

BATTLE OF TWO LOGICS: APPROPRIATENESS AND CONSEQUENTIALITY IN RUSSIAN INTERVENTIONS IN GEORGIA

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Abstract

The article offers a discussion of the two logics that govern the behavior of organizational actors – the logic of appropriateness and the logic of expected consequences – by transferring them into the realm of international relations, in particular, in explaining the causes and reasoning behind third party military interventions into the domestic affairs of other states. The article provides a theoretical novelty of assessing the success of interventions not by durability of peace as their main aim, but by actual fulfillment of their interventionary goals and objective, which shall be considered when discussing the pros and cons of the two logics. By analyzing the case of the Russian interventions in Georgian starting from 1992 and ending with the recent war in South Ossetia in 2008, the author argues that the likelihood of success of interventions is higher when the two logics are merged and not separated from each other in guiding the decision-makers in their actions.

Keywords: *Logic of appropriateness, logic of expected consequences, third party interventions, Georgia, Russia, Abkhazia, South Ossetia.*

Introduction

The last decade of the 20th century and the end of the Cold War, which shaped the relations within the international system of states for almost half a century, marked a significant upsurge in the numbers of ethnic clashes within state territories. In the words of Alexander George, the post-Cold War period “has created a new geopolitical environment and has spawned many new types of internal conflicts. Such internal conflicts within states... vastly outnumbered the more conventional types of war between states”.¹ The end of the Cold War together with the positive processes of overall democratization of the world brought forth proliferation of severe and zero-sum civil wars. At this point, the ideological identity of conflicting groups was replaced or layered with religious and/or ethnic ones. More than two-thirds, or a majority of the post-Cold War intrastate conflicts, were fought on ethnic grounds.²

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¹ George, Alexander, “Strategies for Preventive Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution: Scholarship for Policymaking”, in: *Political Science and Politics*, vol. 33:1, 2000, p. 15.

² Such as Yugoslavia/Serbia vs. Croatia; Azerbaijan vs. Nagorno-Karabakh, Bosnia/Herzegovina vs. Serbia, Russia vs. Chechens, Georgia vs. Abkhazia and South Ossetia. See Correlates of War dataset (available from:

Intrastate conflicts continue to attract the attention of foreign countries that are either being directly affected by civil wars outside their borders, or which themselves influence the course of events in foreign countries. Domestic actors in conflicts do not engage in conflicting actions in a vacuum: any process significant enough to change one particular setting would inevitably have a “butterfly effect” on its surroundings. Third party interventions are and, most probably, will continue to exist as foreign policy tools of domestic dimensions.

The fundamental quandary of international security affairs is why some countries intervene in the affairs of other states while others do not. Even more so, why do the same states intervene in some cases and take no actions in others with remarkably similar conditions? More importantly, what thinking should the states be guided by in order to succeed in interventions? Under what circumstances should states take actions outside their borders to reach their own aims and objectives? Answers to these questions lie in a discussion of intervention outcomes being contingent upon their agendas as well as on a discourse on the behavioral patterns of states both at home and internationally.

The purpose of this article is to unveil the intervention puzzle through explaining third party interventions by an interplay of two logics – the logic of appropriateness and the logic of expected consequences. While the former pertains to normative behavior of states, domestically and in the international arena, as a guiding principle of their actions, the latter frames their deeds by a dictate of *ratio*. In viewing *pro et contra* of the two logics in a specific case of a third party intervention I will argue that not separation but, rather, synergy of these logics in decision-making allows states to achieve the best possible results in their actions and to succeed in interventions.

I will start, first, from an overview of existing theoretical explanations of third party interventions with a claim that successes and failures of foreign interventions should be judged by the specific outcomes of their actions cross-referenced with their intervention goals and objectives, and not by durable peace, which is currently a widely used indicator for intervention success. I will then continue with the explanations of the logic of appropriateness and the logic of consequentiality to transfer this neo-institutionalist theorizing into the field of international relations generally, and foreign interventions in particular. To support my point of the logics’ synergy I will review two cases of intervention of the same actor in a single controlled environment – the military actions of the Russian Federation in the Abkhazian and South Ossetian conflicts on the territory of Georgia separately in 1992-1994 and in 2008. I will argue that while the first intervention had not brought many positive results for the Russian side because it was guided by the logic of appropriateness only, the second one was highly successful due to a synergy of the two logics. Finally, I will re-conceptualize on the findings and will provide my own theoretical premises for a successful foreign intervention.

Intervention Success – a Measurement Problem

The success of foreign interventions largely depends on their nature – whether the interveners are neutral with no vested interests in conflict outcomes, or biased and supporting

one belligerent out of their own interests. Being neutral does not mean that the third parties do not engage in warfare with either of the belligerents – they may so do, sometimes acting as buffers between the belligerents. However, they do not actively support any party to the conflict and are not interested in particular outcomes because it would suit them, but according to Diehl et al., aim to foster “a solution that meets the interests of the disputants as well as the international community”.³ Neutrality of interveners is also likely to contribute to their acceptability by the warring parties, which also increases the likelihood of their success. Bartunek noted this point when stating that “[a]cceding to third party permits the ... [belligerents] to save face with their constituents as well as with themselves, since the third party is considered a respectable and impartial source of proposals.”⁴

Contrary to neutral interveners, biased third parties decide to intervene on the basis of their own vital national interests being affected or threatened by the developments in target countries. With such a stance towards solution of conflicts, biased interveners may have more chances to succeed since they have their own stakes in solving the conflict and, therefore, would “...be willing to use force if necessary, and its military capabilities must be sufficient to punish whichever side violates the treaty...”⁵ The negative point here is that such forceful actions in support of one party to the conflict would be viewed as hostile by the party or parties against whom such actions are taken. Therefore, the high acceptability of a neutral intervener, which contributes to success of interventions in the first case, is compared here to the degree of vested interests, the costs the biased intervener is willing to incur and “wholeheartedness” in achieving its objectives.

