

LECTURES NOTE ON ABKHAZIA, GEORGIA

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ABKHAZIA, GEORGIA

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Authors: Sergi Kapanadze, Helen Khostaria, Levan Geradze, Paata Gaprindashvili, Giorgi Jangiani, Zurab Shengelia, Nino berdznishvili, Esma Kokoskeria

Redactors: Helene Khoshtaria, Giorgi Jangiani, Mariam Grigalashvili, Mariam Tsitsikashvili, Salome Gabliani

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Roots of the conflict in Abkhazia

(a short review)

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Zurab Shengelia

The roots of the conflict in Abkhazia date back to the period when the Russian Empire started to spread its influence (taking control of territory) in the South Caucasus that falls on the end of 18th and the beginning of 19th century. The conflict reached its peak at the end of the 20th century, when it escalated to a military phase and formed the modern status of the conflict. This conflict stands out with its specifics not only among the post-soviet conflicts. Every conflict in the modern world has either a territorial claim or religious confrontation as a ground. In our case, Georgians consider Abkhazians as an indigenous ethnic group, believing that no other homeland exists for them and the territory they are living on is their traditional place of residence and development. Polemics that lasted from 2000 to 2001 in the Respublika Abkhazia newspaper asked an important question: if the natural migration of Georgians to Abkhazia had not occurred, what would be an approximate number of Georgians in Abkhazia nowadays? Some believe that it may have even been higher than the number of Abkhazians currently living in Abkhazia. This proves the claim that the territory of Abkhazia, as well as entire Georgia, is a place of residence of two indigenous ethnic groups and this is a common position.

The conflict has neither a religious confrontation as a fundament: Abkhazians are Orthodox Christians, so are Georgians; and even if it were not the fact, having the same faith as Russians is the main fundament of the political technology for the political interests of Abkhazians.

If we are to analyze historical events, we should consider the fact that liberal arts and historical science have always been bound by strict ideological boundaries. Multiple examples may be found while assessing the events from 20th century, for instance.

Our society uses predominantly two terms: Abkhazian and Apsua, as two terms with different meanings. If we have a closer look at legends and the history of Georgia, it is evident that Apsua and Abkhazian are the same concepts and differ from Georgian. Just as Georgians are labelled as Gruzins and Georgians in different languages with the meaning remaining unchanged, it can be said about Apsua, which means Abkhazian in Abkhazian language. Disregarding the identity of these two terms starting from the end of 19th century, paved way for Russians to publish the first “scientifically” proved monograph in 1903 (author - Voronov) - *Абхазия не Грузия* (Abkhazia is not Georgia) Invalid source specified.. It describes the differences between Georgian and Abkhazian ethnic groups and instead of concluding that Abkhazians are not Georgians, they claimed that Abkhazia is not Georgia, exploiting the matters to their own interest. This, sort of, shifted the ethnic difference to a state level.

As Russia began to conquer the South Caucasus, it faced many obstacles. The confrontation was not only coming from the locals, but was also dictated by foreign factors. Uprisings in Georgia, confrontations in Abkhazia, Russo-Turkish war etc. The policy of victorious Russia is of great importance, especially towards Abkhazia. Three waves of muhajirs, ideology of exploiting and populating the territory, colonization (writing founded by Uslar, first Abkhazian alphabet, special attention to the Abkhazian resort zone, Russian liturgy in churches that started by that time). The reaction of the Georgian society to these developments is noteworthy. For instance, Iakob Gogebashvili unconditionally supported the idea of holding liturgies in religious and linguistic groups had disappeared during Soviet period only in Russia, as a result of this policy.



J. Titmeria, Jansugh Charkviani, Otar Tchiladze, Grigol Abashidze, Karlo Kaladze, Beso Jghenti, Joseph Noneshvili, Phridon Khalvashi, Alexandre Baramidze, Revaz Margiani, Giorgi Tsitsishvili, N. Gureshidze, Ivane Tarba, Archil Sulakauri. 1969/5.



Aleko Shengelaia at the meeting with Abkhazian writers. 1974/4/5.



Giorgi Leonidze, Bagrat Shinkuba, Nikolay Tikhonov, Simon Chikovani, Anatoly Sopronv. 1958.

Abkhazian and of developing the Abkhazian language overall.

The beginning of 20th century was marked by the dissolution of the Russian Empire. Abkhazians, who felt the danger coming from Russia, started to search new ways of establishing relations with Georgians. In 1919, the representatives of the Abkhazian People's Council were negotiating with the Government of independent Georgia to establish relations on a confederative basis. Invalid source specified. These negotiations led to nothing. On one hand, it was due to the lack of readiness of then Government of Georgia and, on the other hand, active intervention of Soviet Russia (establishing Soviet rule).

In 1931, Abkhazia was united with the rest of Georgia as an autonomous republic and, as a result, communist ideology became the only defining factor in Georgian-Abkhazian relations, especially its national policy sector, which was based on Stalin's works. Stalin was unilaterally deciding on the policy of the party and the state solely in the fields of party building and national policy. The idea of cultural blending was the cornerstone of this national policy. A single Soviet culture should have been formed that would have assimilated the cultures of the ethnic groups living on the Soviet territory. Surely, conserving smaller ethnic groups' cultures was not part of this idea and it was expected that bigger cultures would absorb smaller ones. On 25 May 1989 (Gorbachev's rule), during the first meeting of the high council, it was stated that more than 250 small ethnic, religious and linguistic groups had disappeared during Soviet period only in Russia, as a result of this policy.

As for the Abkhazians, for example, their writing was changed five times in 70 years, meaning that a middle-aged Abkhazian had to study his own language and writing five times.

It is noteworthy that this idea was being implemented with the help of the “big brother” institute. Russia was a “big brother” of Georgians and Georgians were the same to the Abkhazians. The Soviet Government would make decisions in Moscow and assign their implementation to the Government of Georgia that would subsequently implement it based on the Government of Abkhazia. A report letter sent by the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia, Akaki Mgeladze to Stalin on 12 December 1952 is the proof of the aforementioned.¹

The activities of Lavrenti Beria play a special role in the formation of Georgian-Abkhazian attitudes. Despite viewing the activities of Beria similarly by both societies, it is the “big brother” institute that provides for ethnically Georgian Beria to be considered as a sole implementer of the communist ideology with regards to the Abkhazians.

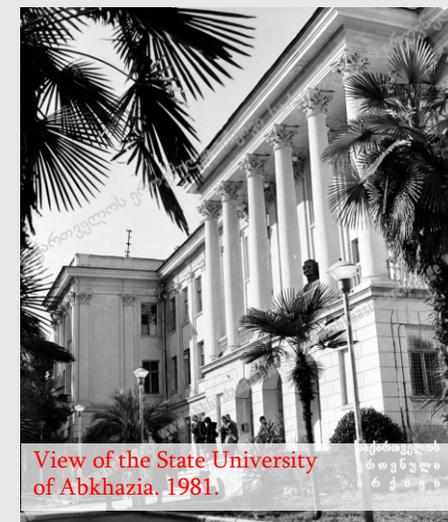
The Abkhazian society was addressing the Government of the Soviet Union about all this. It was complaining to the “ultimate big brother” about the Government of Georgia (i.e. documentary collection *Абхазские письма* (Abkhazian Letters)), as it believed that the Government of Georgia was acting independently from the central government, with its own initiative. There are multiple examples of the aforementioned, such as manifestations for opening a university in Abkhazia and establishing the Abkhazian television.

¹A report letter of the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia, Akaki Mgeladze to Stalin.

<http://matiane.wordpress.com/2013/04/22/report-to-Stalin-on-abkhazia>



Khukhuti Bghazhba, Galaktion Tabidze and Dimitry Gulia. 1946. Literature Museum.



View of the State University of Abkhazia. 1981.



Jansugh Charkviani, Chair of the Likhni village council, Guram Asatiani. 1975

All this served as a prerequisite for the confrontation in Abkhazia between Georgians and Abkhazians in the process of disintegration of the Soviet empire. This was perfectly exploited by the forces opposing the disintegration of Soviet Union (mostly coming from Russia) who added fuel to the situation and shifted the conflict to a military phase, subsequently identifying themselves as belligerents. This opinion has been further proved right by recent policy of Russia in Ukraine - the occupation of Crimea and its actions in Donetsk and Luhansk regions.



A group of Georgian and Abkhazian writers. 1955. Sitting second from right: Bagrat Shinkuba. Standing first: Guram Asatiani, second: Shota Akobia.

Apsuara

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Nino Berdzenishvili

In the written sources, the term Apsuara was first used by the founder of Abkhazian literature, Dimitri Gulia in 1920. Opinion journalism played held an important place in the first Abkhazian newspaper, Apsni, that was being issued from February 1919 to February 1921. Invalid source specified. Then prominent Abkhazian public figures, Dimitri Gulia,² Mikheil Lakrba,³ Dimitri Alania⁴ were discussing the most acute problems for the Abkhazian people in very interesting polemics concerning the Abkhazian identity issues. It was during these polemics that Dimitri Gulia wrote a poem, in which he prayed to God for the Abkhazian people and named Apsuara, as a sole means of survival.

The roots of the term Apsuara stem to the far past. Apsuara⁵ can be conditionally translated as Abkhazianness (the quality of being Abkhazian, Abkhazian self). Since 1960, Abkhazian scientists have been trying to define Apsuara and its system. Many believe that Apsuara encompasses an Abkhazian national culture, an everyday culture including language and religion, whereas the major part of the scientists thinks that Apsuara is a mere combination of authentic Abkhazian traditions. In any case, Apsuara Invalid source specified. is considered as a historical category that has been forming through centuries and has eventually become an unwritten law of the Abkhazian traditional culture, a code of conduct for an individual.

The major part of the researchers focuses on the moral and ethical side of Apsuara and considers it as a structural axis of the phenomenon.

The social behavior originating principles play an important role in the structure of Apsuara. The first principle is Alamis - the conscience that has absolutely specific ethnic importance to the Abkhazian people. The second principle is Auaura - humanity that puts the human in the center of the Apsuara system. Prohibitive principles in Apsuara system are also important. I.e. the Pkhasharoup principle - the shame that excludes the violation of the socially accepted norms of behavior.

Even today, Apsuara defines the lifestyle of the Abkhazian people and plays an important role in the modern Abkhazia.

² Dimitri Gulia (1874-1960) – famous Abkhazian writer, founder of the Abkhazian literature and historiography.

³ Mikheil Lakrba (1901-1965) – famous Abkhazian writer, playwright, journalist, theater specialist.

⁴ Dimitri Alania (1893-1938) – Abkhazian public figure, publicist.

⁵ Дмитрий Гулия Стихотворения from "Антологии абхазской поэзии" ("Апсуа поезиа антология", 2009)



Giorgi Shervashidze, Telemaq Gurieli (brother of poet Mamia Gurieli) and Besarion Beridze.



Ivane (1847-1906) Shervashidze (standing) and Konstantine Shervashidze (sons of Grigol Shervashidze) with their wives Tereza Chichua and Mariam Kobulashvili (granddaughter of Tekle Batonishvili daughter of Erekle II).



Bichvinta monastery and fence. Photo from Ermakov's collection.

Abkhazian media

As of today, up to 30 newspapers are published in Abkhazia in Abkhazian, Russian and Armenian languages. Gali Newspaper is also published in Megrelian as well. Respublika Abkhazia is a state newspaper published in Russian (editor - Vitali Chamagua), whereas Apsni Newspaper is a newspaper of the Parliament of Abkhazia, published in Abkhazian once in a week (editor - Boris Tuzhba) and accentuates culture and literature.

The following newspapers are considered oppositional in Abkhazia:

1. Nuzhnaia Gazeta⁶ (editor - Izida Chania) - a very popular weekly Russian newspaper with the highest circulation (4,000 copies).
2. Ekho Abkhazii (editor - Vitali Sharia) - independent weekly Russian newspaper (3,000 copies) accentuating imaginative literature together with the political news.
3. Chegemskaia Pravda (editor - Inal Khashig) - a weekly Russian newspaper, mostly highlighting the political processes in Abkhazia
4. Noviy Den' (editor - Sergey Arutunov) - in circulation since February 2004 and frequently publishing the interviews and articles of Russian authors.

Apart from the aforementioned, Abkhazian People's Party newspaper Narodnaya Gazeta (in Russian; director - Yakub Lakoba), Republican Party newspaper Golos Naroda (in Russian), religious newspaper Khristianskaya Abkhazia (in Russian) and several regional newspapers are published in Abkhazia. Of great popularity are also the Airaira newspaper (editor - Daur Nachkebia), a weekly Russo-Abkhazian newspaper of the socio-political movement Vozrozhdenie, Kolokol (in Russian) and Asarkal (in Abkhazian), the last two being monthly magazines of the NGO, Center for Human Rights and Democracy (editor - Genadi Alamia).

Three televisions are broadcasting in Abkhazia:

1. Abkhazian State TV-Radio Company (CEO - Ema Khoja).⁷
 - a) Radio programs were first aired on 30 April 1932 (first editor - Ivane Koghonia).⁸
 - b) TV programs were first aired on 6 November 1978.

⁶ Russian newspaper, <http://abh-n.ru/> (retrieved on 8/11/2015)

⁷ Abkhazian State TV-Radio Company, <http://www.apsua.tv/rus/> (retrieved on 8/11/2015)



Ruins of Saint Svimon kananeli monastery (IX-X) and the first builders of the monastery (1880s). Engraving according to the photo of Bokhonov S.



Givi Dzneladze, Ivane Tarba, Joseph Grishashvili, Mikheil Chiqovani, Eremo Qarelshvili, Shalva Alkhazishvili, Tengiz Archvadze, Givi Monavardisashvili at the day of Press. 1958/5/5.



Writers based in Abkhazia: Vakhtang Tsanava, Shota Akobia, Murman Qoiava, Dimitry Gigiberia, Simon Tsverava, Mikheil Chachua, Valerian Duduchava, Emeliane Qurdiani. 1950/10.

2. Abaza TV⁹ - an independent TV company, founded by Beslan Butba and is aired twice a day.

3. TV Studio Asarkia¹⁰ (Nadezhda Venediktova) - on air since 2011.

There are two radio stations broadcasting in Russian:

1. Soma¹¹ - on air since 31 December 1998 and broadcasting in Sokhumi, New Athos and Gulripshi.

2. Golos Abkhazii (Voice of Abkhazia)¹² - on air since 2012 and broadcasting mostly in Sokhumi.

The first NGO in Abkhazia was founded by Mushni Khvartskia in Sokhumi (a branch of the Leningrad Scientific Centre) and was mostly concerned with the popularization of scientific and technical achievements. Before that, there had been several creative unions that studied politics, history, ecological problems and that served as a basis for the foundation of socio-political movement Aidgilara (first chairperson - Nodar Chanba) later in 1988.

NGO's founded in the nineties were mainly preoccupied with rehabilitating the post-war people both mentally and physically. Later, especially after the 2008 August War, organizations, interested in the principles of democracy and human rights spread in Abkhazia.

As of today, there are more than 35 NGO's registered in Abkhazia, including several creative and professional unions. Up to 10 organizations are specifically active.

