing them from unauthorized forms of interference in domestic affairs. This gives a "sacred" significance to the principle of territorial integrity.

As is the case with any ideal type distinction, these different types of center–periphery relations do not reflect empirical realities, but accentuate, exaggerate, or idealize particular empirical traits with the aim of developing a better understanding of social reality. These various types of relationships do not exclude each other. Relationships of domination characterized by conflict, by integration, or by indifference may very well intermingle in domestic or international relations. If the center, as the seat of authority and power, generates values and norms that are assimilated by the periphery, the center–periphery relationship is defined by integration. As an alternative to the assimilation of a powerless periphery, the periphery may formulate grievances and mobilize protest actions, entering into a relationship of confrontation with the center.

As all types of center–periphery relations are asymmetrical and hierarchical, it may be assumed that the transformation in the relationship between both poles is affected by changes in each of the poles, but more fundamentally by changes at the center than at the periphery. The use of a center–periphery model further assumes that the transformation of the relationship between both poles will more substantially affect the periphery than the center.

The identity of the center is largely defined at the periphery and the identity of the periphery by its relationship to the center. The center is the nucleus that creates itself through the reproduction of one or more types of the relationships mentioned above, such as the assimilation of its periphery, the maintenance of its borders, or the use of its peripheries as a

bridgehead to other areas.[10] But peripheries are also active creators of their own identities, either through the reproduction of their dependency relations with a center, through integration, or by resisting integration through confrontation.

The reproduction of center-periphery relations should not be understood as static. Polarity reversals cannot be excluded. A periphery may, under particular circumstances, start to take an innovative role and acquire more crucial roles in the whole system, modifying its structure, and even come to acquire centrality. Such a reversal in polarity may come about as a consequence of a radical transformation in the relationship between center and periphery that strengthens the latter to the point that it becomes the dominant center. The emergence of the former periphery as a new center may also result if the imperial center disappears. A more gradual transformation from dependency to interdependency is also conceivable, if both poles acquire relatively equal functions in the political system. Examples of shifts of dominance from center to periphery are numerous in history, ranging from the ascendancy of former peripheries over the Chinese, Macedonian, and Roman empires up to the emergence of the former British colonies in North America as the dominant pole in the modern world system.[11] Examples of polarity reversals are likewise numerous in economic history, both between regions within one state and between macro-regions in the world system.

Individuals within a political elite too play a key role in spatial relationships. Peripheries may serve as bridgeheads between different centers, and political leaders from these peripheries may, under circumstances favoring regional cooperation, play an integrative role. Raimondo Strassoldo points out that "marginal" individuals such as Jean Monnet or Konrad Adenauer, coming from peripheral regions such as Alsace-Lorraine or the Rheingebiet, were crucial in integrating France and Germany into a European framework. But political leaders from the periphery may also stress their unconditional loyalty to the center, as was the case with Napoleon (from Corsica) or Stalin (from Georgia).[12]

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[10] Strassoldo, pp. 27–61.

[11] See Owen Lattimore, "The Periphery as Locus of Innovation," in Gottmann, ed., pp. 205–215; and Jean Gottmann, "Organizing and Reorganizing Space," in Gottmann, ed., pp. 217–224.

[12] Strassoldo, p. 50.

The center–periphery model is a spatial model and spatial relations are crucial when national movements are attempting to remove specific territories and their populations from the authority of a government. They in effect are protests by peripheries against their subordinated status. But the separation they are striving for is not necessarily absolute. Partial forms of withdrawal also exist. Peripheries may thus strive to diminish their dependency on a center by seeking self-government through various forms of autonomy or federal relations. Means to diminish dependency relations range from incorporation into the center by obtaining a share in the central functions of decision-making (through the creation of a federation) up to the creation of an internationally recognized sovereign state on a par with the center (through, for instance, the creation of a confederation).

The creation of de facto states—whose definition includes the control over a defined territory[13]—and the redrawing of international boundaries—when a secessionist movement is successful in achieving recogni-

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[13] Control over a territory is crucial to the definitions of a state—including definitions of de facto states in juridical and political science literature. According to Article 1 of the Montevideo Convention from 1933, "The state as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications: (a) a permanent population; (b) a defined territory; (c) government; and (d) capacity to enter into relations with the other states." See The Avalon Project at Yale Law School, Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, 20th Century Documents, Convention on Rights and Duties of States (inter-American), December 26, 1933, http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/intdip/interam/intam03. htm#art1. Scott Pegg gives a more encompassing definition of the de facto state: "In essence, a de facto state exists where there is an organized political leadership which has risen to power through some degree of indigenous capability; receives popular support; and has achieved sufficient capacity to provide governmental services to a given population in a defined territorial area, over which effective control is maintained for an extended period of time. The de facto state views itself as capable of entering into relations with other states and it seeks full constitutional independence and widespread international recognition as a sovereign state. It is, however, unable to achieve any degree of substantive recognition and therefore remains illegitimate in the eyes of international society." See Scott Pegg, *De Facto States in the International System*, Working Paper no. 21, (Vancouver: Institute of International Relations, The University of British Columbia, February 1998), p. 1, http://www.iir.ubc.ca/pdffiles/ webwp21.pdf. See also Scott Pegg, *International Society and the De Facto State* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 1998) and Dov Lynch, *Engaging Eurasia's Separatist States: Unresolved Conflicts and De Facto States* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2004).

tion—can both have consequences for domestic relations between majorities and minorities within a state, and for the external regional balance of power.[14] Secessionist conflicts may lead to a re-centering of the international order, when dependency relations move from one center to another, or to a realignment of dependency relations by creating a multiplicity of centers within a more pluralistic network.

THE APPLICATION OF THE MODEL

Various types of relations between state institutions characterize Georgia's domestic center–periphery order. For each of these types, political authority operates within spatial limits. First are state-to-state relations, where the Georgian government represents an internationally recognized state and where the authorities from South Ossetia and Abkhazia constitute de facto states. Second, the current Georgian Constitution provides for federal relations between Tbilisi and the Autonomous Republic of Ajara.[15] Third, the process of regionalization in Georgia has to be taken into account. The "regions," which were created under the Shevardnadze regime and where so-called governors represent presidential authority on the local level, never received a proper constitutional status. The question of self-government on the regional level remained therefore

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[14] See Prevelakis.

[15] An amendment to Article 3.3 of the Georgian Constitution provided that, "The status of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara shall be determined by the Constitutional Law of Georgia." Until May 2004, when Ajaran leader Aslan Abashidze was forced into exile, no such law was approved by the Georgian Parliament. A law on the status of Ajara was passed on July 7, 2004, granting the region only nominal autonomy, but formally confirming its statehood as an autonomous republic. On Georgia's policies in Ajara, see the International Crisis Group, "Saakashvili's Ajara Success: Repeatable Elsewhere in Georgia?" *Europe Briefing,* August 18, 2004, http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index. cfm?id=2907&l=1. On Ajara's constitutional status, see *The Report of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee),* Parliamentary Assembly, Council of Europe, Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Georgia, Doc. 10383, December 21, 2004, particularly pp. 3, 10–11, http://assembly.coe. int/Documents/WorkingDocs/doc04/EDOC10383.htm. In 2002, according to official statistics, Ajara had a population of 376,016.

on the political agenda after the Rose Revolution.[16] Fourth, there are some regions with a high proportion of national minorities, such as the Azerbaijanis in Georgia's southern Kvemo Kartli region bordering Azerbaijan; the Armenians in the Samtskhe–Javakheti region, particularly in and around the town of Akhalkalaki; and the Kists, who are related to the Chechens, in the Pankisi Gorge. The political and economic integration of these minority populations within Georgian state structures remains weak. Claims for political autonomy among some of these territorially concentrated minorities could lead to a further fragmentation of Georgian statehood. In all of these cases, there is a clear spatial dimension to the security problematic: the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia constitute nearly 15 percent of Georgia's territory. In the rest of Georgia's territory, minorities represent 16.3 percent of the population.[17]

The same conceptual center–periphery scheme can be applied to the international order in the Caucasus, and more particularly to the "peripheral" security policies that Georgia, under successive presidents, developed toward Moscow, Washington, and Brussels.[18] Here too a spatial dimension applies. Georgia is conceived of as a single center in relation to various domestic peripheries and as a single periphery in relation to various international centers. This twofold application of the center–periphery model provides insights into the mutual linkages between domestic and international security threats under each of the three Georgian presidential regimes.[19]

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[16] On the problematic of Georgia's regionalization, see Bruno Coppieters, Tamara Kovziridze, and Uwe Leonardy, "Federalization of Foreign Relations: Discussing Alternatives for the Georgian–Abkhaz Conflict," Caspian Studies Program Working Paper no. 2, (Cambridge, MA: Caspian Studies Program, Harvard University, October 2003), p. 16, http://bcsia.ksg.harvard.edu/publication.cfm?program=CSP&ctype=paper&item_id=405.

[17] See Ghia Nodia's contribution to this volume.

[18] For an analysis of the role of culture in Georgian foreign policy orientations, see Stephen Jones, "The Role of Cultural Paradigms in Georgian Foreign Policy," in Rick Fawn, ed., *Ideology and National Identity in Post-Communist Foreign Policies* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), pp. 83–110.

[19] Here the center–periphery model is used for spatially located security threats. This does not exclude its application to security threats created by widespread corruption, the criminalization of state structures and poverty, or civil–military relations when these have a spatial dimension. All such threats, indeed, have had an impact on the relations between Tbilisi and the breakaway states.

The analysis in preceding chapters provides a basis for testing assumptions implied by the center–periphery model. Thus, in terms of Georgia's domestic security policies, have changes between the center and the peripheries been induced by transformations at the center rather than at the periphery? With respect to Georgia's international security policies, do profound policy changes in Moscow, Washington, and Brussels have a stronger impact on their relationships with Tbilisi than events in Georgia have on these relationships?

These assumptions have direct consequences for an assessment of Georgia's future policy options—for example, concerning its chances of reintegrating the breakaway entities or coming closer to the European Union (EU). The chance of successfully negotiating the political status of South Ossetia or Abkhazia will depend, of course, in part, on political dynamics in Sukhum(i) or Tskhinval(i)[20] but more crucially on those in Tbilisi. The chance of Georgia being drawn into Western organizations, particularly NATO and the EU, will likewise largely depend on its capacity to reform its state structures, but even more fundamentally on the capacity of these organizations to address the problems of Georgia as a peripheral state.