Alone or in coalitions with others, neutral or biased, states intervene in the affairs of other states for various reasons. Countries may have their own vested interests for interventions, or may be genuinely interested in acting as neutral and impartial arbiters and to undertake purely peacekeeping responsibilities. Some interveners are driven by the desire to stop human suffering and the actions of belligerents that represent a threat to peace and security to their region or globally. Others want to use conflicts to pursue their own goals and objectives and to spread their influence beyond their territories. Some states may be interested in extending the conflicts by contributing to the military capabilities of the belligerents, while others may still want to build peace by preventing bloodshed and assisting target countries in their post-conflict recovery. In either of these cases viewing the goals and objectives of interventions is vital in assessing the degree of success or failure of their actions.

Current scholarship in foreign interventions seems to neglect this instrumental approach to evaluating success and mainly focuses on considering actual and durable peace as an indicator for third party success. This means that the actions of states are considered to be successful when peace was reached in a target country and it lasted for a certain number of years. Subsequently, if peace was not achieved or lasted for a short period of time, interventions are considered as unsuccessful. There is almost a universal view on measuring the success of third party interventions by the years of peace following the exit of interveners from the conflict scene. For some it is five years of settlement stability,⁶ while for others the

³ Diehl, Paul F., Reifschneider, Jennifer and Hensel, Paul R., “UN Intervention and Recurrent Conflict”, in: *International Organization*, vol. 50:4, 1996, pp. 687-688.

⁴ Bartunek, Jean M., Benton, Alan A. and Keys, Christopher B., “Third Party Intervention and the Bargaining Behavior of Group Representatives”, in: *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 19:3, 1975, p. 552.

⁵ Walter, Barbara F., “The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement”, in: *International Organization*, vol. 51:3, 1997, p. 340.

⁶ Hartzell, Caroline A., “Explaining the Stability of Negotiated Settlements to Intrastate Wars”, in: *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 43:1, 1999, p. 14 and Licklider, Roy, “The Consequences of Negotiated Settlements

criterion is more rigid – the “success” of a conflict resolution is an actual cease-fire agreement between the sides lasting for a period of at least six months.⁷

This approach of using durable peace as the main criterion of success of interventions proves to be inadequate when the matter concerns the real agendas of interveners and what they indeed wanted to achieve by intervening. Consideration of years of peace as the main dependent variable gives us only a partial, if not a distorted, understanding of the phenomenon of intervention.

The wide array of goals and aspirations of third parties, the roles they play in international and regional arenas, the interactions they have with other actors, their compositions and the nature of the conflicting parties brings the same fallibility to measuring success by lasting peace as blaming the refrigerator for not being able to play your DVDs. Years of ceasefire as an indicator of settlement may, of course, be considered an indicator for success of intervention in cases where conflict settlement and peace was indeed the aim of interveners. However, there are conflicts where third parties directed their support to ethnic groups, which eventually lost their wars, as a result of which peace was reinstated. Can we still consider such third parties as successful? There are also interveners not concerned with resolution of conflicts at all, but rather, want to exercise their influence over the countries with wars and beyond by further prolongation of hostilities. Can a lasting peace still be used as a parameter for their success? Peace may also be achieved with minimal participation of third parties or even due to other factors not pertinent to interveners per se, for instance by the belligerents themselves. Shall such interventions be regarded as successful?

The way to solve this measurement problem is to evaluate the success of third party actions not by years of peace but by *actual fulfillment of their intervention goals*. By this new indicator, interventions can be considered as successful if they managed to reach their agendas, which would be clear by specific outcomes of each separate intervention. Similarly, if the outcomes of interventions were opposite to the goals the third parties had before and during interventions, then they can be said to have failed. By assessing the success of interventions through their real agendas, we would better understand what was guiding the interveners before taking particular actions, in the first place, and, more importantly, on the basis of what reasoning their goals and objective can be considered particularly successful.

Battle of Two Logics

At some point states concerned with the conflicts outside their borders become faced with a dilemma: to intervene or not to intervene, and the outcomes of their future actions largely depend on their pre-intervention lines of reasoning, or logics. Notwithstanding the multiplicity of rationales for state interventions and their case-specific differences, decisions of states to intervene are usually related to two issues: positive cost-and-benefit calculations, and their moral obligations either towards the belligerents or with a generally altruistic behavior.

in Civil Wars, 1945-1993”, in: *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 89:3, 1995 p. 682.

⁷ Regan, Patrick M., “Choosing to Intervene: Outside Interventions in Internal Conflicts”, in: *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 60:3, 1998, pp. 754-779.