Of great influence and popularity is the Abkhazian Elders' Union (chairperson - Konstantine Ozgan) and the movement - Abkhazian Mothers for Peace and Social Justice (chairperson - Guli Kichba).

Women in Politics (chairperson - Irina Agrba) and Humanitarian Programs Centre¹³ (editor in chief - Batal Kobakhia) also play a significant role in the political processes in Abkhazia.

⁸ Abkhazian State Radio Company, <http://www.apsua.tv/rus/radio/> (retrieved on 8/11/2015)

⁹ Independent broadcaster, <http://abaza.tv/> (retrieved on 8/11/2015)

¹⁰ TV Studio Asarkia, <http://asarkia.info/> (retrieved on 8/11/2015)

¹¹ Russian Radio Station Soma, <http://radiosoma.com/> (retrieved on 8/11/2015)

¹² Russian radio station Golos Abkhazii, <http://101.ru/?an=personal&userid=603019> (retrieved on 8/11/2015)

¹³ Abkhazian NGO Humanitarian Programs Centre, <http://apsny-chp.org/> (retrieved on 8/11/2015)



Delegates of the Republican Conference of Young Writers of Georgia: Ivane Tarba, Silovan Akhvediani, Mikheil Zodelava and Alexi Gomiashvili. 1947.



Galaktion Tabidze meeting Sokhumi pedagogues. 1947



Jansugh Charkviani and Mushni Lasuria at the 275th anniversary of Davit Guramishvili. 1980.



Soso Botsvadze, Galaktion Tabidze. 1954.

Topics of the history of Abkhazian
writing and the ethnic
culture of Abkhazians

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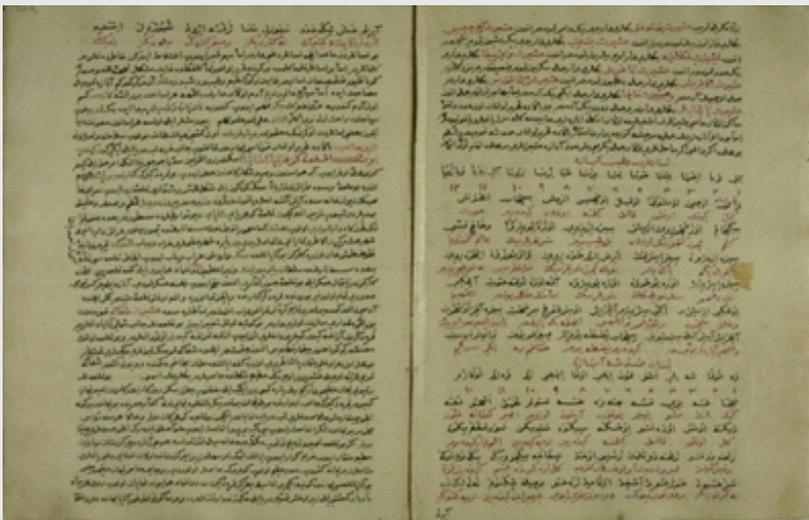
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1. On Abkhazian language

The Abkhazian language belongs to the Abkhazian-Adyghe group of Ibero-Caucasian languages. This group also contains Abaza, Adyghe, Kabardian and Ubykh languages.¹⁴

The first scripts of Abkhazian vocabulary date back to the book of XVII-century Turkish explorer, Evliya Çelebi.¹⁵

The beginning of the history of scientific study of Abkhazian language is connected with the name of Petre Uslar. He used Russian graphic to create a writing system for the Abkhazian language for the first time in 1862.¹⁶ In 1926-1928, the Abkhazian literary language was translated to a writing system based on Latin graphic, coined by Nicholas Marr.¹⁷ In 1928-1937, the writing system of Nicholas Marr was replaced by the new writing system forged by Yakovlev, Polivanov, Chanba and Ahashba also based on the Latin graphic. In 1938-1954, with the efforts of Dimitri Gulia, Simon Janashia and Akaki Shanidze, the Abkhazian literary language was translated to a new writing system, based on the Georgian graphic. In 1954, the Abkhazian writing was reset to Zavadski's version of Uslar's writing system. In 1994, the writing of six letters was clarified.



АЦСУА		АЛФАВИТ						
Аа	Бб	Вв	Гг	Гьгь	Гөгө	Гґ	Гьгь	Гөгө
а	бы	вы	гы	гьа	гөы	га	гьы	гөы
Дд	Додо	Ее	Жж	Жьжь	Жөжө	Зз	Зз	Зөзө
ды	дыы	е	жы	жьы	жөы	зы	зы	зөы
Ии	Кк	Кькь	Көкө	Ққ	Қьқь	Қөқө	Кк	Кькь
и	кы	кьы	көы	қы	кьы	көы	кы	кьы
Көкө	Лл	Мм	Нн	Оо	Пп	Пл	Рр	Сс
көы	лы	мы	ны	о	пы	пы	ры	сы
Тт	Төтө	Тт	Төтө	Уу	Фф	Хх	Хьхь	Хөхө
ты	төы	ты	төы	у	фы	хы	хьы	хөы
Хх	Хөхө	Цц	Цөцө	Ци	Цөцө	Чч	Чч	Ее
хы	хөы	ц	цөы	чы	чөы	чы	чы	еы
		Ѳѳ	Шш	Шьшь	Шөшө	Ыы		
		ѳы	шы	шьы	шөы	ы		
		Ѳѳ	Ци	Цьць	ь	о		
		ѳы	чы	цьы	щыц	щыц		

Creation of writing

Russian policy towards Abkhazian language

¹⁴ Chikobava. 1953 - Чикобава А.С. Введение в языкознание. Часть 1. Учпедгиз, 1953

¹⁵ Çelebi. 1971. ევლია ჩელების მოგზაურობის წიგნი. ნაკვეთი I. თურქულიდან თარგმნა, კომენტარები და გამოკვლევა დაურთო გიორგი ფუტურნიძემ. თბილისი (Also - Эвлия Челеби. Книга путешествия. Issue 3 Земли Закавказья и сопредельных областей Малой Азии и Ирана. М. Наука. 1983 (<http://www.vashaktiv.ru/texts/ch/chelebi23.php>) (Retrieved on 8/11/2015)

¹⁶ Uslar. 1887 _ Услар П. К. Этнография Кавказа. Языкознание. Абхазский язык, Tbilisi, XV с. + 193 с. + 120 с. (Re-issued.: Sokhumi, 2002.)

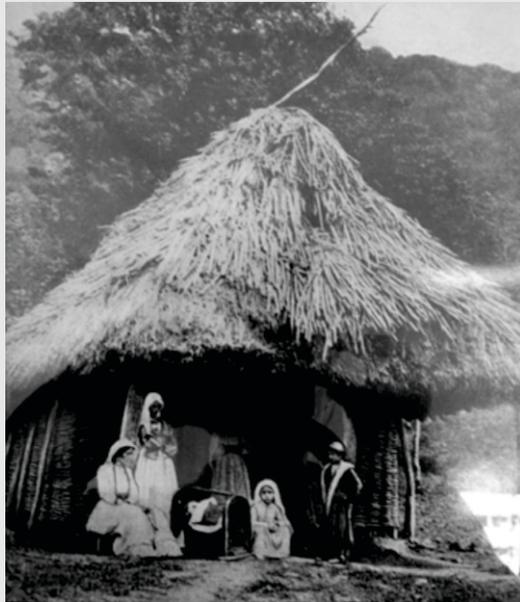
¹⁷ Murr. 1938 _ Marr. Н. Абхазский аналитический алфавит, Л., 1926 (Ibid. Н., К вопросу о положении Абхазского языка среди яфетических, СПб., 1912 («Мат. по яфет. языкознанию», V); Ibid. - О языке и истории абхазов. М.-Л., АН СССР, 436 с.; Ibid. А.-русский словарь, Л., 1926).

The colonialist policy exercised by Russia in the Caucasus implied denationalization, or, depriving of nationality, national traits of both large (i.e. Georgian) and small ethnic groups (particularly, Abkhazians). The linguistic factor was important during the implementation of this policy. Extinction of the Abkhazian language, weakening the Georgian language and establishing the dominant position of Russian in Abkhazia was one of the tasks of the imperial policy. Weidenbaum's thoughts on Georgian and Abkhazian languages may serve as one of the examples. Invalid source specified.

1. Episodes from the Abkhazian ethnography

The residential buildings of Abkhazians were the oldest western-Caucasian style, soil-based round wooden wickerwork without windows, widely known as Kolkhetian Patskha. In the 19th century Abkhazia, so-called Oda houses are of wide usage, a house based on pillars that is known as Akuaskia in Abkhazian. According to the Abkhazian tradition, newlyweds were settling in a wedding house, specially constructed for them, which was called Amhara.

Abkhazian clothing belongs to the general Caucasian type.



A sort of residential building.
Abkhazian plaited house Akuachv.



abkhazian wedding house

Customs and traditions

Several rules that can be accounted as remaining of the generic formation, still exist in the lifestyle of Abkhazians. For instance:

Vengeance - retaliation

, that was not only obligatory for the family members of the murdered, but involved distant relatives too and included an entire kinship of the killer.

Mamamdzudzeoba

- **аталычество**: another widespread tradition stemming from the generic formation. The representatives of the higher layer would send their children to other families for upbringing. The representative of the higher layer would acquire a loyal, submissive subordinate, whereas serfs would acquire a strong and often rich patron.

Mutual aid

The power of generic relations is well expressed in a widely acknowledged mutual aid rule. Abkhazians help each other materially in various common events, such as marriage, death or some other case.

State of women

Women enjoy more freedom in the Abkhazian society, as compared to the customs of various Caucasian people. The female representatives of the higher layer would enjoy as many rights as males. However, still, a woman is not be equal to a man.

Marriage

A young gentleman or a lady were not allowed to directly express their will to get married in front of the elders. A mediator would inform the latter. Since 19th century, up to the modern days, often, young people have been getting married via staged abduction. Birthplace engagements have also been a tradition.

Childbirth

A childbirth has always been an important event in Abkhazia. The family of the child has been responsible for its upbringing and its individual growth. This process would start from the moment of birth. Raising a son has been of special importance - the formation of his authority would be facilitated starting from his early years.

Burial, mourning

Family members of the deceased would go through several stages from the death of the person until the final stage of mourning (one-year anniversary): 1. Acknowledging the deceased - Ahvhvara, 2. Mourning process, 3. Burial, 4. Leg opening, 5. Forty (fifty-two) days, 6. Anniversary.

Several aspects of Apsuara.¹⁸

Respecting the elders

This is one of the most important characteristics of patriarchy. In modern Abkhazia, this tradition has weakened, however, it is still widely used and remains actual. Elders are under special care and attention even today. For instance, the oldest member of the feast always gets the best place and he is the first who receives the offer to wash his hands before the feast.

Akhatgilara - standing up

Showing respect by standing up: in Abkhazia, every person, no matter the age, is greeted by standing up. Violating this custom is perceived as a major disrespect and a shame.

Alamis/Anamis

The essence of Abkhazian morale, spirituality. Represents a combination of the ethnical morale, the Apsuara code and the highest moral laws of humanity, such as dignity, nobility, love of freedom, conscience, loyalty, innocence.

¹⁸ Inal-Ipa. 1965 - Инал-Ипа Ш. Д. Абхазы (историко-этнографические очерки) Sokhumi - "Алашара" - 1965. Also see: Kuprava. 2008 – Куправа А. Э. Вопросы традиционной культуры абхазов. - Sokhumi. 2008.

Janashia. 1917 – Джанашия Н. Абхазский культ и быт. Петроград - Типография Академии наук – 1917.

Janashia. 1960 – Джанашия Н. Статьи по этнографии Абхазии Сухуми — Абгосиздат — 1960.

Religious views

Abkhazians are followers of a pagan religion. Even if a modern Abkhazian is an Orthodox Christian or Muslim, remaining of pagan views still exist in his/her everyday life.

Folk medicine and magical views

The foundation of Caucasian, more particularly, Abkhazian folk medicine had multiple factors, but the most important was the religious belief that every disease, mostly epidemic, was caused by supernatural powers, meaning that medicaments would not cure them. If a disease had been identified, it would have been necessary to sacrifice to the powers that caused the disease.

Abkhazians use magical views and the rituals based on them even today in their everyday life. Most often, the magical customs are used when curing diseases.

Culture and Religion in Abkhazia

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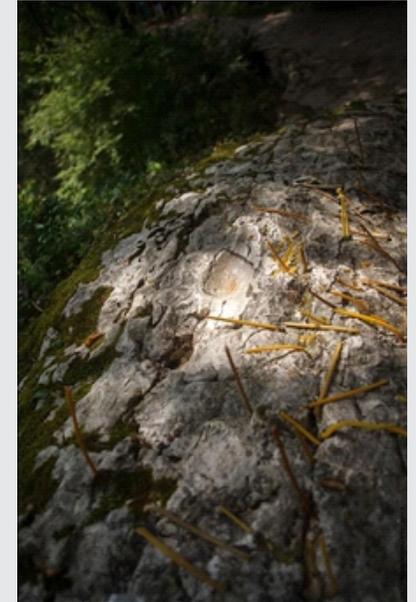
Considering the development of humanitarian, especially historical sciences under the circumstances of a strict ideological control, it becomes clear that there are several stories about the dissemination of Christianity in Abkhazian Kingdom. The given material may need specification or be debatable, but this is the view of the Abkhaz society that should be interesting for the readers.

According to the earlier sources, Christ's disciples - Andrew the Apostle and Simon the Zealot, who travelled from Cappadocia to Trabzon - preached Christianity in Abkhazia in the 1st century AD. According to the oral history, Simon the Zealot, who came with the intention of Christianization of the region, died as a martyr in 55 AD at the bank of the river Psirtskha. He was buried there and today there is a church named after him at that place.