The assumptions involved in the use of a center–periphery model to locate Georgian security does not mean that the outcome of its secessionist conflicts has to be exclusively conceived of as the result of shifts in the balance of power between the main external actors in the South Caucasus. On the contrary, the use of the center–periphery model to analyze secessionist conflicts within Georgia focuses on both the role of centers in international relations—referring to those actors which have the greatest impact on Georgia's foreign policy choices—and of the center at the domestic level—referring to the policies of the Georgian state. But the main key to a resolution of domestic conflicts between center and periphery remains the transformation of the Georgian center.

In addition, the synergy between insecurity within Georgia and instability within the wider Caucasus has resulted in two movements of the periphery away from the center. First, the Georgian center is being challenged by the periphery—by the claims of the former Soviet

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[20] Abkhazians write "Sukhum" and Georgians write "Sokhumi" or "Sukhumi" in English-language publications. Ossetians use "Tskhinval," whereas Georgians refer to the city as "Tskhinvali."

autonomous entities on the one hand and by its national minorities on the other. These challenges could be resolved by integrating these peripheries into the center—through political representation, minority rights, or federal arrangements. They may also be addressed through a policy of confrontation. This, however, could lead to a weakening of the center and, if secessionist entities are able to take full advantage of this weakening, to the emergence of new sovereign centers. So far, the center in Tbilisi has failed to integrate the breakaway states at its periphery or to subdue them through a policy of confrontation. But the breakaway states in the periphery have likewise failed to free themselves from the Georgian center by securing international recognition of their sovereignty.

Second, a conflictual process that can be described as a movement from the periphery away from the center exists on the international level: Georgia resists its peripheral status vis-à-vis Moscow by claiming membership in Western organizations. It strives for a change of status from dependency on a single center toward interdependency with a multitiered network of centers within a larger Euro-Atlantic environment. Georgia's aspiration for membership in NATO and the European Union symbolizes this longing. Moscow has responded to this challenge by mixing policies of integration and confrontation. In this case, the center failed to stop the growing dissociation of the periphery. But the periphery has also failed to complete its emancipation by severing its dependency on the center and by achieving inclusion into new centers, such as NATO and the EU. Georgia remains peripheral to the Western security system. Its profound instability can thus be understood as the result of two failed attempts by peripheries to change their relationship to a center—in one case, national, in the other, international.

Integration and confrontation are two possible conditions of center–periphery relationships. The other types of center–periphery relations also provide useful analytical tools for understanding Georgian security policies. For instance, in comparing the state- and nation-building strategies that Georgia has employed toward its autonomous entities since its independence, it is interesting to see not only the extent to which these strategies have been based on confrontational policies, but also in what measure they have taken other options into account. In this regard, several questions can be raised. To what extent did nationalist elements under Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze, or Saakashvili treat the

autonomous entities as fault lines where a severe confrontation with minority nations or external powers was taking place? Did they ever conceive these autonomous entities—even after a settlement of the present conflicts—as potential bridgeheads to other regions in the wider Caucasus—favoring, for instance, cooperation with Turkey, Russia, or particular regions in the North Caucasus? On the other hand, did these autonomous entities—for instance, Ajara or Abkhazia—strive for such a role? Similar questions can be raised on the level of international relations when Georgia is defined as a periphery and the center is located in Washington, Brussels, or Moscow. Thus, for instance, which policies have Brussels and Washington followed to support Georgia's role as a bridgehead between Asia and Europe?

The national and international levels are linked by the extent to which various "national projects" in this multinational country, to use Nodia's concept, have been framed by a confrontation between the Georgian nation and the nations on the periphery, as well as between the Georgian periphery and the Russian center. What are the domestic consequences for Georgia of having Washington treat Georgia as a country located on a fault line near "rogue" states such as Iran or as a country whose failure to establish full control over its territory opens the door to international terrorist elements? Finally, it may be asked to what extent the nature of Georgian policies toward its domestic periphery is affected by the evolution of Russian, U.S., or EU policy and actions.

While the contributors to this volume do not frame their analyses in terms of center–periphery relations, they supply the evidence for such an analysis. The book has thus been conceived of as "layered." The inner layers deal with the internal and historical sources of the national security challenge facing Georgia. The outer layers deal with the external sources of the challenge, including Russia, the West, and the complex configuration of other players and problems that make the environment so intricate. Nodia includes both layers in his analysis of the Georgian national project, which includes the unification of the nation and the center's control over its periphery on the one hand and full integration into the Western world on the other. Both layers are also more or less explicitly included in all other contributions to be found in this book, even if their main focus is on either the internal or the external sources of insecurity.

CENTER–PERIPHERY RELATIONS IN THE DOMESTIC REALM

Center–periphery relations on the domestic level in Georgia encompass the various dependencies between Tbilisi and different territorial autonomies as well as territorially concentrated minorities. Several types of interaction are relevant in this context. First there are the confrontations between national communities that have taken place on the South Ossetian and Abkhazian peripheries, leading in both cases to full-scale war with the center. Until May 2004, confrontation also characterized the relationship between Tbilisi and Ajara. Confrontation has been avoided but remains a risk with territorially concentrated minorities. Second is the failure to integrate the Georgian periphery into the state- and nation-building efforts of the center. The authorities at the center generally lacked the political will to engage in radical compromises for resolving outstanding conflicts with the periphery, because such compromises risk a loss of domestic legitimacy or could stir up other sources of state instability. Third, despite the recurrent eruption of crises due to the lack of resolution of the Georgian national question, the interaction between center and periphery remains largely characterized by indifference. This results from the failures of both the policies of confrontation and accommodation. Fourth, there is the untapped potential of the periphery to serve as a bridgehead toward other regions and states. All four patterns of interaction are elements in the creation and transformation of national identities.

The center–periphery model assumes that changes in the interaction between poles will be more heavily shaped by changes at the center than at the periphery. This means, for example, that the accession to power of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze, and Saakashvili had a greater impact on the relationship between Tbilisi and its peripheries than any political change within the periphery could have had. The asymmetrical and hierarchical relationship between the poles also implies that each transformation of the relationship between the poles will have a more profound effect on the periphery than on the center. Dramatic changes in the center–periphery relationship in Georgia include the failed restructuring of the Georgian state at the time of independence and its consequences for Tbilisi's control over South Ossetia and Abkhazia. They also include the 2003 Rose Revolution and the consequences for Ajara and South Ossetia.

The Soviet Period

Integration was the declared aim, domination the main characteristic, and confrontation the final result of ethno-federalism in the Soviet Union. It had been conceived of as a form of integration of the various nations previously held together by tsarist imperial rule. A complex federal structure including a supranational level of governance and various types of federated entities (union republics, autonomous republics, and autonomous regions) was meant to solve the problem of national self-determination. Relations between Moscow and the union republics constituted a first tier of center–periphery relations within a multilevel structure, whereas relations between union and autonomous republics constituted a second tier, and between union republics and autonomous regions a third tier. The Soviet center remained the arbiter of all center–periphery disputes on the second and third tier.

The Soviet ethno-federal institutions failed, however, to integrate the national communities, due in part to the lack of equality among nations in this multi-tiered framework. Shared sovereignty, one of the specific characteristics of federations, was also missing. Nodia describes this structure as quasi-federal, where the exercise of sovereignty in fact occurred in a highly centralized form through the Communist Party. Confrontation between national communities on the second and third tiers resulted largely from a breakdown at the Soviet center. Moreover, when confrontation erupted, Soviet ethno-federal traditions that had strengthened separate identities and provided state resources to nationalist elites added to its intensity.[21]

Abkhazians and South Ossetians defined their identity largely in opposition to the Georgian authorities, but they were also involved in a confrontation with the local Georgian population in their area. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Georgian government could not stay indifferent toward these conflicts at its periphery. In the face of this challenge, it sought to re-establish Georgian cultural and political hegemony

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[21] On the discussion regarding the unifying aims and divisive effects of ethno-federalism, see Henry E. Hale, "Divided We Stand. Institutional Sources of Ethnofederal State Survival and Collapse," *World Politics,* vol. 56 (January 2004), pp. 165–193 and Nancy Bermeo, "Position Paper for the Working Group on Federalism, Conflict Prevention, and Settlement," presented at the Third International Conference on Federalism, Brussels, March 3–5, 2005.

over the whole of its territory, a hegemony that it claimed to have lost during the Soviet period.

The justification for Georgian territorial claims on Abkhazia and South Ossetia has a temporal dimension. According to a popular Georgian historical narrative, these territories were first settled by proto-Georgian tribes, and over time they have been developed by an indigenous Georgian population.[22] The Georgians, it is asserted, are the only population "native" to the South Ossetian region, whereas the Ossetians were "latecomers" to Georgian territory, since they migrated from North Ossetia "only a few centuries ago." This difference in origins would give the Georgians a greater historical claim to the region than the Ossetians, despite local demographics that leave Georgians in the minority. Concerning Abkhazia, a different argument is used to justify Georgian hegemony. While Abkhazians are, in the eyes of many Georgians, correct to claim an autochthonous status, they are a minority in Abkhazia (18 percent of the population in 1989), and their numbers do not, in Georgian eyes, warrant the overrepresentation they enjoy in the institutions of the republic nor special political privileges as a titular nation.

Moreover, not all Georgian nationalists accepted the view of Abkhazians as an autochthonous nation. As early as 1954, the literary historian, Pavle Ingoroqva, maintained that the Abkhazians were not indigenous to Abkhazia, but had migrated from the Northern Caucasus. His thesis has a large following in Georgia. Basically it denies the right of the Abkhazians to be considered as a titular nation, and, therefore, delegitimizes their political overrepresentation.

Abkhazian discourses on the ethnogenesis of the Abkhazian nation, in turn, also invoke the issue of sovereignty. Their historians deny an indigenous status to the Georgian population in Abkhazia, characterizing them as settlers and migrants. They refer to migration policies implemented by the tsarist and Soviet regimes that turned the local Abkhazian population into a minority.[23] Abkhazians rely on this historical interpretation to jus-

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[22] Bruno Coppieters, "In Defence of the Homeland: Intellectuals and the Georgian–Abkhazian Conflict," in Bruno Coppieters and Michel Huysseune, eds., *Secession, History, and the Social Sciences* (Brussels: VUB University Press, 2002), p. 105, http://poli.vub.ac.be/.

[23] See the various contributions to George Hewitt, ed., *The Abkhazians* (Richmond, UK: Curzon, 1999).

tify an exclusive status for the Abkhazian nation and its claim to international sovereignty. They also use it to delegitimize Georgian claims for proportional representation.