Decision-making deliberations of actors were pioneered by March and Olsen in their seminal works on neo-institutionalism.⁸ According to them, two logics govern the behavior of actors and organizations: *the logic of expected consequences* and *the logic of appropriateness*, which are juxtaposed to each other and used separately to explain the behavior of institutional actors. When transferred to the realm of international affairs, these two logics have a similar, if not increased, role in states' behavioral patterns.

Under the logic of expected consequences, states reveal, as argued by Hicks, an “instrumental behavior – perceived as semiautonomous – of rational individuals under institutional constraint.”⁹ Decisions are taken as a result of the actors' rational choice, which assumes “some model of individual action, often one based on subjective-expected utility theory.”¹⁰ A number of preconditions must be present in such a strategy: the actors should be aware of their own capacities, should see several options for action, should calculate beforehand the costs and benefits of moving in every direction and should act in the way that maximizes their own benefits.

States, similar to organizations, guided by this logic, also calculate the expected utility from interventions and the possible losses they could suffer from their interventions. In the words of Goldmann, weighing expected consequences “essentially leads us to derive actions from given preferences”¹¹ – if states think they stand to benefit more than they stand to lose, they decide to intervene. The questions states ask themselves are “What is the situation we are faced with? What are the available options for our actions? What benefits would our interventions bring us and what costs would we incur? How to design our actions that, as we think, would bring highest benefits and least possible costs? What consequences would we face if we intervene and if we do not intervene?”

Interveners, thus, according to Regan, evaluate carefully “... the cost and benefits of alternative action along with their estimations of the probability that any action will achieve the desired outcome.”¹² Werner also observed the role of rationality in state actions when stating that third party's “...decision to intervene... is often assumed to be based on his value for the target, the expected costs of war, and his marginal contribution to the probability of victory.”¹³ In short, if states see that the utility from their actions is high enough to outweigh the costs they would incur, they decide to intervene. Similarly, states would refrain from intervening if the costs from intervention are unacceptably high in comparison with the benefits they would receive.

⁸ For nearly full account of the discourse on logics of appropriateness and expected consequentiality see the following works by March, James G., and Olsen, Johan P.: “Ambiguity and Choice in Organizations”, (Bergen, Norway: Universitetsforlaget, 1976); “Rediscovering Institutions”, (New York: Free Press., 1989); “Democratic Governance”, (New York: Free Press, 1995); and “The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders”, in: *International Organization*, vol. 52, 1998, pp. 943–969.

⁹ Hicks, Alexander, “Is Political Sociology Informed by Political Science?”, in: *Social Force*, vol. 73:4, 1995, p. 1221.

¹⁰ Hechter, Michael and Kanazawa, Satoshi, “Sociological Rational Choice Theory”, in: *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 23, 1997, pp. 193-194.

¹¹ Goldmann, Kjell, “Appropriateness and Consequences: The Logic of Neo-Institutionalism”, in: *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions*, vol. 18:1, 2005, p. 44.

¹² Regan, Patrick M., (2002). “*Civil Wars and Foreign Powers – Outside Intervention in Intrastate Conflict*”, (University of Michigan Press, 2002), p. 39.

¹³ Werner, Suzanne, (2000). “Deterring Intervention: The Stakes of War and Third-Party Involvement”, in *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 44:4, 2000, p. 720.

The second logic – of appropriateness – is based on normative beliefs that make behaviors or actions appropriate under certain conditions and inappropriate under others. The notion, levels, categories and types of (in)appropriateness are set by actors themselves either alone or together, under institutional settings that would set norms and standards for all their members. From a neo-institutional prospective, the emphasis is made, according to Hicks, “...on the orienting or energizing role of the social – or, at least, of other individuals – rather than stressing the casual exogeneity of ego.”¹⁴ States possess their own social identities that guide their actions in international arena. The logic of appropriateness, thus, “essentially leads us to derive actions from given identities”,¹⁵ which are also - similar to interests in the previous case - given, fixed and rigid.

Individually, states may act on the basis of their own sense of appropriateness, which might differ from that of others. States act jointly, in the words of March and Olsen, “according to the institutionalized practices of a collectivity, based on mutual, and often tacit, understandings of what is true, reasonable, natural, right, and good.”¹⁶ States evaluate the situation in accordance with the norms, rules, morality and ideational settings they are themselves governed by. In this respect, Weber et. al. define three factors behind the logic of appropriateness: “recognition and classification of the kind of situation encountered, the identity of the individual making the decision, and the application of rules or heuristics in guiding behavioral choice.”¹⁷

Equipped with the logic of appropriateness, states, according to March and Olsen, “...seek to fulfill the obligations and duties encapsulated in a role, an identity, and a membership in a political community. Rules are followed because they are perceived to be adequate for the task at hand and to have normative validity.”¹⁸ The questions that states ask themselves when deciding to intervene are “What is the situation we are faced with? Who are we? Who are other actors? Does this situation violate the moral principles our society is based on? What are our obligations towards our own people, those involved in conflicts and wider community of states? How will our behavior affect us? Is the intervention appropriate?”

In essence, states decide to intervene if they view a particular situation in the target country as a threat to their identities and a violation of the principles on the basis of which their own society or “[r]ules and practices [that] specify what is normal, must be expected, can be relied upon, and what makes sense in a community.”¹⁹ Having assessed the conflicts from the point of view of their own and the collective moral basis, states take certain actions if they consider that the situations have exceeded the threshold of ethical and normative permissibility. They may still intervene even if their cost-benefit calculus is negative: they would intervene, in the words of Weinstein, “...regardless of what the particular situation

¹⁴ Hicks, Alexander, “Is Political Sociology Informed by Political Science?”, in: *Social Force*, vol. 73:4, 1995, p. 1223.