Cross at the Place of Execution of Simon the Zealot and the Footprint of the Saint on the Stone



Trabzon, an old Greek colony, was a port city. Being a trade destination, it became a center for the dissemination of Christianity in the entire Caucasus and Abkhazian Kingdom was the first destination. The fact that Abkhazia was the first to adopt Christianity is proved by the fact that the Bishop of Pityus, Stratophiil was the sole representative from Caucasus at the first Christian meeting in Nicaea. We can presume that Christianity managed to find ground in Abkhazia, even before it became the official religion, therefore the religious hierarchy was also created earlier. At that stage of development of the Abkhaz Kingdom,¹⁹ Christianity was not solely a religious matter; it rather determined the geopolitical choice of the country, thus the religious matters were of great importance. Interestingly enough, despite the domination of Greek in the official ecclesiastical language, the liturgy in Abkhaz Kingdom was held in Georgia. The religious processes of that time were under great attention:



- Some sources indicate that part of Abkhazians did not adopt the new religion (considering the Roman emperor factor and the power of religion as a weapon of colonization);
- Clash of national perceptions and the new religion, defeat of the first and building Christian churches at holy places (Didripshi, Ldzaa, Pitsunda, Elipi, Likhni) despite the fact that these holy places might have been devoted to the cult of the sole god - Antsa which was mentioned by the apostles. It may not be coincidental that in Abkhaz language, Christian icons and national relics are expressed with one word - anikha.
- Later, the fall of Constantinople strengthened the Ottoman Empire's aggression. Islam distorted the Abkhaz culture and people turned away from Christianity. In the beginning of the new century, religious nihilism took hold among Abkhaz people. Old, pagan beliefs

¹⁹ In the period of existence of Abkhaz Kingdom, definitions of Abkhaz and Abkhazia were broadened. In the certain period, Abkhaz Kingdom meant the entire Western Georgia, with the capital on Kutaisi.

strengthened. Islam enters Abkhazia in 16th century Invalid source specified., as a result of Ottoman influence. Islam was first adopted by the high class - the nobles, however, the pagan cult was strong among the major part of the population. Ottoman Empire, using both peaceful and violent methods, was increasingly trying to gain religious influence. The expansion especially strengthened in the beginning of 17th century. In the second part of 17th century, the metropolitan residence of the Patriarch of Western Georgia that was hitherto located in Pitsunda, was moved to Gelati, near Kutaisi. At the same time, two mosques were being constructed in Sokhumi. In 1734, Ottoman army intervened in Samegrelo and Abkhazia. At the same time, an uprising took place in Abkhazia: Turkish troops were destroyed and the Christian religion was restored. Islam failed to take a strong hold in Abkhazia. Locals were slightly following Muslim rituals and traditions, whereas Allah was adopted only in a façade way. However, nearly on the entire territory of Abkhazia, the population still follows the old pagan traditions, existing prior to the adoption of Christianity and Islam.

Abkhaz Music and Folklore

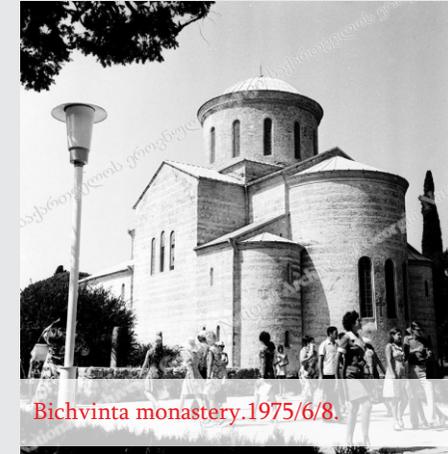
Modern ethnography pays great attention to the ethnic and societal problems. There are cases, in which territorially distant settlements have similar musical tunes and vice versa, in which neighboring settlements do not have similar tunes at all.

The aforementioned is due to the fact that the language development process has been developing differently in music. Interdependence and influence on the musical culture can be analyzed via observation on national musical instruments, melody structures and tunes. Abkhaz national instruments are composed of the ones presented in Abkhazia and those taken from other cultures. Pure Abkhazian instruments include: Ainkaga, Abiki, Ashamshigi, Acharpini, Aiumaa, Akhima, Apkhartsa, Aphkhiartsa, whilst the instruments taken from other cultures are Aduali, Achamguri, Apanduri and Amirzakani.

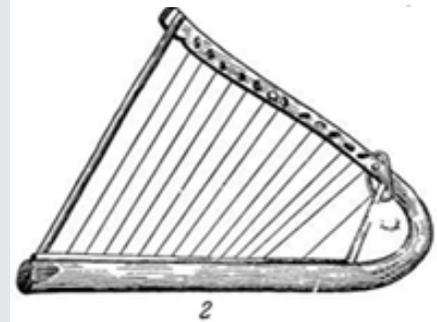
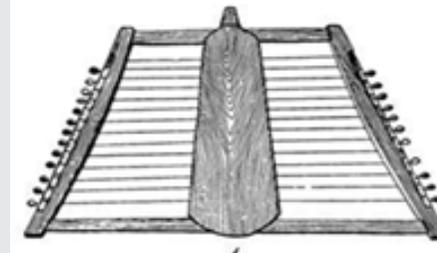
Their abundance indicates the strong bonds between Caucasian peoples. In this case, Abkhazian (as an ethnic group) instruments are in strong ties with Adygean and Georgian instruments, whilst the polyphonic folk songs are, of course, strongly connected with Georgian polyphony culturally. Abkhazian, mostly three-voice songs, from Ochamchire region, are strongly connected to Mingrelian songs. Tunes, similar to Mingrelian, can be indicated, however, there are elements of the Eastern Georgian polyphony as well, mainly mobile Bani.

However, in Abkhazian songs, mobile Bani also took hold in two-voice sings, as well, that subsequently became specific to the Abkhazian ethno-culture. The given trend then influenced Adygean and other folklores in the Northern Caucasus. Both political and musical development is strongly interconnected in Caucasus. Elements creating the culture of society were created by music, art and dynamics of relations with other peoples. Folklore was always an indivisible part of Abkhaz lifestyle and reflected its history, life and characteristics. For centuries, it was folklore that preserved ethnic features and individualities.

As for genres, there are several of them in Abkhazian folklore: working, ritual, comical, wedding and medical songs. Of course, there are many songs preserved from the pre-Christian period, i.e. old songs and chants such as Azari, Atlarchopa, Dziuiu and Atsunikhua. These pre-Christian songs went through a difficult path of development, but the ideas expressed in these songs suggests their pre-Christian nature.



Bichvinta monastery.1975/6/8.



Musical instruments: Aiumaa and Akhuma.



Musical instrument Aptschia.

History of Theatre

Establishment of theatre in Abkhazia is connected with the development of the Georgian theatrical culture. Georgian lecturers raised many Abkhazian directors and actors up. Interestingly enough, Georgian and Abkhazian troupes of Sokhumi Drama Theatre were located in the same building for decades. Georgian and Abkhazian actors have played together in plays, they shared each other's ups and downs, but the political developments affected the theatrical life and divided it.

National games, ceremonies, oral performance - it all represented the source of development of Abkhazian theatrical culture, from which new theatrical masterpieces were created. In 1912, a member of Armenian traders' guild, Joachim Aloiz built the first small theatre with 670 seats.²⁰ Amateur plays were staged there from 1915. In 1918, circle (club) for drama writers was opened in teachers' seminary following D. Gulia's initiative. In 1921, Aliozin theatre changed its name to Abkhazian National Theatre.

During the establishment of Soviet rule, the theatrical troop became active under the leadership of D. Gulia. In 1928, Abkhazian sector of Sokhumi Theatre was opened. In 1930, Abkhazian Drama Studio was re-opened in Sokhumi and the Drama Theatre was opened on its base in 1931.²¹ In 1943, the building fell victim to fire. This became a barrier for cultural development, however, soon, in 1952, it was reconstructed (M. Chkhikvadze was the architect) Invalid source specified.. Audience hall was designated for 700 people and included radio system. During plays, there were live radio translations in Russian, with a synchronized translation. In 1967, the theatre was named after Samson Chanba.

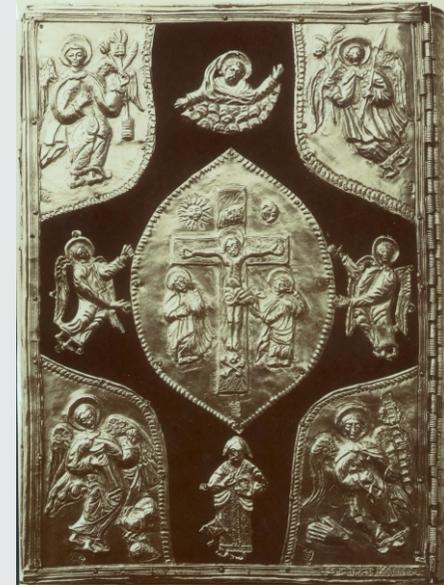
As for the development of the theatre, its repertory was very broad. It included a broad variety of Abkhazian and Georgian works and world classic, too. Work of professionals, such as A. Khorava, A. Vasadze, A. Tavzarashvili played an important role in the development of both troops. In different periods, producers of the theatre were: V. Kushitashvili, S. Chelidze, A. Agrba, Sh. Pachalia, G. Sulikashvili, N. Eshba, G. Zhuruli, G. Gabunia, I. Kakulia, L. Paksashvili, Ts. Mrevlishvili etc. In 1973, producer in chief of the Abkhazian troop, D. Kortava and the stage director of the Georgian troop, Kobakhidze, were awarded the title of Worker of Art of Abkhazian Autonomous Soviet Socialistic Republic. Abkhazian theatre was adopting traditions of world theatre and tried to develop on its own, too. The theatre made many efforts for developing a unique drama culture.

The best plays of the Abkhazian troop included: Anzori (Shanshiashvili, 1930), The Government Inspector (Gogol, 1932), The Sheep Well (Lope De Vega, 1934), The Death of the Squadron (Korneychuk, 1937), Othello (Shakespeare, 1941), Intrigues and Love (Schiller, 1947), The Last Ones (Gorkiy, 1954), Snowball (Pachalia, 1957), Song on a Rock (Shinkuba), Don Carlos (Schiller, 1971), Alou is Angry (Chkadua, 1974), Deed (Sukhovo-Kobylyna). In 80'ies, another important event happens in the theatrical life: Shakespeare's

²⁰ 27.02.2012. ТЕАТР НЕ ИЗМЕНИТ СВОЕГО ОБЛИКА, http://www.gazeta-ra.info/index.php?ELEMENT_ID=2952 (see 17,10,2014)

²¹ Торжественно открылись Абхазский Государственный драмтеатр и Русский Государственный театр драмы, Аpsupress, 22 Мая 2014.

http://www.apnypress.info/news/torzhestvenno-otkrylis-abkhazskiy-gosudarstvennyy-dramteatr-i-russkiy-gosudarstvennyy-teatr-dramy/?PAGEN_ (see 17.10.2014)



Cover of the Mokvi gospel (1300). Gospel was rewritten by the order of Mokvi bishop Daniel. Author of the miniature and rewriter of the text was someone Efrem.

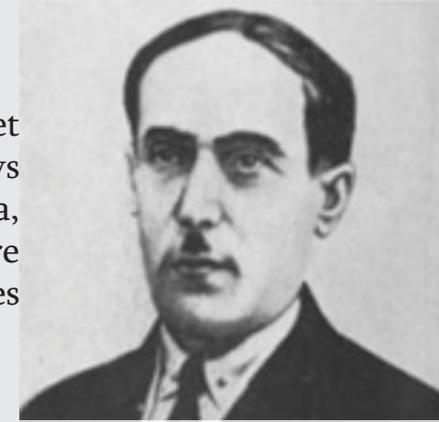


Sokhumi Theatre building.



Sokhumi Drama Theatre and the fountain in front of the building. 1963.

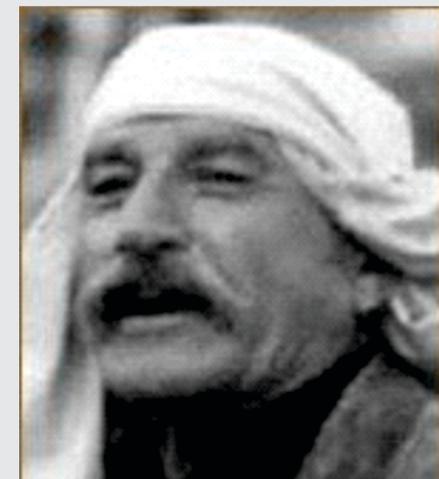
tragedy, King Lear was staged for the first time. The play had a great success. King Lear's role was played by a Soviet artist, Sharakh Pachalia. During Shakespeare's festival, this play was rated as the best setting of Shakespeare's plays in the Soviet Union. Theatre was proud of artists, such as Sharakh Pachalia, Asis Azra, Laurtsan Kaslandzia, Minadora Zukhba, Marina Pachalia, Mikhail Kove, Jarnas Amkuba, Samson Kobakhia and Vera Dbar. They were awarded the title of national artists of Abkhazia and Georgia. After them came new generation which continues the ancestral traditions.



Samson Tchanba



Sharakh Patchalia



Aziz Agrba

Analysis of Political Situation in Abkhazia: 1990-2014

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Abkhazian ethnos remains a debatable issue among scientists. One view holds that Abkhazians represent an autochthonous nation, ethnic group living in Abkhazia that gave name to the territory or received its name from the territory. According to another view, Abkhazians (not Apsus) represent are Georgian people that participated in the formation of unified Georgian nation together with other Georgian peoples. Whilst Apsus (modern Abkhazians) are kindred, yet alien people that appear in Georgia in middle ages on the territory of Abkhazia. They hijack the ethnonym of local people, Abkhazians and manage to get certain autonomy under the circumstances of Georgian feudal dissolution, as other Georgian principalities do. (Lortkipanidze, 1990) Russian Empire was continuously using Abkhazian ethnos during the Georgian annexation as a weapon for distortion of unified Georgian statehood and implementation of an effective imperial rule. For this purpose, Abkhazian population was artificially confronted with the center and to everything Georgian, in general. During Soviet rule, Abkhazian autonomy, as well as other Georgian autonomies, was actively used to control the Government of Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic. Initiation of Abkhazian issue was always taking place as a contrary to activation of national liberation movement.

The Abkhazian factor became especially actual during the dissolution of Soviet Union – a modernized Russian Empire. Moscow did its best to stir separatism in Abkhazia, organize and arm extremist groups and push them against Georgian statehood.

This is when Vladislav Ardzinba enters the stage. He had been portrayed by separatist ideologists as an undisputed leader of the “restoration of the Abkhazian statehood that was lost during Soviet period” and a person that deliberately and consistently made believe the nation that creating an independent Abkhazian state was possible.²² (Ardzinba, 1989)

The Abkhazian separatism, despite its secessionist nature, has always been directed by Russia. A part of leaders understood that their aspirations were doomed without Russia, so they were accentuating the relations with Russia, whilst the second part was directly ruled by Russia and was following its instructions.

Today, after the full occupation of Abkhazia, Russian Federation tightened control over the territory of Abkhazia and actively intervenes not only in the military and other security institutions, but in its internal affairs, too. Formalization of such system of relations is carried out by signing high-level agreements on “international” and “sectoral” cooperation.

On 24 November 2014, the Alliance and Strategic Partnership Treaty was signed between the Republic of Abkhazia and Russian Federation. As the sides have voiced, this treaty paved way for a new stage in the relations between the “countries” (Civil.ge, 2014).

The treaty provides for direct economic aid from Russia to Abkhazia and implies signing sectoral agreements between the sides.

²² Предусмотренный действующей конституцией статус автономной республики приводит к фактическому национальному неравноправию и неравенству. Такое деление народов на ранги, является прямым наследием сталинизма, а так же административно-командной системой, которая ведет к унитаризации, что особенно отразилось на автономиях. Это положение можно проиллюстрировать на примере развития советской государственности абхазского народа равно как и других автономий.“ Vladislav Ardzinba



Without title.



Galaktion Tabidze and Mariam Dadiani -Anchabadze among Sokhumi Drama Theatre actors.1927/3.



People from Samurzakano (1860s)

High level of sectoral cooperation between the sides is proved by the business visit of de-facto Foreign Minister of Abkhazia to Moscow, during which he met with the leadership of the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Russia. Bilateral consultations took place between the heads of two institutions during the meeting, a broader spectrum of issues was discussed and Memorandum on Common Mechanisms of Realization of Foreign Policy was signed subsequently (The MFA of the Russian Federation, 2012).