Gamsakhurdia

With the weakening of Soviet institutions, both Georgians and Abkhazians attempted to reshape center–periphery relations according to their respective national projects. These colliding projects rested on opposite discourses concerning historical injustices, national identity, and state sovereignty. From the Georgian perspective, the primary aim of the Soviet approach to federalism and of the creation of federal entities within Georgia was to divide their country and to restrain their sovereignty. The Abkhazians and the Ossetians, the titular nations of federal entities that were subordinated to the Union Republic of Georgia, resisted what they perceived as forms of oppression and discrimination. They feared that Georgian independence would put an end to the constraints previously imposed by the Soviet center on Georgian nationalism. As demonstrated by Nodia, it was far easier for these two minority nations than for the other minority groups without autonomous state institutions to articulate their grievances, formulate a national project, mobilize state resources, and receive external support to confront the center.

Nationalist mobilization took place both at the center and at the periphery among Georgians, Ossetians, and Abkhazians. It took the form of a series of unilateral moves corresponding to comparable moves at the other pole, such as unilateral declarations of sovereignty or independence, the organization of elections in which one side refused to participate, constitutional changes that were considered illegitimate by the other side, the introduction of new language policies enhancing the status of one language and culture while degrading the status of the other, and eventually the use of military force.

The eruption of violence in this confrontation between center and periphery in Georgia was part of a series of unilateral actions and may thus be understood as the result of a multitude of factors. David Darchiashvili points out that the weakening and then final breakdown of the Soviet center permitted the creation of paramilitary units, which emerged to deal with the internal ethnic conflicts underway by the end of 1980s. The Georgian authorities, however, failed to turn the professed loyalty of these paramilitary groups to the nation into a loyalty to the state's institu-

tions. For Christoph Zürcher, this situation provided a favorable environment for "entrepreneurs of violence" to exploit violence in advancing their own profit seeking. Gamsakhurdia used these forces to consolidate his political power and to wage war in South Ossetia. But the weakness of the Georgian state left him unable to control their actions or even to prevent them from eventually turning against him.

The Georgian national project and nationalist mobilization at the time of independence did not favor policies allowing the peripheries to act as bridgeheads with other centers. As noted by Thomas de Waal, Gamsakhurdia defended eccentric ideas about the common ethnic and cultural basis of the Caucasian peoples, but failed to take practical initiatives toward regional integration. Such initiatives would have had to include Georgia's peripheries in cooperative frameworks. The confrontation with South Ossetia prevented the strengthening of cooperative links with North Ossetia. In the case of Abkhazia, Gamsakhurdia helped to popularize the notion that the Abkhazian population was not indigenous to the territory, but had migrated from the Northern Caucasus, beyond the borders of Georgia.[24] Cross-border cooperation only happened on the military level. During the wars in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, armed support was given to the Ossetians and the Abkhazians by ethnic kin and political allies from beyond the Georgian borders.

Shevardnadze

Gamsakhurdia's ouster in January 1992 and the return of Eduard Shevardnadze to Georgia a few months later had dramatic consequences for Tbilisi's relationship with the periphery. Shevardnadze's accession to power permitted, with Russia's support, the implementation of a ceasefire in South Ossetia. Still, one of the main reasons that Shevardnadze supported the August 1992 military intervention in Abkhazia was to demonstrate his nationalistic credentials in the face of the continuing threat from Gamsakhurdia, who had mobilized armed groups in western Georgia. Zürcher notes that there had been cases of intercommunal violence in Abkhazia before August 1992, but these had not escalated into a full-scale civil war. Such a war only became possible through the center's outside intervention.

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[24] See Coppieters, in Coppieters and Huysseune, eds., pp. 91–94.

The armed groups loyal to Gamsakhurdia were only defeated at the end of the Abkhazian war in October 1993, and then only with Russian support. Despite the loss of large parts of territory, the Shevardnadze government managed to restore some of the elements of statehood. The end of the "Times of Troubles," as Zürcher phrases it, was symbolized by the introduction of a new constitution in 1995 and the reinforcement of the government's monopoly of power. Paramilitary organizations were marginalized or reintegrated into the new armed forces.

Reunifying the Georgian multinational state became the Shevard-nadze regime's main challenge. The military defeat in Abkhazia, the weakness of the Georgian Army, and the Russian refusal to help solve the issue by force left diplomacy as the only option for resolving the political status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Negotiations, however, were quickly deadlocked and remain so today.

The Georgian approach to reunification entails an asymmetrical federal model, in which Abkhazia and South Ossetia, together with Ajara and the Georgian regions, would receive differing degrees of autonomy. This is unacceptable to the secessionist leaderships. Such federal ties would in their view perpetuate a relationship of dependency and confrontation between center and periphery. The Abkhazian authorities, for their part, initially preferred a confederation or the status of a "free associated state" with Georgia. Either option would permit the recognition of Abkhazia as a subject of international law with a full international legal personality, sovereignty, and a unilateral right to secession. It would also radically change the nature of the center–periphery relationship with Georgia. Tbilisi has refused, considering this position to be incompatible with preserving the country's territorial integrity.

With Abkhazia, confrontation between center and periphery remained predominant throughout the Shevardnadze era. In 1999, the Abkhazian leadership radicalized its position, insisting that independence or a free association with the Russian Federation were the only acceptable options. The Georgian authorities, in turn, repeatedly threatened to use military force if negotiations remained stalled, and provided undercover support to Georgian guerilla forces operating in Abkhazia. Georgian and Abkhazian authorities have talked of economic cooperation since 1997, on the assumption that, if progress could be achieved in areas of common economic interest, confrontation could be avoided. [25] But the deadlock

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[25] On the following, see Coppieters, Kovziridze, and Leonardy.

over Abkhazia's political status stood in the way of economic or any other form of cooperation.

The prospect of developing a policy of economic integration with South Ossetia appeared better than with Abkhazia. In this case too, however, the question of political status overshadowed all efforts at economic integration. In the political negotiations between the South Ossetian authorities and the Shevardnadze government, the issue of passports and travel documents constituted a key point of contention. For the South Ossetian authorities, the issue was crucial to communication and trade with the Russian Federation. South Ossetian leaders asked to be allowed to issue their own identity cards and legal documents, but the Georgian government refused.

From the Abkhazian and South Ossetian perspectives, cross-border trade with Russia must be facilitated before a final political settlement can be reached. Increased contact with Russian regions, particularly in the North Caucasus, in their view, will not only be beneficial for their economic development, but will also enhance their leverage in future negotiations with the Georgian authorities. During the Shevardnadze era, the absence of a legal regime, however, did not halt the trade of large quantities of goods through South Ossetia, much of it smuggled. The Shevardnadze government preferred to tolerate rather than suppress such activities, and sometimes even treated them as hopeful forms of an emerging cooperation between Georgians and Ossetians as well as proof that ethnic hostility between the populations did not exist.

As explained by Nodia, the tensions between Tbilisi and the former Autonomous Republic of Ajara did not result from secessionist claims or from conflicts over national identity. There is a sharp contrast, in this respect, between the case of Ajara and the two previous cases. Center–periphery conflicts in this case resulted mainly from the refusal of Ajaran Supreme Council Head Aslan Abashidze to accept the formal authority of Tbilisi. On fiscal matters, Ajara prevented Tbilisi from controlling customs points at the Turkish border and refused to transfer tax revenues. In the security field, Abashidze developed close cooperation with the Russians stationed at the military base in Ajara and set about creating an independent local army. According to Darchiashvili, in 2003, Ajara had twenty tanks and armored vehicles at its disposal, as well as helicopters, coastal cutters, and special armed units.

Leaders coming from the periphery may portray themselves as patri-

ots and demonstrate unconditional loyalty to the national cause. Such was the case with Abashidze. As noted by Nodia, he never defended an Ajaran national project, but "loved to portray himself as a champion of Georgian unity." He also managed to become a powerful figure on the national level through elections, largely by distorting the number of eligible voters and voter turnout in Ajara. This electoral manipulation gave a significant number of seats to his political party (the Revival Party) in the Georgian Parliament.

Ajara had extensive trade relations with neighboring Turkey, signed several bilateral agreements with regions in the Russian Federation, and developed, as a member of the Assembly of European Regions (AER), bilateral ties with a number of other European regions.[26] Ajara was the first region in the Caucasus to make a serious attempt to be integrated into the pan-European network of interregional cooperation. But Ajara failed to play the role of a bridgehead to other countries or regions, because Batumi and Tbilisi could never formalize their federal relationship, and, therefore, resolve the matter of custom duties or that of Ajara's international legal status. Moreover, domestic conflicts between Tbilisi and Ajara were reproduced on the international level. Ajara's membership in the AER, for example, was swiftly followed by the membership of the Georgian region of Imereti, whose governor was an appointee of the Georgian president, to the same organization. Tbilisi made this move in order to counterbalance Batumi's activity on the interregional level. The representatives of these two Georgian regions were soon in conflict with each other, openly airing their domestic divergences. This hindered their cooperation with other AER members.

There were thus sufficient grounds for a severe confrontation between the center and the Ajaran periphery, but Shevardnadze and Abashidze also shared common interests that at times allowed political agreement. The Ajaran leader, for example, traded his personal support for Shevardnadze in the April 2000 presidential elections for the introduction of the name "Ajaran Autonomous Republic" into the Georgian Constitution. Shevardnadze's views on the future federalization of the

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[26] Created in 1985, the Assembly of European Regions (AER) is a forum that facilitates cooperation among 250 regions of thirty different European countries. In November 2004, Ajara and two Georgian regions (Imereti and Shida Kartli) were members of the AER and two regions (Guria and Kakheti) had the status of observers. See http://www.are-regions-europe.org/.

state were another factor impeding the normalization of Tbilisi's relations with Batumi. From Shevardnadze's perspective, the formalization of federal ties with Batumi should follow, rather then precede, the reintegration of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Shevardnadze's unwillingness to try to solve this question implied a policy of powerlessness in the face of Ajara's de facto withdrawal from central authority. His relative indifference constituted one of the main points of contention for the Georgian parliamentary opposition in the last years of his regime.

Regionalization was much debated under Shevardnadze, but actual reform remained tentative and inconclusive. Without taking Ajara and Abkhazia into account, Georgia consists of ten regions, each of which includes a number of rayons.[27] The *presidentis rtsmunebuli* (representatives of the president of Georgia) or so-called governors wield great executive power over the lower entities on the rayon and municipal level. The process of democratization and state consolidation in the second half of the 1990s failed to establish a proper constitutional status for the regions or the principle of self-government. The unresolved secessionist conflicts constituted one of the regime's main arguments against a clear and democratic division of powers between the central government and the regional authorities. Tbilisi insisted that such a reform had to be postponed until Georgia's territorial integrity had been restored. Shevardnadze also feared losing control over the lower levels of government, particularly over the electoral process, a process with which his governors regularly interfered.