¹⁵ Goldmann, Kjell, “Appropriateness and Consequences: The Logic of Neo-Institutionalism”, in: *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions*, vol. 18:1, 2005, p. 44.

¹⁶ March, James G. and Olsen, Johan P., “The Logic of Appropriateness”, in *ARENA Working Papers*, WP 04/09, 1998, p. 4

¹⁷ Weber, Mark J., Kopelman, Shirli, Messick, David M., “A Conceptual Review of Decision Making in Social Dilemmas: Applying a Logic of Appropriateness”, in: *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, vol. 8:3, 2004, p. 281.

¹⁸ March, James G. and Olsen, Johan P., “Understanding Institutions and Logics of Appropriateness: Introductory Essay”, in: *ARENA Working Papers*, vol. 13, 2007, p. 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

involved would dictate in light of national interest”.²⁰ States would intervene because it is morally unacceptable for them to do otherwise, and they can do otherwise. Similarly, states might abstain from intervention in the domestic affairs of other countries if they believe that the situation is within the limits of moral and normative acceptability.

The problem with this separation of two logics is due to two reasons: difficulty of their unilateral application to the philosophy of decision-making deliberations of states, and insufficiency of their independent usage for explaining diverse behavior of states. Neither of these logics alone fully explains the whole complex array of situations that states face and the options available for them. Much in the same line, Finnemore and Sikkink argued that “Rationality cannot be separated from any politically significant episode of normative inclusion or normative change, just as the normative context conditions any episode of rational choice. Norms and rationality are thus intimately connected...”²¹ Hechter and Kanazawa also pointed out the need for the inclusion of a discourse of values of individual actors in a proper and more comprehensive understanding of rational choice theorizing.²²

A careful merger of the two logics is, thus, required for states to reach success in fulfilling their intervention agendas. As excellently noted by Carr, in order to achieve best results, “Political action must be based on a coordination of morality and power”.²³ The intervention case study presented below supports the argument of increasing likelihood of success that the inseparability of the two logics would bring to third parties.

Georgia: Conflict Background

The first Russian interventions in the conflicts in Georgia took place under the aegis of peacekeeping missions with conflict resolution mechanisms after the military clashes of the early 1990s between the titular Georgian nation and the Abkhazian and South Ossetian minorities. Following the period of the Georgian history known as the “War of Laws” in the late 1980s-beginning of the 1990s, against a background of chauvinist and denigrating rhetoric employed by the country’s first President Zviad Gamsakhurdia, who openly discriminated against all the ethnic minorities, the domestic security dilemma took a severe turn.²⁴ According to Zdravomislov, the situation culminated in a cycle of mutually aggressive ethnic nationalism where “[i]mperial components of the Georgian politics towards Abkhazians stimulated Abkhazian nationalism, which gave an impetus to the Georgian nationalism.”²⁵ Each subsequent step taken by either party to introduce more freedoms and rights for their respective communities - in Georgia proper, Abkhazia and South Ossetia -

²⁰ Weinstein, Franklin B., “The Concept of a Commitment in International Relations”, in: *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 13:1, 1969, p. 46.

²¹ Finnemore, Martha and Sikkink, Kathryn, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change”, in: *International Organization, (International Organization at Fifty: Exploration and Contestation in the Study of World Politics)*, vol. 52: 4, 1998), p. 888.

²² Hechter, Michael and Kanazawa, Satoshi, “Sociological Rational Choice Theory”, in: *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 23, 1997, pp. 208-209.

²³ Carr, Edward H., “The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations”, Second Edition, (London: Macmillan, 1946), p. 97.

²⁴ An example from the many, the following excerpt from an interview of Gamsakhurdia gives the glimpse of the situation with ethnic minorities in early independent Georgia: “We wanted to persuade the Ossetians to give in. They took flight, which is quite logical since they are criminals. The Ossetians are an uncultured, wild people – clever people can handle them easily.” See: Interview with Zviad Gamsakhurdia “We Have Chatted Too Long With the Separatists: A Conversation with the Chairman of the Georgian Supreme Soviet”, *Moscow News*. December 2, 1990, p. 11.

was considered as lessening the rights of other ethnic groups, and, thus, directly threatening their identities.

The conflict in South Ossetia erupted in December 1990 and lasted for a year and a half, resulting in approximately 3 000 battle deaths,²⁶ complete economic devastation of Samachablo (as the Georgians call South Ossetia), severance of transport routes connecting Georgia with Russia through South Ossetia, and the de facto separation of the region from Georgia. In June 1992 the new president of Georgia Eduard Shevardnadze signed a cease-fire agreement with Russia as a guarantor of peace and security, which established a peacekeeping organ in the form of the Joint Control Commission (JCC), composed of representatives from Georgia, South Ossetia, North Ossetia and Russia. From its very birth, the JCC brought forth the phenomenon of the “credible commitment problem”²⁷ and left Georgia in a disadvantageous position in which it was alone in facing three opposing, potentially unfriendly and not trustworthy counterparts – Russia, South Ossetia and North Ossetia.