Despite non-recognition, due to its geographical location, Abkhazia is included in the processes taking place in the region. For example, ongoing war in Ukraine directly reflected on Abkhazia, too. First, the war created a vast amount of IDP's and part of them came to Abkhazia. Nearly 1,500 IDP's have found resort in Abkhazia and it seriously stressed the local government.

Sanctions, imposed by EU to Russia are also associated with the war in Ukraine (europa.eu, 2014). Among other threats, the decision, taken by the European countries, brought unwanted socio-economic results. Abkhazians believe that these sanction put Abkhazia under serious threat, as the non-recognized is increasingly becoming a subject to various risks that the latter is unable to react symmetrically, independently and operatively to due to its scale.

Against this background, Russia helps Abkhazia in every direction, despite difficulties. However, Abkhazia officially acknowledges that it is interesting in developing cooperation with other “partners” and primarily, with the countries that have friendly relations with Russia.

According to Abkhazians, 90'ies example illustrates that it is necessary to develop other contacts to sustain stability and the dependence on a sole country (International Crisis Group, 2010), despite the strategic partnership, is not recommended. Thus, there are ongoing efforts to contact with various countries and organizations for establishing partnerships.

Abkhazia, despite non-recognition and minimal participation in international relations (including trade and economic relations), is still subject to negative impacts of world economic crises. It all happens against the background of drastic fall in hydrocarbon energy prices that, in turn, causes devaluation of Russian Ruble (used by Abkhazia as a national currency), increase in inflation level, decrease in purchasing power of population and shrinking of financial capacity of the entire Russia.

Such negatives processes inevitably reflect on the socio-economic situation of Abkhazia, considering that Russia remains the main trade and economic partner of Abkhazia and provides it with significant financial aid. Thus, many factors that characterize Russian economy directly influence the economic situation in Abkhazia and the well-being of its population.

These processes greatly influence peace process dynamic. The entire process in this direction can be divided in several parts – according to the de-facto government and the operation of formats that represent a mechanism of peace process implementation.



The Decade of Georgian Literature. 1969/5. Joseph Noneshvili, Ivane Tarba, Rezo Margiani, Alexandre Baramidze, Archil Sulakauri, Otar Bakanidze.



Dimitry Gulia (first from the right) among the delegates of Akaki Tsereteli's 100th anniversary committee. 1940/6/22. Balcony of Rustaveli Theatre.



Abkhazian veterans of 1877-1878 war between Russia and Turkey. From left, standing: Giorgi Gvatua, Sirkva Lakerbaia, Data Anchabadze, Eristo Emu khvari, Grigol Shervashidze. From left, sitting: Qvaji Marghania, Zurab Chkhotua, Qujmakhan Emukhvari, Dzadzvi Marghania. Sitting in the first row: Qvaji Aqirtava, Chagu Emukhvari.

Vladislav Ardzinba

The first de-facto president of Abkhazia was, for sure, a charismatic figure. Despite his dependence on Russian security agencies, that was beyond doubt, he tried to balance Russian and Abkhazian interests in the region, which Georgia had lost an effective control of and which was still enjoying autonomy, to a certain extent. He also tried to sustain contacts with high representatives of Georgian Government and contributed to operation of various international peace formats through idle constructiveness. His visit to Tbilisi in August 1997 and the meeting with Eduard Shevardnadze is also significant, as it was truly a bold step against the background of then situation in Abkhazia. The negotiations concerned the possibility of a common state, but turned out to be ineffective, because the offered formulation threatened Georgian statehood and aimed to legitimate secession of Abkhazia from Georgia in perspective.

Nevertheless, it was during Ardzinba's rule, when the first Geneva process started. Coordinative council of the parties and its work groups were acting and the cooperation on the current working issues was evident. Naturally, the sides could not agree on return of IDP's or restoration of territorial integrity of Georgia, however, the cooperation dynamic could be seen – the process was launched (Francis, 2011).

It is irrelevant to suppose that only the success of such format could resolve the problems created by the loss of Abkhazia through war. However, the political peace process for conflict resolution is one of the most important parts of the major geopolitical process that should completely change the existing reality in our region.

Sergey Bagapsh – “Georgians' brother-in-law”

Part of Georgians met coming to power of Sergey Bagapsh, the second de-facto president of Abkhazia, very positively, especially because Bagapsh was “Georgians' brother-in-law”, as he was related to Gali region residents. Moreover, since his early years, he had been working in Komsomol, party of agricultural positions and on every stage of his job was strongly connected to Tbilisi, creating an expectation that he would have good contacts with the nomenclature of the Georgian society.

Despite the expectation and, possibly, Bagapsh's honest efforts to rectify recently extremely tightened relations, the hopes of the aforementioned part of the Georgian public were not met. Following the open aggression of Russia in 2008, establishing full military control over Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region and subsequently recognizing them as independent countries practically stopped the peace process and only left Geneva format that could not, naturally, efficiently resolve problems between the sides.

Sergey Bagapsh died before the end of his term. The details of his death remain unclear and leaves space for various interpretations. According to the official version, his death was due to a severe illness (Parfitt, 2011).

Alexander Ankvab – “Iron Man”

Alexander Ankvab, also known as the “Iron Man”, became the third president of de-facto Abkhazia. His coming to power was met with great hopes from the Abkhazian public.

Alexander Ankvab was one of the youngest internal affairs general in the Soviet period. He served as a deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of Georgian SSR and in



Giorgi Leonidze, Ivane tarba, Bagrat Shinkuba, Irakli Abashidze, Sergi Chilaia. Decade of Abkhazian Literature and Art. 1950-1960.



Joseph Noneshvili, Alexandre Aleqsidze, Ivane Tarba. 1960-1970.



Ilya Chavchavadze's visit to Abkhazia. 1903/5/24.



Without title.

every district he gained a name of an effective, honest and very principal worker, who fought against corruption and other vicious manifestations intolerably. His steps turned out to be hopeful for the Georgian public as well, as he stated that he would restore old borders of Gali region and would exercise modern, correct policy regarding every citizen in Abkhazia, regardless the ethnic background.

According to mass media, he has been attacked at least four times (Democracy and Freedom Watch, 2012). However, his efforts turned out to be unsuccessful and he was unable to end his presidential term (Civil.ge, 2014). The crisis that started in May 2014, ended after the visit of Vladislav Surkov, Russia's Special Representative in Relations with Separatist Abkhazia and South Ossetia that led to resignation of Alexander Ankvab and early elections in 2014 (The Economist, 2014). Raul Khajimba won the elections, however, 26,000 ethnic Georgians living in Gali and Tkvarcheli (nearly 18% of the population) were banned from participating in the elections due to possession of double citizenship (Agenda.ge, 2014).

Raul Khajimba

Khajimba was a staff officer of USSR KGB. He is viewed among the Abkhaz politicians as the most loyal to Russia. Abkhazian public also holds that Khajimba will let Russia implement the projects, practically frozen during Alexander Ankvab's rule, such as:

1. Building a highway through Kodori Gorge to Northern Caucasus;
2. Selling major real estate objects to non-citizens;
3. Restoration of railway, which is viewed differently in Abkhazia;
4. Aibgha village;
5. Logistical center in Lower Eshera;
6. Building a port near Eshera.

Current processes and primarily, the Alliance and Strategic Partnership Treaty, signed between Russia and de-facto Republic of Abkhazia illustrate the aforementioned clearly. This treaty practically absorbs the Abkhazian security forces and directly subordinates them to the Russian security forces (Civil.ge, 2014). With the aim of strengthening control, General Khrulyov (who was the Head of 58th Army in the 2008 war and personally led the war against Georgian in Tskhinvali region and was wounded in one of the fights) was appointed as the head of General Staff of Abkhazian Armed Forces (Civil.ge, 2015). Besides, Russian border forces control the administrative border on Enguri River in Gali region and the presence of the Abkhazian side there is only nominal. Moreover, formation of mechanisms for providing coordination of the activities of internal affairs organs is being discussed. By this step, Russian institutions will establish full control over law enforcement activity.

One more segment is important for analyzing the political situation – civil society.

An intensive process of creating NGO's followed the end of war phase of the Abkhazian conflict. It was practically the sole mechanism for the Abkhazian separatist government to create a foreign representation (Propescu, 2010).



Ivane Konstantine Tarba at the 50s anniversary of Giorgi Leonidze. 1950/4/3.



Kaisan Kuliev, Ivane Tarba, Karlo Kaladze. 1960-1970.



Shota Akobia, Akaki Beliashvili, Davit Kvitsaridze, Sergi Chilaia, Mukhran Machavariani, Karlo Kaladze, Mamia Asatiani, Rezo Margiani, Ivane Tarba. 1960-1970.

The non-governmental sector, headed by United Nations, started to operate in parallel with the conflict resolution process. For better understanding of the essence of conflict and convergence of positions, they became actively involved in confidence-building meetings. In parallel with this, Tbilisi-based NGO's, in the framework of projects funded by EU and other major donors, were holding meetings between the representations of the sides (Tocci, 2011).

Despite not having right to make decision, the meetings created opportunities between the representations to discuss various issues that were impossible to be discussed on formal meetings or negotiations due to political positions. Such meetings, undoubtedly, contributed to a better understanding of positions by the sides and the convergence of positions on various issues or problems.

Most recently, the Russian involvement in the region has been increasing – Kremlin increases not only its military presence, but the propaganda, too: alternative media outlets are being blocked, Russian agencies (BBC, 2015) are becoming the main disseminators of information and the Abkhazian version of “Sputnik” is being intentionally created. Under such circumstances, progress achieved by Georgia on its Euro-Atlantic path is perceived as an increased threat and the increased Russian presence as an additional security measure. As Geneva talks are “frozen”, international involvement and non-governmental mechanisms remain sole possibilities for conflict regulation and peace process facilitation. In 2009, Russia blocked international monitoring (The Guardian, 2009). Against this background, it is necessary to strengthen this format and provide bigger international attention so that the non-governmental format can serve its main function of a peace facilitator and a mechanism for prevention and information of the international society.



Elene Ghoghoberidze, Irakli Andronikashvili,
Alio Mirtskhulava, Nikolay Tikhonov,
Ivane Tarba. 1961/8/27.



The decade of Georgian Literature and Art.
Ivane Tarba, Mark Zlatkyn,
Alio Mirtskhulava. 1958/3.



Guram Asatiani, Gia Margvelashvili,
Pavle Antolovski, Archil Sulakauri,
Ivane Tarba. 1960-1970.

Euro-Atlantic Course and Conflicts

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Aspiration to Euro-Atlantic integration is an indivisible part of Georgian national security and national interests (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia (Georgian), n.d.). Georgia achieved qualitatively new stage of the completion of this task, as NATO decided on Bucharest summit that Georgia would become a member of NATO, subsequently making the membership of Georgia in this organization inevitable (NATO, 2008).

NATO is a collective security organization that has been a guarantor of European and Euro-Atlantic security for decades. During Cold War, its existence was a crucial factor for sustaining peace. After Cold War, area of security and development broadened following integration of Eastern European countries in NATO.

Aspiration of Georgia to become a member of NATO is due to both ideological and pragmatic factors. Ideologically, Georgia associates itself with European civilization and by integration in EU and NATO, this identity will be institutionalized. From the pragmatic point of view, for Georgia, NATO is the most effective tool for addressing security challenges. Georgia's security challenges are connected both to the issues of existence of occupied territories and territorial integrity and potential threats from Russia to the sovereignty of Georgia. Therefore, a logical question emerges: what is the influence and interrelation between the integration of Georgia in NATO and resolution of Russo-Georgian conflict. Mainly:

1. What influence will Georgia's integration in NATO have on conflict regions?
2. What mechanisms does NATO have for the resolution of Georgian conflict?
3. Can Georgia become a member of NATO against the background of existing conflict regions, especially after Russian annexation?

Integration in NATO has a specific role in regulation of Georgian conflicts.

Although, institutionally, NATO does not have conflict regulation instruments and it does not participate in conflict resolution, it is politically one of the main factors of long-term resolution of Georgian conflict.

Institutional restriction stems from NATO being a collective security organization. Therefore, the niche of its involvement in the conflict is military operation that is not a form of regulation in case of Abkhazia. The military operation can be started as a support for humanitarian intervention (like the one implemented in Bosnia & Herzegovina), or following a threat to NATO member state, leading to enactment of the 5th article of Washington Agreement (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 1949). No will or prerequisite for the aforementioned actions is present in case of Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflicts. Even more, if NATO is overactive in relation to the conflict issues, it will create a threat of it being involved in military confrontation that in case of Abkhazia and South Ossetia equals to confronting Russia. This scenario does not fall in anyone's interests. Therefore, institutionally, it clears the way to the institutions, such as UN, EU and OSCE that include same member countries, whilst sustaining its function as a political factor. The political factor stems from the aspiration of Georgia to NATO membership. Becoming a member means that Russia, who deliberately occupies Abkhazia and South Ossetia with the aim of not allowing the region to slip from his sphere of influence, will lose this leverage. Becoming a NATO member will solve Georgia's main problem with Russia that is also the basis of conflict – manipulating Georgia by Russia.

Even though this is the only and the most effective tool for protecting our sovereignty from Russia, becoming a member of NATO will not be a guarantee of a co-habitation project with Abkhazians.

However, agreeing on co-habitation forms will be much more possible if Georgia is a member of the institute, created on the basis of international law and minority rights protection. Then, NATO is an organization, mostly safeguarding democratic values, international law and minority rights. Georgia, as a NATO member, will be able to offer co-habitation project:

- 1) Georgia itself will be more democratic. Despite different perceptions, our integration to NATO falls on the principle of sustainable democratic institutions and the protection of minorities existing in international law.
- 2) Georgia will be stronger diplomatically. By becoming a member of NATO, Georgia will become a full-fledged member of the democratic society.
- 3) Russia's role will not be sole and dominant and, moreover, Russia will not have illusion of including Georgia in its sphere of influence.

Due to these three factors, starting a neutral and outcome-oriented diplomatic process with Abkhazians and Ossetians will be possible.

As of today, it is of utmost importance that in the process of integration, Abkhazian's perceptions be changed on the basis of the alternative that Georgia offers it with the Euro-Atlantic integration.

On the one hand, there is minority protection which is a fundamental value of each NATO member country (Appathurai, 2014) and is a cornerstone of founding documents of UN, OSCE and Council of Europe. On the other hand, there is an alternative of Russia – an aggressor, and it is in the decisive phase of smothering Abkhazian and Ossetian identities and annexation.

Today, Abkhazians' attitudes toward NATO are being formed not in a free environment, but under so prevalent Russian propaganda (BBC, 2015). Therefore, formation of co-habitation projects and, especially, their realization, requires de-occupation and healthy political processes – civil activity and media projects that will directly confront the possibilities of deception on the spot.

As for the myth, spread by Russian propaganda, according to which “Georgia is unable to become a member of NATO due to occupied territories”, is false.

Even though occupied territories complicate reaching consensus on political decisions in NATO, it does not represent an impeding factor because:

1. No official founding document, declaration, statement or policy states that a conflict is an obstacle for becoming its member (Straus, 2014).