In the debate on the future of the administrative–territorial arrangement of Georgia, the "rayonists" were opposed to the "regionalists." For the rayonists, control was said to be central to preserving the stability of the state and even the survival of the existing political regime. They believed that Abkhazian and South Ossetian secessionism and the threat to stability they represented made radical reforms impossible. According to the regionalists, undemocratic electoral practices at the regional level

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[27] These ten regions (excluding Ajara and Abkhazia) are: (1) Imereti (with 669,666 inhabitants), (2) Kvemo Kartli (497,530), (3) Samegrelo and Zemo Svaneti (466,100), (4) Kakheti (407,182), (5) Shida Kartli (without South Ossetia, 314,039), (6) Samtskhe-Javakheti (207,598), (7) Guria (143,357), (8) Mckheta-Mtianeti (125,443), and (9) Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti (50,969) (10) Tbilisi (1,081,679). I am thankful to Ghia Nodia for these data, which he received from the State Department for Statistics of Georgia.

would be more difficult to maintain once regional decentralization had taken place and local self-government was established. Both currents were represented in the Georgian government and parliament. Until the end of the Shevardnadze regime, the far-reaching reform urged by the regionalists seemed impossible.

Under Shevardnadze, unlike in the Gamsakhurdia period, ethnic minorities were no longer assigned the threatening status of "guests." The Shevardnadze regime failed, however, to develop an inclusive civic concept of Georgian citizenship and the Georgian nation. Minority elites were simply co-opted into patronage networks. This perpetuated the Soviet practice of tolerating elite corruption in exchange for political loyalty.

Saakashvili

The political leadership that came to power in Georgia following the Rose Revolution put the struggle against corruption, Georgia's integration into the Euro-Atlantic community, the normalization of relations with Russia, and the reunification of the country at the top of its political agenda. In the new leaders' view, the previous leadership under Shevardnadze had only paid lip service to these objectives. The new leadership sought radical changes. It seemed at first that the most spectacular results could be achieved on the question of national reunification. Once again, as had been the case with Saakashvili's two predecessors, progress was to come through a policy of confrontation. Saakashvili was convinced that the new regime could make a clear break with the previous regime by pursuing a different policy toward Ajara, whose leader had strongly opposed the Rose Revolution. Saakashvili succeeded and Abashidze was forced from power in May 2004.[28]

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[28] To understand the lack of Russian full support to Abashidze in his confrontation with Saakashvili in May 2004, one has to make a distinction between Russia's attitude toward conflicts between national communities in Georgia on the one hand and toward intra-Georgian disputes on the other. As compared to its involvement in the ethnic conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, where Russia has taken the side of the national minorities, Moscow has been far more careful as far as intra-Georgian disputes—including violent ones—were concerned. It did not attempt to destabilize the domestic situation in Georgia during the *coup d'état* against Gamsakhurdia at the end of 1991 by giving substantial support to the forces loyal to the ousted president. It further supported Shevardnadze at the end of 1993 against the pro-Gamsakhurdia forces at a

In Shevardnadze's order of priorities, the Abkhazian question had ranked first, followed by the questions of South Ossetia and Ajara. Saakashvili reversed this order. After its success in Ajara, the new regime confronted the authorities of South Ossetia, combining a policy of force with an extended hand toward the population of the South Ossetia. As the International Crisis Group Report on South Ossetia described, the Georgian government combined a policy of "attacking greed" on the elite level with one of "addressing grievance" at the level of the population at large.[29]

Anti-smuggling operations were mounted in and around South Ossetia in December 2003 and reinforced in May 2004. The most spectacular were attempts at military intimidation by moving in troops and cracking down on the Ergneti Market, which functioned as a trading post between Russia and Georgia. This trade, which involved both Ossetians and Georgians, had been considered by the previous regime as a way to facilitate contacts between the communities. Accordingly, it was thought to have long-term positive effects on Tbilisi's conflict resolution efforts. From the perspective of the Saakashvili government, however, the primary effect of this market was to criminalize the economy and to prevent a settlement of the conflict. Moreover, it destabilized the Georgian budget and impeded necessary customs and tax reforms. Shevardnadze's indifference, the new people believed, stemmed from the degree to which parts of the Georgian establishment had materially profited from this trade.

At the same time that the new Georgian government increased the physical pressure on the South Ossetian authorities, it also sought to appeal to the South Ossetian population by paying retirement pensions and launching television and radio broadcasts in the Ossetian language.

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moment when Georgia was not strong, but rather, as Shevardnadze's suggested, "on its knees." In November 2003, Russia abstained from direct involvement against the revolutionary mobilization against Shevardnadze, and in May 2004 it also refused military support to Aslan Abashidze's regime in Ajara, mediating his departure from the country. This distinction between the two types of conflicts may be explained by a fear of a total destabilization of Georgia, which would be a far greater risk if Russia intervened in intra-Georgian disputes than in secessionist conflicts.

[29] International Crisis Group, "Georgia: Avoiding War in South Ossetia," *Europe Report,* no. 159, November 26, 2004, pp. 11–12, http://www.icg.org/home/index.cfm?l=1.

Saakashvili and his people were acting on the conviction that the Georgian–Ossetian conflict was primarily driven by greed rather than by genuine grievances, and, therefore, that the South Ossetian authorities lacked popular legitimacy. Seen from this perspective, they assumed that a few well-chosen concessions to the population would remove the issue of grievances.

These initiatives, however, failed. On the military level, the confrontation led in August 2004 to a series of armed clashes with casualties, particularly on the Georgian side. As a result, Saakashvili decided to end the military confrontation and to withdraw Georgian troops from the conflict area.[30] On the economic level, as Damien Helly and Giorgi Gogia note, the closure of the Ergneti Market disrupted the activities of several criminal groups, but failed to address the problem of the local population's economic survival. Thus, both the policy of military confrontation with the South Ossetian authorities and the attempt to integrate the local population backfired. According to the International Crisis Group, the remilitarization of the conflict reversed a decade of relative progress.

The situation in South Ossetia has been radically affected by the deterioration in relations with Tbilisi, which underscores South Ossetia's status as a periphery more than ever. Because of the breach in trade relations with Georgia, it has become entirely dependent on another center, Russia. At the moment, Moscow sustains the South Ossetian budget, infrastructure, and even its pension system.[31]

Darchiashvili shows how the absence of central authority over breakaway states has led to the loss of authority over adjacent territories. This has surely been the case for territories along the Georgian–Abkhazian cease-fire line. The new government has sought to control the Georgian partisan groups operating in Abkhazia and pursued them for their alleged involvement in criminal activities. According to Oksana Antonenko, police operations against such groups in February 2004 have helped to improve the security situation in both Georgia and Abkhazia.

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[30] See Ghia Nodia, "Europeanisation and (Not) Resolving Secessionist Conflicts," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Studies in Europe,* issue 1 (2004), http://www.ecmi.de/jemie.

[31] Interviews with South Ossetian participants in the first expert meeting of the "Georgian–Ossetian Dialogue," which took place on March 15–18, 2005, in Brdo, Slovenia. The meeting was organized by Oksana Antonenko from the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

Despite the eagerness of the Saakashvili regime to solve the problem of national reunification, it realized that unilateral measures would not work in the Abkhazian case. On the military level, operations such as the one in South Ossetia would have been obstructed by Russian peacekeeping forces. Offering the Abkhazians economic concessions or opportunities would require a mutually agreed-to framework, which at that time seemed impossible. For more than a decade, Abkhazia had been separated from Georgia, and all meaningful trade links between Georgia and Abkhazia had been severed.

The low level of social, cultural, and economic interaction between Abkhazia and Georgia had a direct impact on the process of state- and nation-building in Abkhazia. It explains why the negotiations with Georgia played no role in the first round of the presidential elections in Abkhazia in October 3, 2004, and in the crisis that emerged afterward. The two main candidates in this election expressed no disagreement on the question of Abkhazian sovereignty or the position to be adopted toward Georgia. Here, it was the periphery that expressed an attitude of indifference toward the center, reflecting the basic change in the nature of this relationship and the shift of Abkhazian dependency to the Russian center. Georgia could only pretend to be the center with authority over the Abkhazian periphery by blocking Abkhazia's international recognition and by creating severe security threats. Antonenko notes that Russia, having brokered an agreement between the two main candidates in the 2004 Abkhazian presidential election, remained the only external force with direct influence on Abkhazian affairs. The fact that Russia's preferred candidate did not become president of the republic, however, highlights the limits of its power. The relationship between Abkhazia and Russia, therefore, is asymmetrical and hierarchical, but not a full dependency.

Concerning the possibility of integrating the peripheries, the new Georgian regime promotes ideas of national identity, nation-building, and citizenship that differ from the nationalist ideology of its predecessors, who had been socialized under the Soviet regime. A distinction thus has to be made in this particular respect between the policies of Saakashvili on the one hand and those of his predecessors. During the Soviet period, Shevardnadze, as a Georgian Communist Party leader, had defended "orthodox" nationalist positions. On the preservation of the Georgian language, for example, his position was in a Soviet context the orthodox view. Gamsakhurdia, a major dissident during Soviet times, represented an "unorthodox" nationalism. That is, he criticized the many concessions made by the

Soviet—including Georgian—authorities to national minorities. Both camps, however, agreed that the Georgian titular nation should preserve its cultural hegemony over other nationalities in the Georgian Republic.

As president, Gamsakhurdia did make concessions to the Abkhazian titular nation, but these attempts at integration were in the Soviet political tradition of power-sharing, which ignored the question of a separation of powers as well as the political differentiation within national communities. In 1991, he proposed that the Abkhazian leadership implement an electoral law based on ethnic quotas that would guarantee them a similar degree of overrepresentation to that enjoyed under the Soviet regime. This proposal was accepted by the Abkhazian side and implemented in the ensuing local elections, but failed to lead to a pacification of the conflict between the two major national communities in Abkhazia. Shevardnadze, after his defeat in Abkhazia, likewise searched for a compromise formula with breakaway states and national minorities that remained in the Soviet tradition. Beginning in 1995, Shevardnadze made several proposals to the Abkhazian and South Ossetian leaderships for the creation of an asymmetrical federal state. His proposals in fact basically reframed the Soviet practice of granting autonomous rights to territorially concentrated minorities while co-opting their elites. He had no idea of how federal mechanisms could be designed that went beyond this Soviet tradition and no notion of the role a multiparty system would have to play in upholding the unity of the state. Leaders in the breakaway states described his offers as a "return to the past."