The warfare in Abkhazia started soon after the end of military activities in South Ossetia in 1992. Under the pretext of protecting the rail cargo transit to Russia from looting, Georgian troops entered Abkhazia in August 1992 and occupied its capital, Sokhumi. After receiving considerable assistance from mercenaries from the Northern Caucasus, the Baltic States, Cossacks from the southern provinces of Russia, and military aid and support from the Russian military bases in Abkhazia, the Abkhazians managed to retake Sokhumi in September 1993.

The war resulted in the deaths of 20,000²⁸ people from both sides and more than 250,000 Georgian IDPs. To avoid a large-scale confrontation with Russia, Shevardnadze was forced to sign another ceasefire agreement with Russia in July 1993 and bring the country into the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to avoid further Russian interference. Under the agreement a detachment of CIS peacekeeper troops, formed exclusively by the Russian military, arrived in Abkhazia and became the guarantors of de facto peace.

The CIS peacekeepers, together with the JCC, presented a buffer between the belligerents and with varying degrees of success managed to cool down the tensions and revanchist aspirations from all the conflicting parties, for instance in summer 2004 when erratic fighting nearly led to renewed war in South Ossetia but was averted by Russian shuttle diplomacy.

This neither-war-nor-peace situation continued in South Ossetia until summer 2008 when full-scale warfare started, beginning with the same scenario of sporadic fighting along the borderlines. Firing culminated at dusk of August 7 as a response to a unilateral ceasefire declared by Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili. Georgian troops, tasked with “restoring constitutional order” and bringing peace to the whole territory of Georgia, occupied village after village in South Ossetia, predominantly populated by ethnic Georgians. By the end of the next day Georgians were practically in control of the whole territory of South Ossetia.

²⁵ Zdravomislov, A.G., “Mezhnatsionalnye konflikty v postsovetskom prostranstve” (International Conflicts in Post-Soviet Space). (Moskva: Aspekt Press, 1997), p. 21.

²⁶ As reported by the Uppsala Conflict Dataset, (available from http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/UCDP/our_data1.htm).

²⁷ Fearon, James D., “Commitment Problems and the Spread of Ethnic Conflict”, In David A. Lake and Donald Rotchild (eds.) “The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict” (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

²⁸ As reported by the Uppsala Conflict Dataset, (available from http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/UCDP/our_data1.htm).

Even before the restart of the military clashes, South Ossetian authorities were seeking Russian military help to protect the South Ossetian population, a majority of who were Russian citizens. The assistance was soon provided: the Russian peacekeepers, which did not participate in the early stages of combat, received a strong reinforcement in the form of the Russian 58th Army and volunteers from Northern Ossetia and other North Caucasian republics of Russia. Russia entered the conflict scene with a peacemaking agenda of its own – what Russian President Dmitri Medvedev called “enforcement of Georgia to peace”.

In nearly two days the Georgians, suffering heavy losses, were pushed away from South Ossetia by the Russians. The Russian military continued its offensive towards Georgia proper, bombing its military facilities and destroying military airports adjacent to the conflict territory and beyond. De facto peace was reinstated on August 12 after a 6-point peace agreement was signed between Medvedev and Saakashvili under the mediation of French President Nicolas Sarkozy. As a result of continuous pressure from the EU, a group of 340 military observers was deployed in the fall of 2008 to monitor the situation in the conflict zones.

This five-day war, according to the South Ossetian sources, brought the deaths of 1692 people and 1500 more wounded.²⁹ The Russian sources give similar figures - 1 600 casualties among civilian residents of South Ossetia, 74 Russian military including 11 peacekeepers, and 171 wounded.³⁰ In four months Russian casualty estimates changed dramatically – according to the report of the Investigation Committee of the General Prosecutor’s Office of Russia issued at the end of December 2008, 48 Russian military and 162 Ossetian civilians died as a result of the war.³¹ The Georgian casualties amount to 413 deaths, among which 169 are military personnel and 228 civilian victims.³² According to the UNHCR, 192,000 Georgian nationals fled from South Ossetia and nearby Georgian settlements.³³

The volatile state in Abkhazia also changed in August 2008, when military activities resumed in South Ossetia. Abkhazian forces were in full mobilization along the border during the South Ossetian fighting and feared no attacks since Georgia was clearly not in a position to wage wars on two different fronts simultaneously. Inspired by the victorious advance of the Russian troops in South Ossetia, Abkhazian forces seized this window of opportunity and launched a successful attack on the Georgian troops in the Upper Kodori region, the only part of Abkhazia previously controlled by Georgia.

Not long after the secession of hostilities in South Ossetia Russia legally institutionalized the results of its intervention by officially recognizing South Ossetia and Abkhazia as new independent states and members of the international community. Currently, South Ossetia and Abkhazia are strengthening their political gains by seeking further military assistance

²⁹ Khugaev, Teimuraz, Prosecutor General of South Ossetia, online interview (available from http://www.gazeta.ru/news/lastnews/2008/08/28/n_1263719.shtml).

³⁰ Newspaper “Rossiyskaya Gazeta”, (Newspaper of Russia), week 4729, August 14, 2008 (available from <http://www.rg.ru/2008/08/14/voyna.html>).