It has not been mentioned, so that Russia or any other non-member state is unable to block NATO enlargement by creating or freezing conflicts. It is in the alliance's interests that such provision is not included in its policy.

1. There have been precedents, in which accepting the NATO membership request of a country with an occupied territory was considered least problematic as opposed to not accepting it. It primarily concerns the case of Germany and, with less intensity, Baltic states, too (Gidadhubli, 2004).

In the aforementioned case, occupation represented a security problem, however, not accepting Germany's request would have been a greater security problem for the whole NATO. Therefore, the enlargement decision was made in a very pragmatic manner. Now, Georgia's task is to assure NATO (and it has multiple allies in the alliance, in this regard) in the process of political decision-making that not accepting its request contradicts NATO's interests.

By not receiving Georgia, NATO:

- Strengthens Russia's blackmailing mechanisms;
- Undermines the organization's efficiency and trustworthiness;
- Leaves regional security problems unresolved.

The aforementioned steps, in the Ukrainian case, clearly illustrated that a 50-years old European security system is on the brink of collapse. Hence, in the circumstances of absence of security system, regional problems may become hot spots anytime. At the same time, receiving Georgia and Ukraine in the alliance under certain legal conditions would help avoid the necessity of military operation and would create a strong future capital for conflict resolution.²³ (Taylor, 2014)

Occupation of Crimea and war in Eastern Ukraine once again illustrate that halting integration because of existing conflicts and their unresolvedness means more problems in Europe. Georgia appeared not to be a deterrent factor for Russia, hence the region requires more long-term and solid decisive security policy – NATO enlargement.

²³ See also Taylor, A. "That time Ukraine Tried to join NATO – NATO said NO.



European Security System, the OSCE and Conflicts in Georgia and Ukraine

GRASS
REFORMANDA

Paata Gaprindashvili
Giorgi Jangiani

Crisis of European Security and OSCE

On the OSCE ministerial that was held in 2014 the representative of France called this year “The Year of European Security and Confidence Shock”.

What is security? OSCE has comprehensive approach to security (until 1975 year the security was determined only by military component), i.e. security means: humanitarian / human rights / human, economic and environmental, political and military dimensions, as a whole - Comprehensive Approach to Security.²⁴

Yet in 1990 year has been recognized that the responsibilities imposed in humanitarian/human rights dimension is direct and legitimate care subject and it doesn't belong to only one particular state internal affairs (OSCE, 1990).

There are many mechanisms within the OSCE framework related to control of Conventional Armed Forces, confidence and security measures are and were integral part of Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security system. We are mainly speaking about CFE (Conventional Armed Forces restrictions in Europe) (OSCE, 1990), Vienna Document 1999 and “Treaty on Open Skies “ (OSCE, 1992).

These mechanisms were developed to avoid conflicts. It has a great role in early warning and crisis resolution affairs. At the same time, the OSCE has acknowledged that one of them, especially the weakening of the CFE's regime, would have a devastating impact on the OSCE's comprehensive security. And it was so.

Should be noticed that European security and confidence collapse began in 2007 year, when Russia announced “Moratorium“ (Doran, 2007) on the agreement of Conventional Armed Forces (and it was eloquently called "A Cornerstone of European security") (Despite the fact that the contract did not implied this possibility) it was announced a little later, in the same year, it completely stopped the performance of contractual obligations. In 2008 year Russia used large-scaled military force against Georgia (Nichol, 2009). Nowadays in Tskhinvali and Abkhazia regions Russia has illegally disposed several military bases, with this there is a threat of annexation of these two occupied regions of the Russian. Russia carried out the annexation of Crimea (BBC, 2015) and there is a threat of recognition/capture of Donetsk and Lugansk regions (Goncharenko, 2015).

CFE (Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe)

The West has tried to save the CFE regime and to return Russia within the international law and civilized relations regime. NATO offered Russian so called 'Parallel Action' Plan according to which NATO member states would ratify adapted CFE and constructionally respond to the other certain requirements of Russia (for example: Flank Matter), At the same time, the Russia should fulfil 1999 year

²⁴ „The OSCE has a comprehensive approach to security that encompasses politico-military, economic and environmental, and human aspects. It therefore addresses a wide range of security-related concerns, including arms control, confidence- and security-building measures, human rights, national minorities, and democratization, policing strategies, counter-terrorism and economic and environmental activities.“ OSCE official

"Istanbul Obligations"; in particular, it should withdraw the armed forces from Georgia and Moldova and renew CFE's performance. Due to the rigid positions of Russia, the negotiations on the 'Parallel Action' Plan ended with no avail (Mcausland, 2008).

In order to rescue armament control regime in Europe, in 2010-2011 years in Vienna was conducted active negotiations in so called "36" Format (the 30 countries of CFE plus Albania, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia and Croatia). Despite many attempts and negotiations (among them was Georgia) despite of numbers of constructive action and distinct compromises from most of countries (on Flank Issues, the Istanbul Commitments, etc.) Russia has refused agreement of fundamental principles (The host country's consent and transparency measures related to information exchange and military inspections), required to commence new negotiations on the security issues. With this step, Russia has buried the Conventional Armed Forces control regime for an indefinite period. The negotiations were suspended in the „36“Format (Shakirov, 2015). NATO member states, participating in CFE among them Georgia has suspended the obligations imposed under the Agreement toward Russia. In 2015 year Russia stopped work in Vienna in the consulting group (Hille & Neil Buckley, 2015).

What was the major element of Russia's rigid position and reasons which caused extremely destructive actions of Russia (even by Russian standards) toward CFE Agreements in recent years, that led to the final collapse of the effective mechanism of European Conventional Armed Forces control acting since 1990 is an issue of more detailed analysis. For now, we are going to note only the fact that in Russian establishment some kind of psychological factors are deeply rooted– “Shattered Pride”, which was arisen in 90s due to the “Weak Russian” unprofitable agreement. Putin's Russia began to “correct” mistakes and return the “strength” to the Russia.

Nowadays it is undoubtful and many openly speaks, among them those who before didn't believe it, that the strategic goal of Putin's Russia (and in general modern Russia) is to establish influence and control at least to the closest neighbourhood. In other words, Russia wants to create special safety sub-regions for itself. This will include former Soviet Union countries (at present except the Baltic States, which are members of NATO and European Union) (Galeotti & Andrew Bowen, 2014).

As we saw, the Russian aggression in Georgia and Ukraine was carried out on the background of cracked confidence and security mechanism. Exactly this mechanism and international law framework plaid important role in withdraw of Russian military forces from Georgia (except Gudauta), and commence of real de-occupation process and dynamics of Georgia (Civil.ge, 2006).

During the Soviet Union, there were thousands of Soviet occupying forces and many large-scaled military infrastructures in Georgia. The deployment of the main forces were Vaziani (Tbilisi), Gudauta, Batumi and Akhalkalaki. There were many different points of military units and objects. With this in Tbilisi was located Transcaucasian Military District Headquarter, from which was governed Soviet Union forces in Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. After the Soviet Union collapse, such position of the forces was mainly maintained and Transcaucasian Military District Headquarter was transformed into the Russian Military Forces Headquarter.

Later, the negotiations were conducted on withdrawal of the mentioned four military bases and other military infrastructures.

In the first half of 90s, despite of that time State leader Eduard Shevardnadze's attempt to conduct negotiation on the security issues with Russia within the mutual dialogue (however, it should be said that there wasn't any other significant alternative choice, because the West avoided the active intervention in the Russian influence sphere) there hadn't been achieved any result for the visible progress. It should be noticed that in 1995 year Georgia was ready for further extension of the prospect, to legalize Russian military bases in Georgia for 25 years, if Russia would help to restore Georgian's territorial integrity and military forces building. Was signed relevant agreement, however Russia didn't intend to make any real steps and settle the inspired conflicts in Tskhinvali and Abkhazia regions and eliminate massive ethnic cleansing. Thus lucky to us the ratification of the 1995 year Agreement hadn't been implemented. In the country where the territorial integrity was infringed, the presence of the foreign countries troops and bases among them in the capital became more and more growing destabilization source.

Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe was signed in 1990 between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. It was signed by every state of these two organizations. CFE has imposed limits to two opposing military blocks on Conventional Armed Forces in 5 categories (so called Treaty limited conventional armament and equipment, abbreviation–TLE: Battle tanks, artillery systems, armoured vehicles, combat aircraft and combat helicopters. With this, by the agreement has been established information exchange and verification (inspections) mechanisms. It is widely recognized that the CFE has a strong role in minimizing of military confrontation threat in Europe and improving the overall European security.

After Warsaw Pact and little later, after collapse of Soviet Union, the issue of CFE adaptation stood in the agenda, because it was based on the CFE blocks relation system. Adapted CFE was signed in 1999 year in Istanbul, and it had changed limitation system between blocks with individual and territorial limit of the member states (OSCE, 1999).

In the second half of 90s Georgia choose active pro-Western course and International Community along with the increased importance of Georgia (is implied participation in the international energy projects) found time for it. Georgia has as far as possible deepened relations with USA, EU and NATO. Along with the territorial integrity restoration, the issue of Russian military troops withdrawal from Georgia became more and more actually.

Georgia's special role in Conventional Armed Force adaptation and entirely in common European security development process (In that particular historical moment Georgia was in the centre of events) largely determined the Russian military forces withdrawal process from Georgia and actually commence of de-occupation. In 17 November of 1999 in Istanbul was signed Georgian and Russian joint statement. By this document, Russia took responsibilities for withdrawal of TLE from Georgia in 2000 year and in 2001 from Vaziani and Gudauta military bases (BBC, 2001).

With this Georgia in its turn took responsibility to give the right to Russia temporarily deployed CFE Treaty limited equipment and technique in Batumi and Akhalkalaki military bases. Parties also agreed that till the end of 2000 year will finish negotiations on these bases and other military objects functioning terms and modalities.

Despite the fact that Georgia didn't demand for the immediate withdrawal of Russian military bases (the theoretical possibility of which was in accordance with the adopted CFE Treaty) reached agreement (Joint Statement) can be unambiguously evaluated as an agreement for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgia.

It should be noticed that the obligations stipulated in the statement derives exactly from one of the fundamental principles of adapted CFE, which implies rights of the sovereign country to make decision to allow foreign country to deploy armed forces on its territory or not.

It can be said that the Georgian side properly and professionally advantage of all the opportunities that has been given by the participation in the international security processes. Quite difficult negotiations with Russia proceeded to Georgian-Russian Statement in Istanbul. The consequent period of the Istanbul agreement had been continued with multi-round and complex negotiations in order to realize Istanbul obligations. In 2000 year, on the 5th round of negotiations Georgia has achieved another serious agreement, according to which military bases of Batumi and Akhalkalaki as well as for other military objects validity period in Georgia was determined the time that was required for the completion of their functioning (BBC, 2000).

In 2000-2001 years Russian has withdrawn extra arms and technique limited by the Agreement and closed Vaziani military base. After many years complex and painful negotiations, in 2007 year Russia has withdrawn military bases from Batumi and Akhalkalaki. Russia didn't close military base only in Gudauta (Abkhazia), despite of the several statements that it has fulfilled its obligation of the Agreement achieved in Istanbul. (Nigren, 2008)

Exactly non-fulfilment of Istanbul obligations (namely, to close Gudauta base and to withdraw armed forces from Moldova) became one of the major reason that the International Community despite the difference opinions in some cases and Russian blackmail, the failure in complying of the imposed obligations by Russia wasn't legalized and therefore the adapted CFE Treaty hadn't been entered into force.

It is ironically but the fact that as the recent Russian history teaches us, authoritarian and, at the same time, economically more or less powerful Russia almost automatically means

the distancing from the international law and civilized relations field and vice versa: when the Russian economy is weakening and the Russia, which is frightened not to be collapsed returns back to the negotiating table. International negotiations and respectively settlement of relations in accordance with the international norms, principles is a chance for Georgia to solve its legitimate security problems.

Sooner or later, I hope that Russia will again have to sit around the table for negotiation on international security and arms control issues;

For this time, Georgia will be fully prepared and will not lose its chance. With this we should understand that we may not have always favourable international situation, when such negotiations will be resumed.

O S C E

Ukraine

In 2014 year Russia carried out armed aggression. It occupied and annexed Crimea which is announced as an illegal action. In this area, takes place mass violation of the rights of local Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars. It also has occupied Eastern Ukraine, where also danger is that Russia will announce separatist Donetsk and Lugansk regions as independent states. In accordance with the data of UN there are died nearly 6 100 person (UN News Center, 2015). In the last days, Russia has bombed Ukraine at least 55 times and in total, it carried out 360 various attacks. Had been dies 7 soldiers, among them Georgian (Giogri Janelidze) and were wounded 18 warrior. After reading OSCE monitoring mission report and 23 April speeches of Permanent Council reports we can make a sole conclusion – the war will be renewed very soon, and various kind of military actions will be continue for a long time in Ukraine.

Its sounds cynical but Russian aggression in Ukraine gave a new life to OSCE. In Ukraine (not in Crimea) since 21 March of 2014 year with an appropriate mandate (that was approved by the Permanent Council of OSCE) is acting Special Monitoring Mission. In March of the current year the mentioned mandate was extended to the April of 2016 year. The mission is quite numerous (it consists with 1000 civilians). Minsk Agreements (Minsk Protocol of 5 September 2015, Memorandum of 19 September 2015 and Minsk Agreement of 12 February 2015) has imposed such functions to OSCE (monitoring not to be used the weapon and border monitoring), which transformed special monitoring mission into the “Light Peacekeeping Operation” (OSCE, 2014). In June of 2014 year had been established Trilateral Contact Group (OSCE, Russia, Ukraine). Since June 2014 OSCE has in Ukraine special representative of the Chairperson Heidi Tagliavini. In July 24 of 2014 OSCE Permanent Council has approved Border Monitoring Mission on the border checkpoint (OSCE, 2014).

We can make many and unfortunately negative parallels between Ukraine OSCE mission and Georgian OSCE mission. However, it should be said that Ukraine mission is much stronger with its multiplication, technical equipment and preparation. It would be good if the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia will have similar technical capabilities.

Despite the “Interpretative Statements to the Mandate” the mission in Crimea doesn't/cannot operate. Moreover, Russia and separatists, which are ruled by Russia constantly hinder to mission activities. They restrict activity area and it is impossible to monitor thousands of kilometres.

Why are they restricting OSCE monitoring mission? In accordance with the statement of Ukraine representative, despite of restriction, as the experience shows, OSCE presence still sets certain brakes to militants and Russian soldiers against complete violation of their obligations.

Despite of the Minsk Agreement of 12 February (The Telegraph, 2015), as the USA representative stated this Agreement just has the name of “Ceasefire Agreement”, in fact, the fire never stopped. It is not secret that Russia constantly violates the agreement, beginning with the brutal attack in Debaltseve, continuing with wars in Shyrokyne and Donetsk oblasts.

The Ceasefire Agreement had been violated, because Russian military representatives remain in Eastern Ukraine and it continues separatists training and armament (BBC, 2014).