The new leadership under Saakashvili and a predominantly Western-educated elite has discussed more pluralistic and civic strategies for integrating the periphery and building the nation. But Darchiashvili and Nodia stress the contradiction between the liberal and democratic inclinations of the new elite and the widely popular traditional nationalist sentiments and practices with which they must contend. One may also add that the fears of the new elite do not radically differ from their predecessors. The new leadership still faces the old dilemma: how to transcend the legacy of Soviet ethno-federalist practices with democratic forms when a new democratically based federalism risks a further disintegration of the country.

As a result, when drawing a blueprint of a future federal system uniting Georgia, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia, the new leadership prefers to stress the cooperative features of a federal arrangement and is reluctant to depict the constitutional mechanisms that would guarantee a separation

of powers. The necessary involvement of foreign powers, particularly the Russian Federation, in providing security guarantees for Abkhazia and South Ossetia creates another delicate problem that the Georgian authorities prefer not to address.[32] Furthermore, the unwillingness of the Abkhazian and South Ossetian leaderships to discuss how federal arrangements could attenuate or even abolish hierarchical relations between national communities and provide for international security guarantees for federated states does not favor a political settlement.

More interesting is Saakashvili's proposal in January 2005 to link the question of the political status of South Ossetia to the prospect of cross-border cooperation with the Russian Federation.[33] In Saakashvili's view, the constitutional autonomy of South Ossetia should be broader than in the Soviet era and, indeed, broader than the autonomy enjoyed at present by the Republic of North Ossetia in the Russian Federation. The competencies granted to South Ossetia would include control of the local economy. Saakashvili further stated that a peace agreement would lead to the easing of border crossings between North and South Ossetia and to the creation of a free economic zone. But these views on the federal status of South Ossetia, as presented before the Council of Europe, remained very vague.

In July 2004, the Georgian Parliament adopted a constitutional Law on the Status of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara.[34] It confirmed the

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[32] In his speech before the Council of Europe on a peace plan on South Ossetia, Saakashvili described the OSCE as a "peace monitor," the EU as a "peace guarantor," the United States as a "peace supporter," and Russia as "a welcomed and constructive peace partner." This formula may be rhetorically well-formulated, but fails entirely to address the question how the various international actors could be involved in future mechanisms for security guarantees in politically realistic terms. See Mikheil Saakashvili, "Address by the President of Georgia on the Occasion of the First Part of the 2005 Ordinary Session of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly," Strasbourg, January 24–28, 2005, http://www.coe.int/T/E/Com/Files/PA-Sessions/janv-2005/Saakashvili.pdf.

[33] See Liz Fuller, "South Ossetia Rejects Georgian President's Offer of Autonomy," *RFE/RL Caucasus Report,* vol. 8, no. 4, January 28, 2005, http://www.rferl.org/reports/caucasus-report/2005/01/4-280105.asp; and Saakashvili, "Address by the President of Georgia."

[34] See The International Crisis Group, "Saakashvili's Ajara Success: Repeatable Elsewhere in Georgia?"

principle of Ajara's federal autonomy, but at the same time reflected the new leadership's fear of delegating governmental responsibility to regional bodies. The Council of Europe, basing its assessment on a critical report of the Venice Commission,[35] expressed severe concerns over the "excessively limited autonomy" granted to Ajara, and more specifically over the fact "that the President of Georgia may dissolve the Ajaran Supreme Council if the latter repeatedly refuses to accept his candidate for the region's Prime Minister and that members of his or her executive are literally appointed by the Ministers in Tbilisi. These restrictions reduce the status of Ajara to a nominal autonomy with little if any practical consequence."[36]

The Rose Revolution, therefore, has not led to radical reforms in regionalism or local self-government. This is partly due to the unresolved problem of restoring the country's territorial integrity. The Georgian Parliament ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government in October 2004, but significantly refrained from accepting a paragraph that envisages the cooperation of local authorities with their counterparts in other countries.[37] The future potential of regions to serve as bridgeheads to other regions and countries does not seem to be very appealing to the Georgian political elites.

Saakashvili has created a commission on territorial-administrative reform intended to rationalize the complex system of territorial organization. The government stated that in the future, all leading positions in local government would be elective.[38] But the question of integration of national minorities remains a difficult one, particularly in those regions

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[35] See the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), *Opinion on the Draft Constitutional Law of Georgia on the Status of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara,* Adopted by the Venice Commission at its 59th Plenary Session (Venice, June 18-19, 2004), CDL-AD(2004)018, Strasbourg, June 21, 2004, http://66.102.9.104/search?q=cache:j1bAtuP3w4IJ:www. venice.coe.int/docs/2004/CDL-AD(2004)018-e.asp+Opinion+on+the+ draft+constitutional+law+of+Georgia+&hl=nl.

[36] *Report of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe.*

[37] *Civil Georgia,* October 26, 2004, http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id =8174.

[38] *Report of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe,* p. 11.

where they are geographically concentrated. According to Nodia, the presence of national minorities in the 2004 Georgian Parliament remained purely ceremonial.

Still, the transformation of the center through the Rose Revolution has had a profound impact on Georgia's periphery, even if confrontation and lack of integration continue. The new leadership is using a more civic and inclusive nationalist rhetoric and has changed the order of priorities in its strategy of national reunification. In the case of Ajara, a democratic process of change has taken place, but Ajara's reintegration has been made according to a strict hierarchical pattern, leaving only nominal autonomy to the Ajaran Republic. The failed attempt to force reunification with South Ossetia has seriously retarded efforts at confidence-building and cooperation. Confrontation is still the main characteristic of Tbilisi's relations with both Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The questions of territorial integrity, regionalization, and the integration of national minorities remain unresolved, but the impatience with which the present leadership addresses these questions—leading, as in the case of South Ossetia, to hasty or even foolhardy actions—contrasts with the relative indifference with which the late Shevardnadze regime addressed these problems.[39]

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[39] The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted in January 2005 a resolution on Georgia, which includes an excellent synthesis of the challenge Georgia confronts in its attempt at national integration and state-building: "The Rose Revolution and the two subsequent elections resulted in a very strong government, which may be an asset in dealing with the country's political, economic, and security problems, provided that a strong government is accompanied by a strong and functioning system of checks and balances. This is not yet the case. Today, Georgia has a semi-presidential system with very strong powers of the President, basically no parliamentary opposition, a weaker civil society, a judicial system which is not yet sufficiently independent and functioning, underdeveloped or non-existing local democracy, a self-censored media and an inadequate model of autonomy in Ajara." Parliamentary Assembly, Resolution 1415 (2005), "Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Georgia," http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/AdoptedText/ta05/ERES1415.htm. This resolution is based on the report of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe mentioned above (Doc. 10383).

CENTER–PERIPHERY RELATIONS IN THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER

The assumption that Georgia's relations toward Moscow, Washington, and Brussels can be described as dependency relations according to a center–periphery pattern presumes first that changes at the center will have a more profound impact than changes at the periphery on the interaction between both poles, and second that changes in the interaction pattern will have a greater impact on the periphery than on the center. Five developments, in particular, put these assumptions to a test: the breakdown of the Soviet multinational framework; the progressive emergence of a Caspian energy security policy in the United States in the second half of the 1990s; the transformation of Russia's security environment at its southern borders at the start of the second Chechen war in 1999 and Vladimir Putin's accession to the Russian presidency; the turn taken by American global security policies after September 11, 2001; and the consequences of EU enlargement for the EU's South Caucasus policies.

All five cases demonstrate that Georgia's security environment has been more deeply affected by a reorientation of the policies of each of these three centers than by any of Georgia's domestic changes. In each of these five cases, policymakers in Tbilisi had, as a consequence, to change the parameters of the national security agenda. This confirms Georgia's position as a peripheral country in international relations.

The Dissolution of the Soviet Union

The contributions to this book describe how the relations between Moscow and Tbilisi were primarily determined by the transformation and the eventual dissolution of the Soviet Union, which opened a window of opportunity for national liberation movements in Georgia both at the center (in Tbilisi) and at its periphery (in South Ossetia and Abkhazia). The Georgian independence movement conceived of the re-establishment of political and cultural hegemony over Georgia as indivisible from its attempt to emancipate itself from Soviet and later from Russian rule. Internal sovereignty was not to be dissociated from external sovereignty. But the loosening of links with Moscow did not lead to greater control over the autonomous entities within Georgia. The mobilization of the Georgian national movement at the end of the 1980s subsequently led to Tbilisi's confrontation with the domestic periphery. But as long as Georgia was a part of the Soviet Union, Tbilisi could not create genuine

armed forces to intervene in domestic conflicts. According to Darchi-ashvili, the gendarmerie-like National Guard, which was created for such a purpose, circumvented the risk of confronting the Soviet center.

A confrontation with Moscow was not avoided, however, due to uni-lateral steps taken on both sides. The Soviet center started to revise its previous position concerning the status of the Georgian autonomous entities. The Soviet Communist Party had previously always refused to accept the repeated demands of the Abkhazians to secede from Georgia and to be directly subordinated to the Soviet Union. As described by Zürcher, Mikhail Gorbachev's attempt to reform the Soviet federal sys-tem needed the support of national movements in autonomous entities within union republics, including Georgia. One of the aims of the 1990 Soviet Law on Secession was to forge such an alliance. It gave minorities within union republics that were opting for independence the right to remain in the Soviet Union. Such a move hardened Tbilisi's view that its territorial integrity was not only threatened from within but also from without, that the interests of Russia and Georgia were incompatible, and that the Soviet Union had to be conceived of as Georgia's "oppressive other" (Devdariani). As a consequence, it took further unilateral steps, culminating in a declaration of independence in April 1991.

The loosening of Soviet control and the eventual demise of central-ized Communist Party rule thus led to the breakdown of the federal insti-tutions on all levels of the Soviet framework where center–periphery negotiations and regulation could have taken place.[40] This also had par-ticular consequences for the relations between the newly independent republics that emerged from the Soviet Union. At the end of 1991, there was no foreign policy apparatus in Georgia or the Russian Federation that could have regulated any confrontation or avoided unilateral steps through diplomatic means.

Gamsakhurdia's short exercise of power after his victory in the Geor-gian parliamentary elections in October 1990 until the civil war in the winter of 1991–1992 was a period of confrontation with Russia, particu-larly through Moscow's direct and indirect intervention in the armed conflict in South Ossetia, which started in January 1991 and lasted dur-

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[40] Nancy Bermeo, "Position Paper for the Working Group on Federalism, Con-flict Prevention, and Settlement," presented at the Third International Confer-ence on Federalism, Brussels, March 3–5, 2005.

ing the whole period Gamsakhurdia was in power.[41] What is more, Gamsakhurdia refused to join the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Devdariani writes that Gamsakhurdia was challenging Moscow's security interests in the whole of the Caucasus.