³¹ Public statement of Investigation Committee of the General Prosecutor’s Office, December 23, 2008 (available from: http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2008/12/23_a_2916550.shtml)

³² “Georgia Update”, a service of the Government of Georgia, 5 December, 2008 (available from <http://georgiaupdate.gov.ge/doc/10006968/Microsoft%20Word%20-%205.11.pdf>).

³³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “UNHCR chief visits South Ossetia”, 22 August 2008, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/48aef0dc4.html> .

from and political alliances with Russia, by allowing the establishment of military bases on their territories and aspiring to join the Commonwealth of Russia and Belorussia.

A Synergy of Two Logics

As a successor to the Soviet Union in many aspects, inheriting its diplomatic representations, political, economic and cultural heritage, not only is Russia vitally interested in developments in the neighboring former Soviet republics, but also strives to have a say in the politics of former Soviet republics. In this respect, Russia strongly resembles a former imperial center with stakes in the domestic policies of its ex-colonies. Parallels can be drawn from the French behavior after de-colonization of the 1960s, very vividly described by Prunier. According to him, France has always considered Africa “le pré carré” (our own backyard) and viewed itself as “a large hen followed by a docile brood of little black chicks”³⁴ that needed to be taken care of. Unlike France, however, which has always upheld the interests of the ruling governments in its former African colonies, in Georgia Russia chose to support opposition sides.

The role of Russia in the Georgian conflicts before 2008 was quite equivocal and less publicized. There was no hard documentary evidence of any regular Russian troops participating on either side of the conflicts in Georgia in the early 1990s.³⁵ Russia, according to its leadership, kept strictly neutral, but, as dubious as it may sound, Zverev postulates this Janus-faced Russian behavior of the early 1990s: “... (although it was in line with a consistent Russian policy of supplying both sides in a conflict), at a time when Russian-supplied warplanes were bombing Georgian-held Sukhumi, other Russian units continued to supply the Georgian Army.”³⁶ Indeed, Abkhazians, South Ossetians and Georgians had large caches of arms and ammunition for a major confrontation even before the start of the conflict, and the only place they could get these arms were the Soviet/Russian military bases located in Georgia and Abkhazia.

Such behavior by Russia revealed a very interesting point in its early foreign policies - being led entirely by the double-sided logic of appropriateness, without any clear and visible benefits that it could receive from its actions. By not closing its borders with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, thus letting mercenaries from North Caucasus join the conflicts, and also by supplying arms and having close ties with the post-Gamsakhurdian Georgian government, Russia considered it appropriate to be present in Georgian politics by satisfying all the belligerents alike as much as possible.

On the one hand, Russia had longstanding brotherly ties with the Georgian nation, and a history of protecting it from Turkish influence. Many Georgians were prominent political and military figures in the Soviet Union throughout its history. Even after their independence,

³⁴ Prunier, Gerard, “*The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide, 1959-1994*”, (London: Hurst&Co., 1995), p. 103.

³⁵ Notwithstanding strong Russian denials of involvement in the civil war, 46 Russian soldiers of various ranks had been reportedly killed in Georgia in 1992. See: Brecher & Wilkenfeld, Brecher, M. and Wilkenfeld, J. “A Study of Crisis Data Project”, (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press. Paperback Edition with CD-ROM, 2000).

³⁶ Zverev, A., “Ethnic Conflicts in the Caucasus 1988-1994”, in: Bruno Coppieters (ed.) “Contested Borders In The Caucasus” (Brussels: Vubpress, 1996) (online version is available from <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/ContBorders/eng/>).

there had always been good connections between the “young” Russian military and its Georgian counterpart.³⁷

The logic of appropriateness evident in Russia’s supporting Abkhazia and South Ossetia had two parts: letting the Abkhaz and South Ossetians be defeated by Georgia would place Russia in a very uneasy, in the best case, position in relation to the nations of the Northern Caucasus whose kin the Georgian minorities were. While for South Ossetians Russia represented an “external homeland”³⁸ in the form of North Ossetia, for Abkhazians it acted as a “surrogate lobby state.”³⁹ In the early 1990s Russia itself suffered heavily from secessionist and ethnic conflicts between its own ethnic minorities occupying the North Caucasus and predominantly bordering Georgia (for instance, the wars in Chechnya and the conflict in North Ossetia). By letting the North Caucasian “volunteers” help their brethren in Georgia, Russia, therefore considered it appropriate to redirect its own domestic unrest and to quench dissatisfaction, thus acquiring in the eyes of its North Caucasian nations the image of a protector of their kin.

On the other hand, there was high dissatisfaction and immense stigma within certain parts of the Russian political and military establishment who found themselves beyond the hearth of power after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Many members of the Russian/ex-Soviet political and military elites blamed Gorbachev and Shevardnadze (who was Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1985-1990) for breaking up the Soviet system, and Yeltsin for supporting them. The conflicts in Georgia, in words of Zdravomyslov, represented a perfect opportunity for them to gain their revenge upon “democrat-Shevardnadze, who took an active part in dissolution of the Soviet Union” and to use Abkhazia and South Ossetia for the sake of territorial interests of the “unified and indivisible Mother-Russia within the borders of 1917.”⁴⁰

In sum, the absence of clear self-interests, and therefore uncertain benefits, and an oxymoronic wish to be neutral and to satisfy all parties put Russia in quite an awkward position, very correctly pointed out by Zverev in the following description: “Throughout 1992 and 1993, Russia had no single policy with regard to the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. It was not clear which would best suit Russian interests - to see Georgia strong and united or weak and dismembered.”⁴¹ Eventually, this vagueness took the form of a neutral peacekeeping operation directed by the logic of appropriateness, which molded the faint “just-to-be-there” interests of Russia into endless, weary and unsuccessful peacekeeping benefiting no one.