It is natural that OSCE mission can't settle the conflict but the mission has very big practical importance in further conflict resolution: reporting and right information delivery to the international community despite its restriction; to obtain ceasefire on the local level, to demilitarize zone in Shyrokyne and so on. However with the same reason there is threat that this mission will have the same fate as the mission acting in Georgia. In accordance with the decision made within the Trilateral Contact Group should be created with four working group (Security, political process, humanitarian issues, economic affairs and rehabilitation). However these groups haven't started work yet (Lehne, 2015).

Where was OSCE in the 2014 year? When Russia annexed Crimea? The point is that only after the annexation of Crimea Ukrainian authorities applied to the OSCE. Before this the Russia,

[Yanukovich](#) and even the European Union was against the mentioned. The OSCE offered opposite parties to participate in dialogue. Despite the early warning about conflicts and developing various mechanisms to avoid conflicts (the time showed that most of these mechanisms didn't work) OSCE Still does not have a seemingly simple things - OSCE Chairmanship to have the authority, in case of a serious incident and escalation of the situation in this or that state to send experts and small groups. Their function will be to evaluate the situation to monitor and make reports about the existing situation. This idea was developed by Georgia with Spain after the incident in Tsitelubani in 2007 year (BBC, 2007). In 2008 year in the OSCE has been begun wide scaled Corfu Process²⁵ (OSCE, 2009) on the European Security issues and exactly in this process Georgian idea was picked up by USA and later it was officially registered. With this minimalist, at the first glance small changes in the OSCE (consensus decision, which will not need further consensus decisions and it would be the prerogative of the Chairmanship) can avoid many cataclysms.

There is great dangerous that all these will break down at this stage. Russia hinders to the monitoring of mission and the functioning of the working groups (it doesn't present candidates). For some time ago, the Leader of Donetsk National Republic Zakharchenko has stated that Minsk agreement may be wrecked, that Ukraine has to recognize their independence; Putin did not exclude the recognition of their independence, and so on. What shall do OSCE on the background of all these? (as you know UN is factually paralyzed in this direction), its resources are limited but we should remember that before all these is finally failed, i.e. while Russia will cross all existed red lines, OSCE with its instruments still remains as the platform, which may be used for settling the conflict. Nowadays many talks that Russia will try to arise destabilization in Baltic Republics. About this stated Prime Minister of Great Britain in March (Siciliano, 2015). Despite of the fact that Baltic Republics are members of NATO and EU, it would be reasonable to initiate/obtain several measures within OSCE.

²⁵ "The "Corfu Process" was launched in June 2009 at an informal meeting of OSCE foreign ministers on the Greek island of Corfu. It aims to restore confidence and take forward dialogue on wider European security". OSCE official

It is regrettable but fact that OSCE can't overcome all this. To have more clear opinion, we would like to note that in case of increase of Ukraine conflict it will be impossible to involve OSCE in the conflicts. Because OSCE merely will not be able effectively lead the two operations.

In any case, in OSCE, in the existing reality there are the following major elements: the attitude of the host country, chairmanship initiatives, creativity and political will of the main players.

OSCE

In some respect, the OSCE is a product of the Cold War (however, this does not mean that it should be abolished - NATO Example). Everything began with CSCE (Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe). It started as dialogue on security and cooperation matters between two Military Alliances. It had been transformed as the organization only in 1992-94 years. Until now, it is the sole place in the Europe where Russia and USA participate together. OSCE didn't have a Charter till now, that will determine its flexibility, and however it sets several restrictions. Russia wants the Charter to be adopted.

To make decisions via consensus principles means all 57 states to have the equal rights. It on the one hand is some strength; however, it leads to a lot of weakness. The only occasion when we have “consensus minus one” principle, it is 1992 Prague Decision, according to which in case of mass violation of human rights the Permanent Council may take relevant measures. This means concrete steps having political characteristics, however not in that certain country.

OSCE has comprehensive approach to the security (till 1975 year the security was defined only by the military component) i.e. security means Humanitarian / human rights / human, economic and environmental protection, political and military dimensions, as a whole, however it may seem surprising to us. Exactly in 1975 year via concluding Helsinki conclusive/final Act started transformation into security narrow comprehension the comprehensive concept. However, finally it was concluded in 1990 year via The Charter of Paris.

Before the final act of Helsinki had been developed several important processes: removal from Détente military concept into peaceful co-existence. The main slogan was: to avoid war in any case; Ostpolitik - West Germany so called Cohesion policy; the major priority was to avoid Nuclear Wars. In 1972 year between USA and Soviet Union was signed the first interim agreement on strategic nuclear arms limitations. In the Europe was signed quadripartite agreement on Berlin Status also was conclude Agreement between Federal Republic of Germany and the Soviet Union, Poland and the German Democratic Republic.

Had been established so called Helsinki Principles/Decalogue:

1. Sovereign equality, respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty
2. Refraining from the threat or use of force
3. Inviolability of frontiers
4. Territorial integrity of States
5. Peaceful resolution of conflicts/disputes
6. Non-intervention in internal affairs
7. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief
8. Equal rights and self-determination of peoples
9. Cooperation among States
10. Fulfilment in good faith of obligations under international law

1990 Charter of Paris, which was obtained in the latest phase of the end of Cold War, was very important. That is true that it didn't create new principles (it confirmed Helsinki Principles once again), but it put security comprehensiveness on a new level, not only in the international relations but also in the internal governance. Was stipulated that „In order to strengthen security and peace among states, it is essential to develop democracy and protect human right." The Charter of Paris for the first time voiced that states have the freedom to choose their own security arrangements.

In 90s had been implemented OSCE formation in such kind, that we have today. Despite of the completion of Cold War in 90s took place conflicts, had been carried out massive ethnic cleansing (it is paradox that ethnical cleansing carried out in Georgia had been recognized in three times on the level of OSCE states Heads, and Russia joined to it). In 1999 year, OSCE obtained Europe Security Charter. It made links domestic and foreign securities between states: „The threat to our security may come from the conflicts existing inside the state also from the conflicts between the states." (OSCE , 1999)

In these two fundamental documents of the security are given all mechanisms, which may decrease conflicts and are made strong steps toward stabilisation. Russian European security initiatives are on the one hand farce and on the other hand it is Russian Strategy – to legalize its imperial intentions and achievements, also its spheres of influence. Lavrove's statement in the Munich Security Conference was another clear demonstration of cynicism and hypocrisy. He offered: “Let's begin negotiations on a new security system based on the Helsinki Principles, on the system which will be convenient for everyone, among them: Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and others who was offered by USA to make choice to go in the west and less cooperate with Russia.” (Lavrov, 2015) That is, if the European and Euro-Atlantic integration is not our choice, but also it is imposed from outside.

The following documents create security analyze and the essential mechanisms of state security defence are (All of them are relevant as never before): 1975 Helsinki Final Act, 1990 Paris Charter for new Europe, 1992 Helsinki Summit Document and 1999 European

Security Charter.

In OSCE was established Arms control mechanisms: CFE (Joint Consultative Committee), Vienna Document (In 1992 had been established FSC-security cooperation forum) and “

[Treaty on Open Skies](#)”. ([Open Skies consultation committee](#))

Today as we already mentioned above is very serious crisis in this regard – Russian even stopped working in joint consultation group in Vienna.

Conflicts Prevention and Crisis Resolution Mechanisms

In 90s in this direction had been created various mechanisms in OSCE (Valletta Mechanism, OSCE Conciliation and Arbitration Court, Rapid Expert Assistance and Co-operation Teams and so on); OSCE has developed peacekeeping operations modalities, however all it remained on the paper.

OSCE Peacekeeping Mission

In 1992 Helsinki OSCE summit made decision on the peacekeeping operations and developed relevant modalities. In accordance with the decisions of the Heads of states, “It is possible OSCE carry out peacekeeping operations in case of any conflicts between the states or in this or that state”. It was underlined that peace efforts would be an important component of the OSCE. It implied as small also large scale operations, in which would participate civil as well as military personnel.

In 1999 year OSCE still talks about peacekeeping operations, but in REACT contexts. This later should become a peacekeeping operations civil component. In 1999 Heads of states still remain theoretical chance for OSCE peacekeeping operations, but it is clear that efforts in this direction have been minimized.

OSCE Field Missions

OSCE actually has developed field missions. For example, as you know there was one of the large-scale missions in Georgia, which was established in 1992 year. In 1999 it was extended and carried out monitoring of Russian-Georgian border at Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan. In 2005 year BMO was blocked by Russia. Later in 2008 year Russia blocked OSCE mission (Civil.ge, 2008).

OSCE institutional development

OSCE began as dialogue and it wasn't developing in accordance with any action plan. During the Cold War, it existed from meeting to meeting. It was established as organization only in 1990-1994 years. In 1990 was established secretariat, centre for avoiding conflicts and free elections office (later the office of OSCE Democratic Institutions and Human Rights). In 1992 year had been created Institute of High Commissioner on National Minorities, and was founded the field missions.

Helsinki summit was crucial in the transformation of conference/dialogue into organization, which finally was concluded in 1994 year in Budapest on the ministerial of OSCE (where I participated for the first time)

OSCE is regional organization, created within the Chapter 8 of OSCE Charter. Norms, principles and obligations of OSCE has political and illegal nature and they sometimes are called OSCE acquis.

OSCE takes decision via consensus. It is possible to attaché/make so called applications on this decisions, however they didn't change obtained decisions.

OSCE decision-making bodies are: The Summits of Heads of States, the Council of Ministers (holds meeting at the end of each year), Permanent Council (holds meeting every Thursday), Security Cooperation Forum. There are many supporting and preparatory committees with a different direction.

OSCE also has Parliamentary Assembly, the secretariat of which is located in Copenhagen.

OSCE has three independent institutions: High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), Office for Democratic Institution and Human Rights (ODIHR) and Representation of Free Media (RFOM).

Every year OSCE has Chairmanship (at present it is Serbia) and Chairman in Office (Minister of Foreign Affairs of the given country), the Chairman assigns his/her special representatives, among them in the field of conflicts. Also three chairmen forms "Troika". OSCE has Secretary General and Secretariat. Secretary General is chief administrator who subjects to the chairmanship.

Georgia and OSCE

The 1992 year the joining of Georgia in the European Security and Cooperation organization raised great expectations in Russian-Georgian conflicts resolution. Mostly these expectations were related to the boarder conflicts and to the suspicion of separatist movements in the two Georgian regions, which were supported by Moscow. Until 2008 year OSCE is actively enrolled in the conflict resolution, democratization support and human right protection. Institutionally, the OSCE mission in Georgia was the biggest engagement in the region until a newly created mission in Ukraine. However, due to Russia's veto in 2008, the extension of the mandate was impossible and it was closed.

Why was blocked the Mission in Georgia?

The mission was blocked to the fact that the Russia illegally beyond the International Law recognized so called “South Ossetia” and Abkhazia as freedom states. Thus it denied to continue mission with the old mandate. Their argument was: it wasn't possible to be continued mission in Georgia anymore because the reality was changed and instead one mission should be formed three mission. It is natural that this initiative couldn't be implemented, because it contradicted to the International law Principles.

Despite of this started the negotiation on the extension of mission, in which were involved other countries, among them actively participated the representatives of EU, Turkish and USA (Radio Liberty, 2009).

Was found diplomatic formula, which gave Russian and Georgian sides opportunity not to hide their interests and not to cross positions so called “Red Lines”. Was outlined so called “Neutral Approach”, which implied the allocation of responsibility areal for mission, Geographic area without answer, where the observers could freely move and carry out monitoring. The major goal for the Georgian part was the mission to carry out the monitoring of the performance of Agreement of 12 August 2008, but the initiative was blocked. The interest of Russia wasn't only to be recognized “New reality”, it didn't want to be performed any kind of international monitoring on the territory, where it enhanced representation and had military bases as a result of this the mission was vetoed.

- All the mentioned was deliberate politics, which began much earlier. One of them was the event, which happened in 2005 year, when Russia blocked border-monitoring mission that began in 1999 year and successfully carried out Georgian-Russian border monitoring.

It is paradox that Russia has recognized the success of the mission and, at the same time, demands to cease it. „ The Russian Federation takes this position, first and foremost, in the light of the radically new conditions that have arisen in this region in comparison to 1999 when the operation was begun. The qualitative improvement of the situation on the Georgian-Russian border, positive developments in the normalization of the situation in the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation and substantial progress in the strengthening of co-operation between the Russian and Georgian border services make it possible to find an effective solution to the problem of guarding this segment of the State border using Russia's and Georgia's own forces, without the involvement of the OSCE. Moreover, the practical gain from the monitoring has been negligible, something to which the Russian delegation has repeatedly drawn attention over the last few years. All these factors make the further continuation of this operation inappropriate”. (OSCE, 2004)

- The second case was related to the peace plan on Ljubljana Summit.

In 2005 year Georgia achieves great diplomacy success on Ljubljana summit and signed Tskhinvali peace plan (Civil.ge, 2005). The mentioned plan was welcomed and signed by Russia. “We welcome to peaceful settlement of the conflict from Georgia and to the initiative of Georgian President made on the 59 assembly of OSCE, on which parties support will provide peaceful resolution of conflict.”²

Plan implies peace process development in so called “South Ossetia”, by which should be carried out Security Measures and territory demilitarization, which through finally confidence and security norms protection would bring us to conflict resolution. Despite the fact that based on the plan the negotiation on the security issues should start very soon, it didn't happened so. After one month in one the first meeting of OSCE Permanent Council, Russian representative stated, that it didn't know any peace plan. This was infringement of international norms – “Axe” diplomacy. However the mentioned politics was continuing purposefully, while finally the mission wasn't closed in 2008 year.

- The same occasion took place in 2006 year when one of the meetings, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Sergei Lavrove met to Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia Gela Bezhuashvili and he openly addressed him with the following words: „Forget OSCE, due to this I was forced in the corner.” To say with other words they told us to forget international law and multilateral diplomacy. As a result of this the Russian has denied all obligations taken in Ljubljana summit under the Norms of International Law in month and half. Among the mechanisms existing in OSCE should be outlined the statements on Georgia, which were made for the end of every year before the ministerial, when met especially interested countries and was considered important issues related to Georgia. At least was made statement that was approved on ministerial. To draw international attention on the Georgian problems due to Russian reasons had been ceased after these steps. After 2005 year not a single similar statement was made.

Economical Projects

In 2006 year in OSCE was developed the document “Program of economical Rehabilitation,” the aim of which was to remain integration of Tskhinvali local population (ethnic Georgian and Ossetians) and regional development via economical project. The document includes a big package of Economical project, which was fitted to Tskhinvali Region and was based on world conflict management practices. It should be noticed that within the OSCE the similar complex economical packet was developed for the first time and was implementing successfully. The donor organizations engaged in it, for the first stage put 10 million dollars in the first packet, however the mandatory requirement was not to allow unilateral actions. Russia despite the fact that took responsibilities on this and despite of repeated calls by the OSCE, to stop unilateral actions continued to stir up separatism and Tskhinvali separatist regime's funding.

So, step by step, Russia is blocking all initiatives aimed at strengthening the international engagement in the region. But in 2007 it didn't avoided direct confrontation when Russian aircrafts bombed Tsitelunbani (BBC, 2007).