Georgia has been building what Devdariani calls a "resistance identity" against external domination. But the rising confrontation between Georgia and Russia cannot be explained solely by the Georgian national project and search for identity. Devdariani points out how the collapse of the Soviet Union went together with a severe identity crisis within Russia itself. Russia's leadership conceived of the dissolution of the Soviet Union as a form of self-liberation, but its elites felt a deep ambivalence about the past. Some still thought in terms of the country's great-power status or *derzhavnost* and deeply regretted the lost grandeur of the Soviet Union, a goal that could only be pursued in Russia's relations with the weaker states at its periphery. As Robert Legvold notes in the introduction, Russia was weak compared to its former Soviet self, but retained the capacity to dominate its neighbors.

During the same period, Western governments were indifferent toward the internal conflicts in Georgia and the confrontation between the new leaderships in Tbilisi and Moscow. They disliked Gamsakhurdia's nationalism, which resembled the new radical discourses emerging in the Balkans, but they did not perceive these conflicts as touching core Western security interests. They refused to establish diplomatic relations with Gamsakhurdia's government or accept the country's membership in international security organizations. This led to Georgia's international isolation, which lasted until Shevardnadze's return to Tbilisi in March 1992. In explaining Georgia's situation, Devdariani writes that the country had inherited the aspiration to share European political practice but no experience with it.[42] This lack of common history with Europe means

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[41] A cease-fire agreement in South Ossetia was signed in June 1992, after Gamsakhurdia's removal from power.

[42] The only exceptions in this regard were the brief years of Georgian independence in 1918–1921 and the aftermath of the Bolshevik occupation of Georgia in 1921, when European social democracy developed an active campaign of cooperation and solidarity with the Georgian Mensheviks. But this brief experience did not create any positive legacy: there was not any sympathy in the Georgian independence movement in the 1980s and 1990s for the Menshevik ideological tradition.

that it is not possible—as it is in the Baltic states, for instance—to speak about Georgia's independence as a return to Europe or to the Western community.

At the time of the Abkhazian war, Georgia's troubles did not rank high on the security agenda of Moscow, Washington, or Brussels. None of these capitals had a clear view of how to intervene in this troubled neighborhood, and this was no less true for Russia. Antonenko describes the confusion and compartmentalization of decision-making characteristic of Russia's policies toward Georgia, particularly in its intervention in the Abkhazian war. Some parts of the Russian leadership wanted to uphold the principle of territorial integrity, particularly on Russia's fragile southern border. But Russian military commanders in Abkhazia supported the local resistance against the Georgian military intervention, and this support progressively became the main feature of the Russian role in the course of the 1992–1993 war. The incapacity of the Russian leadership to have more of a constraining effect on the local Russian military can partly be explained by the political crisis in Moscow over the standoff between the executive and the parliament. This conflict between President Yeltsin and the Russian Supreme Soviet, which came to a climax in October 1993 and had the potential to turn into a genuine civil war, overshadowed all possibilities for a more balanced Russian role in mediating the conflict in Abkhazia.

After the defeat of the Georgian troops in Abkhazia in September 1993, Russian military support for the Abkhazian side did not lead to a confrontation with the Georgian authorities. Georgia was brought to its knees, as Shevardnadze said at the time. He agreed to join the CIS and to accept the further stationing of Russian troops on Georgian territory. These concessions gave him the necessary Russian support to disband the forces loyal to Gamsakhurdia. Further concessions to Russia were to follow. Vardiko Nadibaidze, an active-duty Russian officer, was appointed as Georgia's minister of defense in April 1994. In addition, Shevardnadze gave unconditional support to the Russian military intervention in Chechnya at the end of the same year.

Western governments remained indifferent toward the fate of Abkhazia.[43] As noted by Helly and Gogia, these governments primarily

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[43] Antonenko makes the observation that Boris Yeltsin does not speak in his memoirs about the Georgian–Abkhazian conflict, which contrasts with the

sought to avoid tensions in the region and deferred the main responsibility for peacekeeping operations to Russia. The West only supported the establishment of a UN observer mission in Abkhazia, which included military from several Western countries, and expressed concern about the impact of the Russian military presence in the South Caucasus on the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty.[44] Regional stability was thus from the start a Western security interest, even if this was not then seen as necessitating direct Western involvement. There were, however, also Western energy security interests encouraging a greater Western presence in the South Caucasus. A third area of concern that required greater Western involvement was the fear of failing states in the South Caucasus. As noted by Helly and Gogia, Western humanitarian aid in the beginning of the 1990s was progressively replaced for these various reasons by broader development aid, support for democratization, and other state reform policies.

Western Energy Security Policies

According to Darchiashvili, Western interest in a more direct involvement in Georgian affairs started in 1995 after the consolidation of the Shevardnadze regime. The Georgian government tried to overcome the Western attitude of indifference by playing on Georgia's geographical location and potential role as a bridgehead for communication and transport between Europe and Asia. Georgian leaders also hoped that a confrontational policy with Russia could lead to greater Western attention. But neither the United States nor EU member states wanted to engage in such a policy vis-à-vis Russia. When Georgia put forward the idea of future membership in NATO, the North Atlantic Alliance did not explicitly reject it, despite the poor state of the Georgian armed forces and the lack

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importance he attaches to the CIS. This demonstrates an attitude of relative indifference. A similar observation could be made concerning Germany's former Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans-Dieter Genscher. Despite his reputation as a "friend of Georgia" and the fact that Germany has given substantial aid to Georgia since the return of Shevardnadze to Georgia in 1992, Georgia is barely mentioned in Genscher's memoirs. This seems to reflect a marginal interest in Georgia and its problems, much as in Yeltsin's case. See Hans-Dieter Genscher, *Erinnerungen* (Berlin: Siedler, 1995).

[44] See Alexei Zverev and Bruno Coppieters, "Verloren evenwicht. Georgië tussen Rusland en het Westen," in *Oost-Europa Verkenningen,* no 134 (August 1994), pp. 38–47.

of democratic standards in its defense policies. As noted by Legvold, Georgia's membership aspirations gave NATO leverage to promote domestic reforms in line with Western interests.

The increasing Western involvement in Georgian affairs in the second half of the 1990s—particularly through American energy politics as symbolized by the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan (BTC) project—had a decisive impact on Georgia's security strategy. Darchiashvili situates Tbilisi's unambiguous choice for alignment with the West in 1998. During that year, Georgia intensified its cooperation with NATO. A year later, it withdrew from the CIS Collective Treaty and became a member of the Council of Europe. This membership was conditional upon the realization of democratic state reforms and respect for minority rights. Western governments asserted leverage in various policy domains. In the military field, U.S. and other Western experts pushed for radical reform of the Georgian armed forces. This included a reduction in military personnel, the elimination of corruption, civilian control over the military, and the development of a national security concept. These attempts at reform failed.

A Western orientation should not be equated with a choice for radical democratic reforms, at least not during Shevardnadze's tenure. According to Darchiashvili, transparent defense policies would have endangered a corrupt system of patronage. A similar conclusion can be drawn in other policy fields, such as regional cooperation in the South Caucasus, which was an EU priority. Georgia remained deaf to all calls for exploiting this "unused potential"(de Waal) for its development policies.

Consequently, Western efforts to promote regional integration had little success in Georgia. Only the BTC Pipeline project could be implemented as planned by its American backers. But even this project cannot be considered a success from the point-of-view of regional integration, although it did create long-term material incentives for Western support to regional stability. As de Waal points out, this pipeline can best be described as a non-Russia, non-Iran pipeline.

Shevardnadze's hope that Georgia would get external support for resolving the question of Abkhazia and South Ossetia went unrealized. In the first Chechen war he fully supported the Russian government's attempt to reintegrate Chechnya by force, hoping that Russia would help Georgia to enforce a similar policy toward Abkhazia. This support contrasted with the West's severe criticism of the Russian military's disregard for international humanitarian law during this war, particularly for the

indiscriminate bombing of Chechnya's capital Grozny. But Shevard-nadze's support was of no avail.

A few years later, in 1999, Shevardnadze would give full support to NATO's war in Kosovo, despite the fact that the Yugoslavian authorities were engaged in a war against secession and that the UN Security Council had not endorsed NATO's intervention. He was hoping that the United States might also endorse a unilateral military action in Abkhazia. As noted by Helly and Gogia, the U.S. government made clear, however, that it would not accept a replay of the Kosovo scenario in Abkhazia. Washington's refusal was not a matter of principle or a reflection of indifference. It was simply impossible for the United States or European governments to engage unilaterally in a military resolution of the secessionist conflicts in Georgia without risking a direct military confrontation with Russia.

Georgian diplomatic efforts in the UN framework to enforce a military solution to the Abkhazian problem did not have any reasonable chance of success either. Proposals to have a Security Council resolution supporting the use of force in restoring the principle of Georgian territorial integrity never got the support of the Western permanent council members.

The Second Chechen War and Putin's Presidency

Confrontation remained the main characteristic of Georgian–Russian relations in the second half of the 1990s. From the Georgian perspective, any Russian attempt at integration with its southern neighbor was perceived as threatening domination, nourishing Georgia's "resistance identity" and providing a new motive for confrontational policies toward Russia. An increased Western presence in the South Caucasus also led to a more assertive Russian role in the region, particularly during Yevgeny Primakov's tenure as minister of foreign affairs (1996–1998). This assertiveness had consequences for the competition between the UN and Russia for a leading role in the mediation between Georgia and Abkhazia. Primakov actively tried to mediate between the presidents of Georgia and Abkhazia, organizing meetings such as the one he arranged between Vladislav Ardzinba and Eduard Shevardnadze in Tbilisi in 1997. As described by Antonenko, Russia's involvement in the Georgian–Abkhazian conflict was facilitated by its federal framework. Russian regional elites were highly active in cooperating with Abkhazia. This eroded the sanctions regime implemented by the CIS.