Contrary to that, the second Russian intervention in August 2008 was highly biased and successful and represented a mixture of the logic of appropriateness with the logic of

³⁷ For instance, shortly after the conflicts, Russian defense minister Pavel Grachev was baptized by his Georgian colleague Vardiko Nadibaidze in one of the most important ancient Georgian churches; Georgian Security Minister Shota Kviraya was a high-level military officer in the HQ of the Russian military base in Tbilisi.

³⁸ Brubaker, Rogers, “Nationhood and National Question in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Eurasia: An Institutional Account”, in: *Theory and Society*, vol. 23:1, 1994, pp. 55-76.

³⁹ Jenne, Erin K., “A Bargaining Theory of Minority Demands: Explaining the Dog that Didn’t Bite in 1990 Yugoslavia”, in: *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 48:4, 2004, p. 748.

⁴⁰ Zdravomyslov, A.G., “Mezhnatsionalnye konflikty v postsovetском prostranstve” (International Conflicts in Post-Soviet Space). (Moskva: Aspekt Press, 1997), p. 63.

⁴¹ Zverev, A., “Ethnic Conflicts in the Caucasus 1988-1994”, in: Bruno Coppieters (ed.) “Contested Borders In The Caucasus” (Brussels: Vubpress, 1996) (online version is available from <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/ContBorders/eng/>).

expected consequentiality. This time the former appropriateness was enhanced by a better grounded and legitimized Russian support to the ethnic kin of North Ossetians in Georgia through protecting Russian citizens in South Ossetia. In turn, Russia's military actions brought it quite evident and beneficial consequences from the perspective of its pure self-interest.

The new logic of appropriateness in the Russian actions also had two components: continuation of ethnic aspect and introduction of a completely new domestic and international political reasoning. From the point of view of ethnic linkages, when military actions became unavoidable in August 2008 in South Ossetia, Russia was left with no other choice but to protect their kin and fellow-citizens from the Georgian military advances. Had Russia remained indifferent to the fate of South Ossetians, such inaction would have been lethal to its own statehood since it would have raised aggressive sentiments in North Ossetia against the Russian state for giving up their brothers and sisters to Georgians. For Abkhazians, who, unlike Ossetians, are only distantly related to the Adigi and Apshili ethnic groups of the Northern Caucasus, and, thus have no direct ethnic kin in Russia, their military actions in the Kodori Gorge were, in a way, a by-product of the war in South Ossetia.

In addition to blood lineage, the phenomenon of an external homeland after the first conflicts was strengthened by the provision of Russian citizenship to the overwhelming majority of the population of the breakaway Georgian regions. This, in a way, institutionalized Russian claims in protecting the rights and freedoms of its subjects.

The logic of appropriateness was also evident in the Russian behavior on the domestic and international levels. Almost for a decade after the ascension to power of President Putin, Russia was concerned with “consolidation of the vertical of power” by putting strong controls over different regions and societal groups. From this point of view, Russian intervention in 2008 was more than appropriate in the light of caring for its citizens as an inherent part of its domestic *raison d'être*. Had Russia not intervened, this would have raised domestic questions about the power of its government, which would have lost its authority within the eyes of fellow-citizens.

On the international arena, Russian actions looked also quite appropriate within the modern foreign policy line it has been pursuing. The influence of Russia in the Caucasus was directly linked with its need to secure its southern borders, a need exacerbated by NATO enlargement, which was considered as a hostile move in the Russian political and military establishment. The possible inclusion of former Soviet Republics – Georgia and Ukraine – into NATO, apart from rendering a severe emotional blow to former Soviet decision-makers in the Russian government who would have lost their former “brothers” to the hostile West, would mean further military threats as NATO would be positioned on its southern boundary.

Besides, during the decade after the collapse of the USSR Russia made repeated attempts to reinstate its hegemonic status and to appear powerful - if not on the world's stage then, at least, regionally. Russia strives to compete with the USA in the military field and the use of force, just as for the USSR, according to Lebow, the military “...was the only domain in which it could compete successfully with the United States and maintain its superpower

status.”⁴² Even the public rhetoric of the Russian policy-makers closely followed that of the USA after 9/11, which, in the Russian case, had become 8/8/8.⁴³

After its fiasco with blocking Kosovo’s independence, Russia began vehemently pushing for the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. During the active phase of international recognition of Kosovo, Russia repeatedly threatened the West with a *quid pro quo* reaction and using Kosovo as a precedent for solution of frozen conflicts in the Caucasus. Intervention in Georgia, thus, was also appropriate from the general foreign direction of Russia towards increasing its prestige in the international arena.

In sum, the logic of appropriateness reflected in supporting South Ossetians and Abkhazians by their political recognition provided the necessary internationalization, which, in the words of Finnemore and Sikkink, “...reflect[ed] back on a government’s domestic basis of legitimation and consent and thus ultimately on its ability to stay in power”⁴⁴ and further consolidated the Russian society’s normative support to the domestic and foreign policies of their government.