This case was investigated. In the conclusion of the Joint Peacekeeping Forces was written that the aircraft came from the north, and dropped the bomb. While considering this case in OSCE the position of Russian representatives was 5th the continue of “Axe” diplomacy. They declared that it was possible the other country's aircraft entered from the South and thus cannot be blamed Russia for the bomb explosion.

As a conclusion, it must be said that the role of OSCE was not to allow military-political conflicts, monitoring and improvement of economy and human rights areas.

However, until 2008 year all projects were ceased in Georgia intentionally, via Russia veto intervention. Despite of the Russian statement about Georgian military intention, it always was against to engage international monitoring in Georgia and therefore it was impossible to increase the mission with 5 units.

His major achievement was the transparency and economic benefits for local residents.

To this end, the information was intensively delivered to international community and the problems were quickly responded. OSCE represented specific obstacles, which will impede occupation and aggressive steps. This was clearly expressed in open confrontation in August war of 2008 year. In 2008 year Georgia has lost deterrence mechanism against Russia, while the world lost the ability to monitor the conflict. What about the involvement of Abkhazia, the role of OSCE was less; there was a sort of distribution between the United Nations and the OSCE, according to which the main role in Abkhazia held the United Nations and in Tskhinvali held OSCE.

Despite the fact that in Gali existed Human Rights Protection office and it was actively involved in Geneva processes, mostly it is still focused on the Tskhinvali conflicts. However, in 2008 year even this was changed.

Role of United Nations in Georgia: Abkhaz Conflict

GRASS
REFORMANDA

Involvement of the UN in Georgia has lasted for already two decades. Unfortunately, in 2009, following the veto from Russia, the mandate of the mission was discontinued, however, the specialized agencies of the UN continue to operate in the region, including the peaceful conflict development and confidence-building directions.

“United Nations continues to operate in Abkhazia and aims to react to the acute needs of the local population. The activity is based on the previous years' efforts and fully corresponds to the cooperation agreement between the UN and Georgia – United Nations Development Assistance Plan” – says the UN program in Georgia representative, Neil Scott.

The given paper aims to underline the involvement of the UN in the conflict taking place in Georgia, the contribution of the peacekeeping mission in sustaining stability and conflict resolution and to outline existing challenges.

The paper is based on the analysis of the official documents of the UN, UNOMIG recordings and in-depth interviews with the officials involved in the peacekeeping process.

The project aims to provide more information to the public on Georgian-Abkhaz relations for further discussions on the UN mechanisms of conflict resolution, results and impeding factors.

Early UN Involvement

- Role - peacekeeper
- Goal - establishing factors causing war and protecting stability
- Challenge - recommencing hostilities and violating agreement.

The conflict began with a social resistance in the north-western region of Georgia, Abkhazia that was followed by opening fire in 1992. The United Nations starts getting involved in the conflict in Georgia with the aim of peacefully resolving it exactly in this period.

On 3 September 1992, a ceasefire agreement is signed in Moscow that was “guaranteeing the territorial integrity of the Georgian Republic”²⁶ and subsequently placing the fact finding mission in Georgia.

The UN Security Council was positively assessing the ceasefire²⁷ reached via Moscow agreement²⁸ and sent a mission to study the causes of war.²⁹ However, prior to the agreement coming into force, hostilities were renewed on 1 October 1992 and the mission stopped operating.

On 6 October, due to a complication of situation, Georgia requested an extraordinary Security Council meeting and a new military mission for stabilization. On 8 October, on the 3121st meeting of the Security Council, it was decided to send new mission to Georgia under the leadership of the Secretary General. The mission aimed to assist parties to implement Moscow agreement and provide for the UN representation in the region.³⁰

²⁶ Georgia - UNOMIG – Background <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unomig/background.html> (seen 29.08.2014)

²⁷ On 8 September, President of Russia, Boris Yeltsin writes a letter to the UN Security Council, notifying that the military actions in Georgia had stopped and Moscow agreement had been signed. According to the agreement, the “territorial integrity of Georgian Republic was guaranteed”. Yeltsin, based on the respect to the Principle of the Peaceful Settlement, was requesting from the UN to send a fact finding and monitoring mission to Georgia.

²⁸ UN Document S/24542; Recorded as a Security Council decision in Resolutions and Decisions of the Council, 1992, p. 107

²⁹ Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council: Supplement 1989-1992, p. 467 <https://goo.gl/r3RFqS> (retrieved 07.10.15)

³⁰ It is important that the UN was reacting very fast regarding the Georgian problem. The statement on the extraordinary meeting was made on 6 October, the Secretary General presented a report to the council and the council meeting adopted the decision already on 8 October.

Creation of UNOMIG

The given mission served as a basis for creating the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG). It was established by the Security Council on 24 August through the resolution 858(1993).³¹ The mission was composed of 88 military observers and a small civil aid staff.³²

Renewing Fire

In accordance with Gudauta agreement,³³ the Georgian side withdrew troops, however, on 16 September 1993, the Abkhaz side supported by Russian military equipment and logistics, renewed fire³⁴ and occupied Sokhumi on 27 September. Hundreds of people died during the military actions and from 200,000 to 250,000 (mostly, ethnic Georgian) lost property and became IDPs Invalid source specified..

Prior to the active involvement of the UN in the conflict, Russia tried and, as Moscow agreement showed, managed to get involved in the conflict as a leading mediator and a “peacekeeper”. The following years showed the ability and reluctance of Kremlin to play a positive role in conflict resolution, whilst the UN received only a secondary role Invalid source specified., especially, because ceasefire put the UNOMIG mandate under question and the mission was subsequently reduced.

Moscow Agreement

On 14 May 1994, following hard negotiations, the Moscow ceasefire agreement was signed. The sides agreed on placing the CIS peacemakers whose activity would be monitored by the UN mission (136 military observers). A 24-km safe zone should have been created and the CIS³⁵ peacemakers would patrol there. The goal was to create a secure environment for the return of the IDPs.

Despite big resistance, Georgia joined CIS that was not considered popular, though the Georgian side was ready to agree to Russian terms for the sake of conflict regulation (approval on joining the CIS was further accelerated by the military actions initiated by the supporters of the first President of Georgia, Zviad Gamsakhurdia in Samegrelo).³⁶

³¹ Resolution 858 (1993) [http://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?Open&DS=S/RES/854%20\(1993\)&Lang=E&Area=UNDOC](http://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?Open&DS=S/RES/854%20(1993)&Lang=E&Area=UNDOC) (retrieved 29.08.2014)

³² Georgia - UNOMIG – Mandate <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unomig/mandate.html> (seen 29.08.2014)

³³ Georgian and Abkhazian Authorities made agreement on 28th July 1993.

³⁴ Human Rights Watch "GEORGIA/ABKHAZIA: VIOLATIONS OF THE LAWS OF WAR AND RUSSIA'S ROLE IN THE CONFLICT". March 1995, Vol. 7, No. 7 <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1995/Georgia2.htm> (retrieved 29.08.2014)

³⁵ Ibid. p. 13. Although this force continues to function under the aegis of the CIS, the military units provided have been primarily or exclusively Russian. Nonetheless, the CIS must periodically approve an extension of the peacekeepers' mandate.

³⁶ Human Rights Watch report : "GEORGIA/ABKHAZIA: VIOLATIONS OF THE LAWS OF WAR AND RUSSIA'S ROLE IN THE CONFLICT" March 1995 Vol. 7, No. 7 <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1995/Georgia2.htm> (retrieved 29.08.2014)

The UN Secretary General report published in 1994 points out that the UN did not want the processes to develop this way, however, it was unable to control the situation, as the political will to send UN peacekeepers to the region had not been sufficiently voiced.³⁷

By 1994, Moscow had managed to gain a crucial role in the region as well as in the conflict and it became the main negotiator with the UN, too. The OSCE was represented in the conflict with a minor interaction, mostly as an observer, however it hardly contributed to the conflict regulation at that stage.

Of other agencies of the UN, since 1996, the Human Rights Office (encompassing OSCE and the employees UN High Commissioner in Human Rights. The office was included in the UNOMIG and was accountable to the High Commissioner in Human Rights) was actively involved in the region. Later, UNDP, UNOCHA and UNV became involved with different intensity in the conflict region, mostly in Gali.³⁸

Other Important Outcomes

Besides the ceasefire agreement, the UN served as a mediator in signing two more important documents: Declaration for Conditions of Political Solution and so-called Unilateral Agreement on Creation of Commission that would include representatives of the UNHCR and Russia. The agreement would adopt terms for the return of Georgian IDPs to Abkhazia.³⁹ At the same time, the multilateral agreement was slowly becoming the determinant of the UN's actions in Abkhazia. The agreement was being continuously violated by Abkhaz side, whilst the repatriation of IDPs started several times under the auspices of UNHCR, but stalled shortly due to insufficient readiness and local problems (estimated number of returning IDPs was 311).

Russia's Role in the Conflict

In 1994, the UN Secretary General greeted the incorporation of the CIS in the conflict regulation positively: “This will be a step forward in the cooperation between the UN peacekeeping missions and regional organizations/alliances, similarly to the cooperation with Organization of American States (OAS), EU and NATO. I am sure that the first joint operation of the UN and CIS will facilitate the efficient sustainment of peace and security on the problematic territories.” Invalid source specified.

The extent, to which this cooperation facilitated the resolution of Abkhaz conflict, is not up to debate anymore. Despite initially acting as a supporter of the territorial integrity of Georgia, Russia soon changed its direction and today it uses Russian-Abkhaz relations as a leverage against Georgia.⁴⁰

³⁷ This was largely due to a hesitance to initiate further peacekeeping operations due to some spectacular failures at peacekeeping attempts by the UN, especially in Africa. For a brief discussion of the evolution of peacekeeping efforts see John Mackinlay, “Introduction”, in Mackinlay and Cross (eds) 2003 (see footnote 7)

³⁸ Due to UN respect for Georgian territorial integrity, even UN humanitarian aid has been provided inadequately to Abkhazia proper, which has, especially in the 1990s, been primarily the province of international NGOs. The main UN assistance efforts have been concentrated on the Gali region, to which most (ethnic Georgian) refugees and IDPs are returning

³⁹ For the texts of both these documents see the Conciliation Resources website (www.c-r.org)

⁴⁰ Statehood and Security: Georgia after the Rose Revolution. Bruno Coppieters and Robert Legvold. p. .

participate. Therefore, the conflict became strongly dependent on Russia and the forum that involved its participation.⁴¹ Today, many argue that the UN should not have let Russia to take control of the conflict and be included as a main negotiator; however, the involvement of Moscow had two justifications by that time. First, despite Russia's negative role in the long-term conflict resolution, it has stated on several occasions that it had/has resource for reaching an agreement; however, it lacks will to do so. The UN considered that in case it worked efficiently, this resource could be used. Second: despite various assessments, the UN was not ready to serve as a mediator in long-term negotiations. This was demonstrated in February 1994, during the negotiations held in Geneva, where Abkhaz authorities refused to sign any agreement that would recognize the territorial integrity of Georgia. The UN, in turn, was unable to start negotiations from a neutral position, as it had already expressed support to the territorial integrity of Georgia.⁴² This implied considering the UN as an ally of the Georgian side and an opponent of the Abkhazians and the latter viewed Russia as a counterweight to it. Despite officially reiterating its support to the territorial integrity of Georgia, Russia often violated this claim with its actions. Therefore, the UN, having already recognized the territorial integrity of Georgia, often faced two different challenges. First: an undefined position of Russia that implied supporting the territorial integrity of Georgia, on the one hand and encouraging separatism, on the other hand with the analogous problem present in Chechnya, Russia. Second: the political status of Abkhazia, as Abkhazians refused to negotiate other issues without the status.

Years 1995-1999

- **Role - regulator of relations and facilitator of negotiations.**
- **Goal - creating new instruments for activating negotiations.**
- **Challenge - failure of negotiations due to the political status and the lack of political will.**

Despite strengthening the mission in 1995, vice-representative Livia Botta was appointed together with the Secretary General representative. It was considered that on the local level, the representation would increase the probability of finding an agreement, however, the progress was unable to be achieved due to the disagreement of parties on the status.

In 1996, so-called group of "Georgia's Friends" joins the negotiations: USA, France, Germany and UK. The group was considerably active in 1996-1997. In this period, it had its name changed to UN Secretary General's Friends on the Georgian Case and added one more member - Russia. The given group actively held meetings in Tbilisi and Sokhumi. The Abkhaz side, due to the connection of the group with the UN, considered it as a supporter of the views of the UN on territorial integrity of Georgia and often refused to participate in the meetings.

In spite of numerous efforts, progress was minor. The only success of these years is the 20 August 1997 agreement, according to which Georgian and Abkhaz sides agreed to create a coordination commission that would resolve practical issues Invalid source specified.. The commission, headed by Zurab Lakerbaia, was resolving local problematic issues in Abkhazia in the framework of humanitarian projects.

⁴¹ S. Neil MacFarlane, "The Role of the UN", in Accord , Issue 7, 1999, <http://www.c-r.org/geor-ab/accord7/unrole.htm>; Paye and Remacle (footnote 40).

⁴² UN Document S/1994/253, 3 March, 1994.

In 1997, important steps were made in the direction of renewing Geneva process - first, a coordination council was created.⁴³ Its primary meeting was held on 22 January 1998 in Tbilisi. The meeting was chaired by the Special Representative of the Secretary General via the facilitation of Russia's representative. The participants were: Russian Federation, OSCE and Friends' Group. UNDP, UNHCR, ICRC, CISPKF representatives and Zurab Lakerbaia, as the coordinator of the Georgian-Abkhaz Bilateral Coordination Commission Secretary. The Coordination Council created three working groups that would achieve results in three different spheres:

1. Non-renewal of hostilities and security issues (WG 1);
2. Return of IDPs (WG 2);
3. Economy and social issues group (WG 3).

The chief military observer of UNOMIG headed the first group, UNHCR representative headed the second group, whereas the third group was headed by the UNDP local coordinator.

Important progress was made in the direction of confidence-building: two meetings were organized - in Athens in 1998 and in Istanbul in 1999.

Developments since 2000:

- Role - peacekeeper, chief negotiator.
- Goal - peacekeeping and creating framework for the conflict resolution.
- Challenges - Abkhaz side not submitting documents, delivery of heavy weaponry in the region by CIS forces.

In 1999, Dieter Boden was appointed as the special representative and he made efforts to resolve the conflict with a new approach. He rejected the old practice of introducing new parties in the negotiations and started to work on the settlement of fundamental principles of negotiations for existing reality. The first step was preparing documents known as “Boden Documents”, although the full name was “Basic Principles of Separation of Competences between Tbilisi and Sokhumi”⁴⁴ that was sent to Russian Federation, OSCE and Friends' Group for further comments. Despite the active actions of Boden, the consensus between the parties lasted for two years and it was only handed to Georgian and Abkhaz sides in 2001.

Despite the overall appreciation of the documents, including by the Russian side, the initiative failed, as the Abkhaz side refused to receive/submit documents and the unofficial verbal submittal, too (without official submittal).

Boden's contribution was important in the direction of Geneva work groups' activation. The issue of activation of the second work group concerning the IDPs issue was principally raised. As for the first group, it turned out to be more temporary.