The start of the second Chechen war in 1999 and the succession of Boris Yeltsin by Vladimir Putin in the Russian presidency led, according to the research results presented in this volume, to a shift of policies toward Georgia and to a reordering of priorities on Georgia's security agenda. First, as far as Russia's perception of threats was concerned, Islamic fundamentalism ranked first. The second Chechen war was not legitimized as a conflict over sovereignty, contrary to the previous war, but as a military operation against Islamic terrorism. This necessitated a new relationship with Washington, which in turn affected Georgia's relationship with the United States. In order to understand this triangular relationship in the framework of center–periphery relations, one has to be careful not to assume that all centers have an equal capacity to determine Georgia's security agenda. Asymmetry and hierarchy are not only characteristic of the relations between center and periphery, but also—albeit to a lesser degree—of the relations among centers.[45] The dramatic impact of the shift in American security strategy after September 11 has not only created a very different international environment for Georgia's security policies, including at home, but also for Russia's security policies toward Georgia. Devdariani shows how Putin started to use principles and terminology drawn from U.S. anti-terrorist discourse, particularly regarding a right of preemptive strikes across Georgian borders and Russia's right to self-defense against terrorist threats under the UN Charter. Furthermore, Putin did not radically oppose enhanced U.S. military involvement in the post-Soviet space, such as the GTEP in Georgia, and interpreted it as a kind of burden-sharing.

Second, Putin's accession to power radically changed the forms of Russian decision-making on Georgia and toward the Georgian–Abkhazian conflict. Antonenko writes that Russia's Minister of Defense Sergei Ivanov, who was appointed in 2001, became the most frequent spokesman on Moscow's policies toward Georgia. But the military apparatus did not have the same degree of autonomy under Putin as it did

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[45] Some of the literature on center–periphery relations has made an attempt to differentiate among semi-peripheries, central peripheries, and peripheral centers. Such a differentiation, however, is not helpful in situating Georgia and identifying the security challenge that it faces. It does not make sense to characterize Russia or the European Union as semi-peripheries or as peripheral centers with respect to the United States and Georgia, despite the asymmetries and hierarchy among these various poles.

during the Yeltsin era. A parallel centralization took place with respect to the foreign policy of the regions. Governors lost much of their autonomy in establishing links with Abkhazia. This did not lead, however, to a cessation of their activities. On the contrary, Russian authorities continued to use these para-diplomatic activities as a way of avoiding international criticism for the support they provided the breakaway states.

Third, Putin made an attempt to expand Russia's influence in the South Caucasus region by intensifying relations with the de facto states. Devdariani describes these new policies as the creation of a specific normative regime only partially compatible with international law; one that aims at exploiting the existence of these unrecognized states to the maximum extent possible. According to Antonenko, this can be seen as one of the results of the destruction of Chechnya as a de facto state. Because of this perceived success, Russia was no longer as concerned with the consequences of its support for breakaway states despite the threat they posed to the principle of territorial integrity. This shift of policies led to the reopening of the Russian border with Abkhazia (although Russia's earlier blockade had long been eroded by cross-border trade and cooperation with Russian regions). New visa requirements for Georgian citizens were waved for the residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, from whom Moscow also accepted Russian citizenship requests on a very large scale. These citizenship policies gave Russia the opportunity to legitimize a durable presence in the breakaway states and leverage in pursuing its own security concerns in these conflicts.

Georgia had to change security priorities as a consequence of this shift in Russian policies. The risk of Russian preemptive strikes on Georgian territory became a main security concern. But Western governments—as observed by Devdariani—drew a redline against direct Russian interference in Georgia and opposed all attempts at implementing preemptive anti-terrorist operations on Georgian territory. Diplomatic efforts were initiated in the multilateral framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which in December 1999 began to monitor an eighty-one kilometer stretch of border between Georgia and the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation.[46]

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[46] OSCE Press Release, "OSCE Georgia Mission Expands Border Monitoring Operation," January 2, 2002, http://www.osce.org/item/6491.html. In December 2001, this mission was expanded to include the border between Georgia and the Ingush Republic in the Russian Federation to the west of Chechnya.

September 11

The reorientation of U.S. security policies as a result of the events of September 11 had a direct impact on U.S. relations with Georgia. According to Helly and Gogia, it led to the inclusion of the South Caucasus into the "Greater Middle East," defined as an area of potential threat. It also prompted a rearrangement of U.S. security policies with the Russian Federation, leading, as mentioned by de Waal, to a devaluing of the GUUAM alliance. The most significant step by Washington was its support for the development of modern armed forces and stabilization of the Russian–Georgian border through the Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP). Georgia thus received increased attention in the West, particularly in the United States. Helly and Gogia note that Georgia turned into a transit point for U.S. aircraft supporting military operations in Afghanistan.

Despite increased U.S. attention toward Georgia and its new geopolitical significance as a transit country, confrontation became increasingly frequent in Western, particularly American, relations with Georgia. There was, as analyzed by Antonenko as well as Helly and Gogia, strong Western criticism of Georgia's support for guerilla activities in Abkhazia, such as the failed Gelayev operation in the Kodori Gorge in summer 2001. Aborted attempts to go against corruption and the failure of institutional reforms in Georgia weakened the overall capacity of the state, threatening to turn the country into a failing or even failed state. According to Devdariani, the incapacity of the Georgian armed forces to control the Pankisi Gorge came close to a sign of state failure. In October 2001, Georgia had to acknowledge the presence of foreign guerillas in Pankisi after Washington insisted that it apply a "zero tolerance policy" toward such security threats.

But Shevardnadze found it increasingly difficult to accept Western recommendations and criticism. Devdariani and Darchiashvili both note that this led to a softening of Shevardnadze's opposition to Moscow, including on the question of Russian bases in Georgia. Shevardnadze even stated that future NATO membership could be combined with membership in the CIS. This went together with the lack of a security strategy that clearly defined values and threats, and with the strengthening of nationalist movements challenging Georgia's Western orientation.[47]

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[47] Such movements, which criticized the implementation of Western democratic standards and called for a unique Georgian way to development, remained, as noted by Nodia, in the minority and could not challenge Western cultural hegemony.

The impact of September 11 and of the reorientation of U.S. security policies on Georgia should not be underestimated. The prospect of Georgia becoming a failed state, a state that would breed terrorism at the border with Chechnya and otherwise destabilize U.S. relations with Russia, explains not only the increased U.S. insistence that the Shevardnadze government implement reform policies, but also the lack of strong Western support for Shevardnadze when he was confronted with domestic opposition in November 2003, which ultimately resulted in his downfall.

As far as the question of Abkhazia is concerned, Helly, Gogia, and Antonenko describe how Russia's greater assertiveness in this breakaway republic combined with Georgia's growing frustration over the lack of progress in the UN's mediation efforts led Shevardnadze to accept of a more prominent mediating role for Russia. The result was the so-called Sochi process, bringing together Russia and Georgia, albeit without abandoning the UN-led Geneva negotiations.

The Rose Revolution of November 2003 brought a new leadership to power in Tbilisi. Regime change in this case not only demonstrates that the transformation at the Georgian center had a profound impact on the relationship with Georgia's peripheries—particularly Ajara and South Ossetia. It also shows that a transformation even as great as the Rose Revolution has a limited capacity to fundamentally alter the pattern of relations with a key external center like Moscow. Contrary to the expectations of the new Georgian leaders, they were unable to integrate more deeply with Western structures while normalizing relations with the Russian Federation. Their hopes were reflected in the simultaneous appointment of Salome Zourabichvili, a French diplomat of Georgian origin, as minister of foreign affairs and Kakha Bendukidze, a Georgian entrepreneur who had been highly successful as an industrialist in Russia, as minister of economics. These expectations were also shared by Western observers, but, significantly, not by Russian observers and journalists, who generally pointed out that Saakashvili's radicalism and nationalism could become a new source of conflict with the breakaway states, with Georgia's national minorities, and with Russia itself.

The Enlargement of the European Union

The most significant progress toward integration with the West was probably Georgia's inclusion in the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) of the European Union. This progress was, however, not primarily due to

Georgia's change of regime, but to the new geopolitical situation in which the European Union found itself after its May 2004 enlargement. Its expansion to the east and the inclusion of new member states that had either been part of the Soviet Union or of the Warsaw Pact increased European interest in the South Caucasus, also in the process confirming my thesis that changes in the relationship between the European Union and Georgia are induced by a transformation at the center rather than at the periphery. It may be added, however, that the Rose Revolution has enhanced European interest in the South Caucasus region, which has thus helped to overcome the marginal importance previously attached by EU policymakers to Georgia and facilitated its rapid inclusion in the ENP.[48]

As Helly and Gogia report, a further sign of a significant improvement in Georgia's cooperation with Western governments and organizations was the announcement by the United States in May 2004 of $500 million in grants, largely in the field of state reform. In June 2004, the European Union and the World Bank pledged nearly $1 billion to Georgia. The same year, NATO endorsed Georgia's Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) and appointed a special representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia, who was to be stationed in Tbilisi. In May 2005, U.S. President George W. Bush visited the Georgian capital.

The contributors to this volume—particularly the Georgian contributors Nodia, Darchiashvili, and Devdariani—point to the various obstacles to Georgia's full integration into the West. The new leadership largely consists of Western-educated elites with no or few ties to former Soviet networks. In their public discourse, they favor international integration, and have proclaimed a crusade against corruption. But they also respond to Georgian public opinion, particularly with respect to a quick resolution of the Abkhazian and South Ossetian question. Saakashvili's uncompromising attitude in addressing the conflict with South Ossetia in the summer of 2004 was not appreciated by Western governments. According to Helly and Gogia, Saakashvili was warned that he would not receive any Western support and would be isolated if he used military force in this crisis.

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[48] The European Commission had initially proposed in 2003 that the countries of the South Caucasus could only be integrated at a later stage in this new EU strategy toward its periphery.

Georgian authorities are reluctant to implement reforms granting self-government to regional and local authorities consistent with existing formal European standards, as already noted with respect to the Council of Europe recommendations. A profound contradiction between aspirations and existing practice can also be observed in the reform of the defense and security sectors. Thus, while Georgia has been pursuing its policies of Western integration, severe tensions remain between aspiration and practice.

Relations between Russia and Georgia have not been normalized as a result of the West's increased effort to promote Georgian reform. The OSCE monitoring mission at the Georgian border with Russia was halted. Russia's overall criticism of this organization, which it had once favored but later saw as an instrument of Western expansion in the post-Soviet space, has made it more difficult for Western governments to ameliorate Russia's relations with Georgia within a multilateral framework.

Legvold argues that Russia is out to preserve its influence in Georgia both over the center and the periphery. Moscow respects the principles of territorial integrity and non-intervention in internal affairs, but not at the cost of lessening its influence. It could be added that Russia would not want to support a peace settlement in Abkhazia or South Ossetia that was unlikely to succeed thereby failing to guarantee stability on its borders.