His position to the confidence-building issue was also important. The term itself - confidence-building - was introduced in the Georgian conflict by Boden and the UN was actively trying to increase its importance in the following years. As a result of such meetings, in March 2001, a multilateral document was worked out in Yalta, which encompassed 15 ways of confidence-building that should have been implemented in the nearest future.

⁴³ Despite the similarity in names, this council is not the same as the commission headed by Zurab Lakerbaia, which is a purely bilateral mechanism, although it does coordinate its efforts with UN bodies.

⁴⁴ Basic Principles for the Distribution of Competencies between Tbilisi and Sukhumi-თბილისსა და სოხუმს შორის უფლებამოსილებათა გამიჯვნის ძირითადი პრინციპები http://www.parliament.ge/files/1329_22127_566879_Danarti_8.doc ნანახია 5,09,2014

At the same time, the terms of non-use of force and creation of safe environment for return of the IDPs, were reiterated.⁴⁵ Dieter Boden actively followed the “get things done” approach, although he did not deviate from the initial approach of the UN that was the support of the territorial integrity and safe return of the IDPs.

New Dynamics of the Conflict

Since 1999, Gali region,⁴⁶ as well as Kodori valley, partially controlled by the Georgian side, was the epicenter of hostilities. In this period, Russian Federation started strengthening ties with de-facto government of Abkhazia. It opened and abolished the economic blockade, formally existing since 1992. Assigning Russian citizenship to the Abkhaz population was facilitated, whilst the Georgian citizens became subject to visa regime. Invalid source specified. With this action, the situation in the region became even tenser, however, the UN mission continued to implement stabilization measures. By 2000, lives of the mission members were put under threat: on 17 January and 1 June, the representatives of the UN monitoring mission were kidnapped for several hours, had their apartments raided and were exposed to fire in their direction on numerous occasions. On 10 December, two military observers were kidnapped from Kodori valley and were detained for three days. In parallel with these events, ground patrol was stopped several times, although the security zone was still being controlled by helicopters (except the Kodori valley, controlled by Georgia). On 8 October 2001, the mission's helicopter was shot down in the disengagement area, during a regular patrol.

UNOMIG Sokhumi Head Office was conducting the patrol.⁴⁷ Nine observers that were in the helicopter, died. Despite the UN's requests, the case is still not investigated.

Even though there were not any significant changes concerning the placement of forces, the fact that the monitoring mission was stopped, automatically increased the risk of escalation and the UN had to get involved via crisis management mechanisms. However, no involvement of the CIS peacekeepers was seen in either military or political direction in the process of de-escalation.

On 11 October, the Parliament of Georgia adopted a resolution replacing the CIS international peacekeepers mission. The Abkhaz side, on the contrary, supported closer relations with Russia.⁴⁸ In April 2002, the CIS forces delivered heavy weaponry to Kodori valley without notifying the UN mission. The risk of confrontation was high between the parties, but the situation was defused shortly. The President of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze, called the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin and they agreed on withdrawal of additional forces and heavy machinery.⁴⁹ This incident once again indicated that a direct way of de-escalation did exist and it was far more efficient than the one that might have been implemented by the UN. It also indicated that Russia truly had the ability to control the conflict, however it was not trying to resolve it.

⁴⁵ On the Yalta talks see Robert McMahon, 'Georgia: UN Envoy Hopes Abkhaz Status Talks Follow Yalta Success', RFE/RL, 22 March 2001, <http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2001/03/22032001120120.asp> Also see 'Where are the Keys to a Settlement?' interview with Dieter Boden in Abkhazski Meridian No. 1, May 2002, http://www.unomig.org/missionhead/SRSGinterviews/abkh_mer/abkh_mer.asp. (retrieved 07.10.15)

⁴⁶ On security issues and partisan activity in the Gal/i district see Dodge Billingsley, “Security deteriorates along the Abkhazia-Georgia ceasefire line” (excerpt), in Jane's Intelligence Review, 6 September 2001, http://www.janes.com/security/international_security/news/jir/jir010906_1_n.shtml (retrieved 07.10.15)

⁴⁷ Sectoral Gali and Zugdidi offices were also conducting patrol.

⁴⁸ UN Document S/2001/1008, 24 October 2001

⁴⁹ UN Document S/2002/469, 19 April 2002, p. 2.

2002 and the New Developments

In July 2002, the Abkhaz side agrees to adopt the Boden Document, as a prerequisite for starting the negotiations; however, due to the ongoing developments, initiating negotiations became impossible. First, Dieter Bolen was replaced by Heidi Tagliavini that was still not fully engaged in the developments. Second, on 25 December 2002, to a much discontent of the Georgian side, the Sochi-Sokhumi railway segment was renewed⁵⁰ as a result of Russian-Abkhaz Agreement. In addition, Russian passports were being distributed to the Abkhaz population, subsequently increasing Russian influence over Georgia and the developments on the territory of Abkhazia.

In 2003, Shevardnadze and Putin met in Sochi and adopted Sochi Document. According to the document, the railway between Sochi and Tbilisi would be renewed in parallel with returning the IDPs to Abkhazia. The document demonstrated that it was possible to achieve certain results, even if the UN did not get involved. Renewal of the IDPs issue and starting active discussions on it in Geneva was yet another important outcome (by avoiding talks on status and achieving success in other spheres).

A meeting between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides was organized in summer 2003. The fact itself that both sides attended the meeting, was considered successful. The Georgian side promoted the IDPs return issue, whereas Abkhazians, by security means, demanded the reiteration of non-use of force for the conflict resolution.

Another success was the agreement on implementing the recommendations worked out by the unified mission and sending 20 police officers to Gali region with the aim of adopting respective legal norms for the honorable return of the IDPs.

Dieter Boden offered a new strategy to the parties, but it was not adopted. The issue of IDPs return was promoted, but with no success. Initially, the Abkhaz side was not accepting the offer and later, under the conditions of new special representatives, the negotiations did not resume due to the change of the political situation.

In this period, the UN failed to serve as a mediator and its stabilization mechanisms in Gali and Kodori valley turned out to be inefficient under the condition of the existing tense situation.⁵⁴

New Government

In November 2003, Rose Revolution takes place in Georgia and together with the Government, the approach to the problem changes, too. The new Government tries to regulate the situation. President Saakashvili once again made a statement on non-use of force for conflict resolution.

⁵⁰ UN Document S/2002/88, 18 January 2002

⁵¹ For a description and preliminary analysis of the Sochi agreement see RFE/RL Caucasus Report, Vol. 6, No. 11, 13 March 2003, <http://www.rferl.org/caucasus-report/2003/03/11-130303.html>

⁵² The given meeting had not been associated with the Geneva format, however, the Georgian side did not allow to adopt any other format besides the Geneva and connected the meeting with the work of the first work group (security issues) of the Geneva format.

⁵³ UN Document S/2003/1019, 17 October 2003.

⁵⁴ President's speech to the nation 16 July 2006, as translated by BBC Monitoring

However, in this period, changes take place in de-facto Abkhaz government as well, during the controversial two-stage Presidential elections on 3 October 2004 and 12 January 2005. Demonstrating an uncompromised attitude towards Georgia and long history of relations with Moscow, Vladislav Ardzinba (a participant of the war in 1992-1993) comes to power.⁵⁵

As a result of political changes, there was no progress in the direction of negotiations. In May 2006, the Coordination Council met for the first time since 2001. However, this time, there were no talks neither concerning the Sochi agreement implementation, nor the return of the IDPs.

In July 2006, as a result of a special operation, Georgians re-established control over Kodori valley and a legitimate Abkhaz Government was appointed there.

Subsequently, Boden Document as well as Sochi agreement implementation was returning to the negotiations in the period from 2006 to July 2008, despite continuous abstention of the Abkhaz side. However, they were demanding not only to review the status of Abkhazia, but also to withdraw Georgian forces, including police units, from Upper Kodori.

Several high-level meetings may be considered the only success.

On 25 October 2007, in Sokhumi, under the organization of UNOMIG, Davit Bakradze, the State Minister of Georgia met with the de-facto Foreign Minister of Abkhazia, Sergey Shamba in Sokhumi.⁵⁶ During the meeting, both parties expressed readiness to hold meetings on security issues with the UNOMIG and CIS peacekeepers. There was an expectation that exactly these regular contacts would continue in the upcoming year 2008.

On 28 March, President Saakashvili voiced a Georgian offer for resolving the conflict that included:

- Unlimited autonomy supported by the international guarantees and broad federalism;
- Broad representation of Abkhaz politicians in the Georgian official institutions, including the position of vice-president;
- Right to veto in the legal sphere and the decisions concerning the status of the region, Abkhazian culture, language and ethnic issues;
- Creating a common commission controlling free economic zones in Gali and Ochamchire and merging legal and customs services. Invalid source specified.

New Initiative

In July 2008, the Foreign Minister of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier visits Georgia and presents the three-point plan (later referred to as Steinmeier Plan) of the Group of Georgia's Friends for conflict regulation. The plan has not been published, however it verbally included:

- 1) **Signing the non-use of force document and starting the return of IDPs to the entire territory of Abkhazia;**
- 2) **Economic rehabilitation of Abkhazia via Western grants;**
- 3) **Defining status of Abkhazia.**^{57 58}

⁵⁵ He also had had close ties with Evgeniy Primakov since the Soviet period, Statehood and Security: Georgia after the Rose Revolution. Bruno Coppieters and Robert Legvold. p. 342

⁵⁶ UN Document S/2008/38 2 08-21 201

^{57 58} Steinmeier Plan: Zero Chance and Alibi for "Old Europe". <http://www.experti.ge/shtainmaieri.htm> (retrieved 07.10.15)

It has been 18 years and Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region have distanced from Georgia even more: the number foreign plans for conflict resolution has increased, but official Tbilisi does not plan to change its strategy. <http://www.opentext.org.ge/index.php?m=12&y=2011&art=2420> (retrieved 07,10,15)

The concept of the given document needed improvement, but the Georgian side welcomed the new initiative and the internationalization of the conflict (implying active involvement of Europe/Germany). The Abkhaz side, however, refused the given plan, too and demanded the withdrawal of all Georgian armed forces from Upper Kodori, as a prerequisite for negotiations.

Steinmeier met with the Abkhaz side, but the latter refused the plan after the meeting. Sergey Bagapsh stated: “We refused the plan, it is unacceptable for us; prior to the renewal of the negotiations, Georgia must withdraw armed forces from Upper Kodori. Before that, discussions concerning the status of Abkhazia are nonsense, as Abkhazia considers itself an independent state.”⁵⁹ The adoption of the document was also complicated by the contradictory positions. The Georgian side viewed the return of the IDPs as a strong side of the document, whereas Russia considered this point unrealistic. Germany invited sides to Berlin for negotiations, the Abkhaz side asked for time until August and the fate of the document remained undecided as the war spread out in August.

The report of the Secretary General of 3 October 2008 Invalid source specified. indicates that the hostilities in Tskhinvali region in the period of 2-7 August dramatically altered the situation and influenced the responsibility area of the mission, too.

On 26 August, Russian Federation recognized the independence of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali and on 8 September, the Parliament of Georgia proclaimed the territories as occupied. Thanks to efforts of then the President of France, which was serving its presidency term in the Council of the EU, a six-point ceasefire agreement was signed. The fifth article of the agreement stated: “Russian armed forces to withdraw to the positions held before hostilities began in South Ossetia. Russian peacekeepers to implement additional security measures until an international monitoring mechanism is in place.” UNOMIG did not cancel the mission and continued to operate under the old mandate, as it was doing prior to 7 August.⁶⁰

The Security Council was calling for both sides to respect the Resolution 1808⁶¹, adopted in 2008 and avoid the use of force, do not allow violence on ethnic grounds and protect property of IDPs. It was also calling to support humanitarian aid service for the IDPs and provide for their voluntary, honorable and unimpeded return to their territory.

Nevertheless, the Russo-Georgian strained relations, surely, affected the regional stability. On 23 October, Georgia recognized the occupied status of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali on a legal level. On the other hand, on 4 November, Russian Duma ratified the Russian-Abkhaz and Russian-Ossetian Friendship, Cooperation and Assistance Agreement. Russia officially confirmed the placement of bases and 3,700 soldiers in Abkhazia and South Ossetia Invalid source specified..

Later, the last instrument for the conflict resolution in the hands of the UN - the Geneva format - was used. Georgian and Abkhaz sides, as well as representatives of Russia and the United States attended the meeting, but to no substantial outcome. Abkhaz and Ossetian sides demanded the participation in the negotiations as representatives of “South Ossetia” and “Abkhazia” and refused to sit down at the table with the representatives of the legitimate Georgian Government. The UN completely lost the conflict resolution mechanisms, although the mandate of the mission was still renewed until 15 June 2009.

On 15 June 2009, Russia vetoed the mandate extension to the UNOMIG at the Security Council meeting. As a result, the mission ended and left the country.⁶³

⁵⁹ Separatist Government Refuses the Peace Plan.

http://web.rustavi2.com/news/news_textg.php?rec_start=264&rec_start_nav=33&id_news=27155&pg=1&srch_w=&im=main&srch=1&ct=0&wth=0&l=0&ddd (retrieved 07,10,15)

⁶⁰ როგორ მივდით აგვისტოს ომამდე. (How did we reach the August War) (retrieved 07,10,15)

⁶¹ SECURITY COUNCIL EXTENDS MANDATE OF GEORGIA OBSERVER MISSION UNTIL 15 OCTOBER, UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTING RESOLUTION 1808 (2008)

<http://www.un.org/press/en/2008/sc9299.doc.htm> (retrieved 07.10.15)

⁶² Statement of the Foreign Ministry of Georgia about the International Negotiations held in Geneva. Tbilisi. 15 October. 2008.

http://denmark.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=594&info_id=1008 (retrieved 07.10.15)

⁶³ Moscow Says to Veto Western Draft on Abkhaz UN Resolution, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=21115> (retrieved 07,10,2015)

The Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon stated on this matter: “[Secretary General] is upset that the council was unable to reach an agreement on the realistic and practical package that it had presented and that aimed to stabilize the situation locally.”⁶⁴

Overall, the possibility of the UN to play a positive role in the Abkhaz conflict was not realized. However, both parties are responsible for this and not only the UN. Neil MacFarlane points out that the conflict was not ready to be resolved in 1999 and this statement still holds true.⁶⁵

In 1999, the Secretary General said: “It is crucial for the Georgian and Abkhaz sides to understand that the international community expects a valuable progress. It is time for both sides to show the political will to make steps towards progress.”⁶⁶ Sadly, these steps were not made.

Both internal and external reasons played their role in the conflict escalation. Nevertheless, the mechanisms worked out for the conflict resolution, cannot be considered inefficient. The main reason for their failure is only the secondary role they had to play from 1994 that made the UN a reactive rather than a leading actor.

⁶⁴ Russia vetoes extension of UN mission in Georgia <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=31151#.VuWdDf96M8> (retrieved 07,10,2015)

⁶⁵ MacFarlane in Accord. At the time of writing (November 2003) the impact of Shevardnadze's ouster on negotiations in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict could not yet be assessed

⁶⁶ UN Document S/1999/805, 20 July 1999, p. 12.

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