Devdariani has stressed the importance of Russia's economic penetration in Georgia, particularly in the energy sphere. Georgian economic cooperation with Russia would, if Moscow does not ask for preferential treatment but accepts the principles of free trade, give better prospects for a normalization of their relations. But economic cooperation efforts that involve Abkhazia may be very difficult to realize. For instance, Russian economic projects linking southern Russia with Armenia through the reconstruction of existing railway networks would require the agreement of the Georgian government on terms that are also acceptable to the Abkhazian authorities. Attempts to come to such an agreement have not been successful in the past.

SUMMARY AND OUTLOOK

Georgia's relations with Russia, the United States and the European Union—and toward its various domestic peripheries—are both asymmetrical and hierarchical. Transformations in the relationship between the poles are more influenced by changes at the center than at the periphery.

In the case of relations with Moscow, Washington, or Brussels, the remaking of Georgia's international security environment as a result of major shifts in the security policies of these states—from the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 to the enlargement of the European Union in 2004—had a greater impact on Georgia's foreign relations than either of the two regime changes within Georgia had.

This does not mean, of course, that the *coup d'état* against Gamsakhurdia in 1991 and the Rose Revolution in 2003 had no effect on the country's international position. Shevardnadze's arrival in power in 1992 facilitated the development of diplomatic relations with the outside world and admission to the UN and other international organizations. Similarly, the Rose Revolution sped the inclusion of the South Caucasus in the ENP.

The Georgian government, however, has not always used well these major shifts in the international environment to strengthen its position and to achieve a safer and more productive relationship with the Russian Federation by energetically fostering ties with the Western world. After the Soviet Union collapsed, Zviad Gamsakhurdia failed to secure broad international support for Georgia, and in fact deepened his regime's isolation until it was violently overthrown. Shevardnadze more skillfully exploited the emergence of a Western energy policy in the South Caucasus in the second half of the 1990s, a second major shift in Georgia's international security environment, but chose not to use Russia's plight during the second Chechen war to establish better diplomatic relations with the new Moscow leadership. Instead, he preferred to mobilize his domestic constituency on the basis of anti-Russian rhetoric and policies. The question of Pankisi and the irresponsibility of the Georgian authorities in the Gelayev operation did much to increase anti-Georgian sentiment in Moscow. True, the Russian government also ignored legitimate Georgian security interests, choosing instead to rely on threats. If diplomacy can be said to be the art of dealing with difficult neighbors in difficult situations, diplomacy was largely missing on both sides.

At the point in Russian–Georgian relations when Georgia came close to state failure, the events of September 11 forced Tbilisi to reorient its security policies. It re-established state control over the Pankisi Gorge, went after guerilla forces operating in Abkhazia, and initiated a program of institutional reforms. But the Shevardnadze regime was incapable of seeing democratic reforms through. The result was the Rose Revolution and at last the chance to make good use of the changing security policies

of an enlarged European Union and of renewed U.S. support for demo-cratic progress in the post-Soviet world.

As for Georgia's domestic relations, the advent of independence, the *coup d'état* against Gamsakhurdia, and the Rose revolution also had a more profound impact on the relationship with the peripheries than any internal change taking place within these territories. This is most clearly illustrated by the recent history of South Ossetia, where violent clashes took place as a result of the mobilization organized by Gamsakhurdia and other nationalist leaders in 1989. Shevardnadze's return to Tbilisi in 1992 permitted the establishment of a cease-fire, which held for more than a decade, but the Rose Revolution resulted in new violent confrontations.

In 1991, the Abkhazian national movement, determined to achieve equal status with Georgia, profited from the Gamsakhurdia government's entanglement in South Ossetia and strengthened its position within Abk-hazia by accepting a new electoral law, guaranteeing overrepresentation to its parliamentary representatives. The 1992–1993 military intervention in Abkhazia was initiated by the Georgian government a few months after Shevardnadze's return to Tbilisi, and led to an Abkhazian military victory and the creation of one more de facto state on Georgia's periphery.

A center–periphery model further assumes that changes in the rela-tionship between both poles will affect more substantially the periphery than the center. The conspicuous exception is the dissolution of the Soviet Union, where the center was destroyed and the various peripheries emerged as independent states. This book shows the deep impact on Georgia of shifts in the international setting, including obviously the end of the Cold War and the breakup of the Soviet Union. But less obviously so is it affected by a changing relationship with the West as a result of increased U.S. and European interest in their own energy security. In this case, not only has Georgia's foreign and security policy been deeply influ-enced, but its entire development strategy. Georgia's shifting relations with Moscow, Washington, and Brussels— produced by the dramatic developments in Russia in 1999, in the United States in 2001, and within the European Union in 2004—had similar far-reaching consequences for Georgia. For these countries, however, the place of relations with Geor-gia and the other Caucasian states was far less significant.

When it comes to Georgia's domestic conflicts, the point that changes in the relationship between the poles have a greater impact at the periph-ery than at the center is reflected in the emergence of South Ossetia and

Abkhazia into de facto states as the result of their military victory over the center. Other examples include the reintegration of Ajara into the Georgian fold and the increased dependency of South Ossetia on the Russian Federation, both of which resulted from confrontations with Tbilisi after the Rose Revolution.

The contributions to this volume also demonstrate that peripheries on both the domestic and international levels may try to transform themselves into centers. This has happened in two separate, but parallel cases. On the international level, Tbilisi has striven to move away from Moscow, while on the domestic level Sukhum(i) and Tskhinval(i) have struggled to free themselves from Tbilisi. Other center–periphery relations on both international and domestic levels are far less conflictual, even when neither pole supports a high level of integration.

The conflicts between the poles are also marked by the failure of the peripheries to emancipate themselves entirely from a center perceived as oppressive by establishing themselves as an alternative center or by connecting themselves with another center seen as more protective. As the separation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia from Georgia has deepened, each breakaway state has been more thoroughly integrated into the Russian fold, yet without formally or legally emancipating itself from Georgia. For this to happen, they need international recognition of their sovereignty, which they have not yet achieved.

A similar problem arises in Georgia's international relations. For more than a decade, Tbilisi seemed to assume that further integration into Western institutions would be sufficient to change the balance of power with Moscow, and thus permit a normalization of their mutual relationship, including the resolution of outstanding conflicts. The contributions to this book only partially confirm this assumption. Georgia's alliance with Western governments, its progressive integration into Western institutions, and its parallel policy of confrontation with Russia have led to a lessening of dependency on Moscow. However, these developments have not ameliorated crucial issues for Georgia, such as Russian visa requirements or key questions regarding Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

On the international level, a transformation of Georgian–Russian relations may, if one thinks in terms of a center–periphery model, be expected to follow more from profound changes in Moscow's security environment than in Tbilisi's. If Russia were to reorient its policies towards the EU or the United States, this could have a profound influence on its relations

with Georgia. Or if the situation in the Northern Caucasus were to deteriorate seriously or if massive terrorist attacks occurred on Russian territory, the effects would also likely be significant.

A transformation of Georgian–Russian relations might also come from a radical change in Georgian–Western relations, for instance through Georgia's inclusion in NATO or the EU. A comparison with the Baltics is relevant in this respect. Russia is the single most powerful external influence on all the post-Soviet states, except the Baltic states. The three Baltic states are also the only post-Soviet states for which security "does not start at home," to repeat Legvold's formulation in the introduction, and, which, despite difficult relations with Moscow, "enjoy anything approaching a secure existence." This is largely due, of course, to their membership in NATO and the EU, and, therefore, they represent a role model for the kind of security Georgia wishes to achieve.

The timeframe for these prospects, however, is not only difficult to pin down, but in the case of the EU, hard to conceive of, not only because of the state of Georgia's economy and the incapacity of its state institutions but also because of the difficulties the EU is facing in the negotiations with prospective new members. Georgia's membership seems easier to imagine in the case of NATO, but Georgia's incorporation would require that both NATO's policy objectives and its membership criteria be modified. In either instance, however, change would again mean that a transformation at the center was largely responsible for a new relationship with the periphery.

If the attempts by Georgia, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia to emancipate themselves from a perceived exploitative center seem to be only partially successful, a normalization of their relationship with this center by compromise does not then easily follow. On the Georgian domestic level, any federal arrangement based on the principle of Georgia's territorial integrity will have to include some element of hierarchy among state institutions, and this will have direct consequences for relations with Georgia's national communities. From the perspective of the Abkhazian and Ossetian national projects, even if their inclusion in an ethno-federal framework permits them to realize to a large extent their right to national self-determination, the principle of hierarchy would be difficult to accept. The principle of shared sovereignty would include some severe constraints on the exercise of power by the Georgian majority, which would be similarly difficult to accept from the perspective of the Georgian national project.

An even more difficult task in the transformation of the conflictual center–periphery relations within Georgia into a stable federation is overcoming the profound instability of the center. None of the presidential successions in Georgia has followed constitutional procedures, and it remains unclear to what extent the new elite will be able to build a core statehood based on the rule of law. Weak statehood and chronic instability reflected in *coups d'état* and popular revolts[49] inevitably have a profound effect on the relationship with peripheries. Still more importantly, any change in center–periphery relations as a result of instability at the center affects the peripheries more profoundly than it affects the center itself. In Georgia, successful democratic reforms and institutional stability, of course, cannot be ruled out, but one must be realistic when contemplating a federal solution, and with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, avoiding the worst-case scenario becomes key. Any federal arrangement in Georgia must provide for security mechanisms that are able to resist spillover effects. A high degree of separation between the competences of the domestic center and those of the periphery, as well as strong international security guarantees, will be necessary to achieve a stable federal outcome. Russian involvement in guaranteeing security for Abkhazia and South Ossetia will be crucial, but so will Russian restraint, if international guarantees are not to become unilateral guarantees.

The fact that the future relationship between Georgia and Russia depends more on transformations at the center than at the periphery and that Abkhazia and South Ossetia have turned themselves into peripheries of the Russian Federation does not mean that a resolution of Georgia's conflicts is only to be found in Moscow. Tbilisi's claim to sovereignty over Abkhazia and South Ossetia means that it too must assume an active role in the search for a settlement. This in turn requires a normalization of its relations with the Russian Federation. There must also be confidence-building steps between the center and Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The Georgian authorities need to convince people in both territories of the center's capacity to reform and readiness to resolve national conflicts through peaceful means. Much of this will undoubtedly be difficult, but if Georgian leaders can persuade themselves to move in this direction, they have a chance of persuading the Abkhazians and Ossetians as well.

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[49] The Rose Revolution has generally been analyzed in the framework of post-communist transitions. But a comparison between Georgia and some countries of Latin America, such as Ecuador, may also reveal crucial parallels.