The second Russian intervention also marked the appearance of the logic of expected circumstances in its actions, which accounts for the role of rational choice and expected utility calculation. Two relevant factors influenced the decision to intervene in Georgia: the need to secure its access to the Black Sea region’s marine transportation capacities and to establish control over transit of energy resources from the Caspian Sea to their destination points, thus remaining the major supplier of energy to Europe and beyond.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union Russia was left short of sea connections with the rest of the world. A close look at the dynamics of the development of the Russian transportation network provides important contributions to the discussion on Russian economic interests in the Caucasus, which suffered from a drastic decline in marine cargo transportation in early 1990s. Although the figures for nearly all transportation types dropped during the first years of existence of the Russian Federation, until 2001 the decrease of the turnover of the marine ports was the most dramatic.⁴⁵ Having an initial indicator of 112 million tons in 1990, it fell by 70% by 2001 to 32.2 million tons and further declined to 26.7 million tons in 2007 accounting for only 0.3% of the total transportation turnover of Russia.⁴⁶

⁴² Lebow, Richard N., (2003). “The tragic vision of politics : ethics, interests and orders”, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 273.

⁴³ A vivid example of this is the latest speech of President Medvedev’s at the ceremony of decorating the Russian soldiers who participated in the military actions against the Georgian troops in South Ossetia: “The world has changed after the August. The former world order has collapsed. Russia will firmly defend its interests and those of its citizens,” broadcasted on the Russian TV Channel “Vesti” on 01.10.2008 (available at <http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=212868&cid=1>).

⁴⁴ Finnemore, Martha and Sikkink, Kathryn, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change”, in: *International Organization, (International Organization at Fifty: Exploration and Contestation in the Study of World Politics)*, vol. 52: 4, 1998), p. 903.

⁴⁵ For instance, railroad transit of goods, although fallen by nearly 50% by 2001 has increased by 27% in 2007 and reached the figure of 1 344,2 million tons. Similarly, air transportation capacities decreased by 60% in 2001 and further by 19% in 2007. The highest and constantly increasing capacities is motor transport, which more than doubled its turnover in 2001 and further augmented by 15% in 2007.

⁴⁶ The combined data was taken from the marketing research of the Discovery Research Group cited at <http://mi.aup.ru/res/58/562949953428858.html> and the analysis of JSC “Gruzam” (available at <http://www.gruzam.ru/company/4-76.php>).

This fact is explained by the limited and costly marine foreign trade of Russia, due to the nature of its sea ports, which are located mainly in the north of the country and only operate for several months of the year because of severe climatic conditions (such as Murmansk, Nakhodka, Vladivostok, and Archangelsk). From the 1990s all the former Soviet ports in the Baltic Sea, except for St. Petersburg, and the Black Sea, except for Novorossiysk, belonged to the new independent Baltic States, Ukraine and Georgia. From this point of view, the biggest advantage Abkhazia would offer Russia, apart from quick connection to the Mediterranean and beyond, is the all-seasons operability of its ports - Sokhumi, Gagra, Gudauta, Pitsunda and Ochamchira - due to its mild subtropical climate. A broader access to the Black Sea would provide Russia with better shortcuts to major European and world customers.

Furthermore, all the major Soviet Union summer resorts are now outside of Russian reach, being shared by Ukraine and Georgia. Although the majority of the resort facilities in Abkhazia suffered from the war with Georgia, their reconstruction has been underway for a number of years with shadow support coming from Russian businesses. Now, having officially recognized Abkhazia, Russia will try to legalize its business presence there and further develop productive capacities and services in the region for its own benefit.

In addition to that, Russia can as well use the Black Sea capacities for strengthening its military presence to the South, weakened after split of the USSR Black Sea Fleet between Russia and Ukraine and losing its highly strategic Crimean territories. The first signs of this are already evident: in January 2009 Russia decided to start building the base for its Black Sea military fleet in the Abkhazian city of Ochamchira.⁴⁷ Other Abkhazian ports can be also, in principle, used for military purposes.

In addition to the transport corridors of Abkhazia, the region was famous for its natural resources: charcoal, complex ore, quicksilver, and barium sulfate. Its agricultural production included wine, essential oils, canning, meat, dairy products and fisheries, and during the Soviet Union Abkhazia was one of the main importers of tea, tobacco and citrus to Russia. It also had two hydro-power plants, which until now remain important sources of electricity supplies to Georgia proper. These capacities of Abkhazia, including quite domestic cheap labor, can also be fully utilized after its independence – a clear sign for integration of the economy of Abkhazia with that of Russia was the reconstruction of rail connections with the latter before the restart of the conflict and usage of Abkhazian construction materials for the facilities of the Sochi Olympic Winter Games in 2014.

Contrary to Abkhazia's advantageous economic state, South Ossetia's territory is quite poor from a utilization perspective. Due to its severe continental climate, the land is not suitable for large-scale and efficient agricultural production. Its natural resources are limited to tufa, construction marble, drywall and stucco, which are not fully developed yet. There had been no industrialization in the region during the Soviet times, and the region survived almost exclusively on the transfers from the centralized Soviet and regional Georgian budgets. The population of South Ossetia lived largely on the remittances coming from its *gastarbeiters* working in Russia and their kin supporters from North Ossetia. Another significant source of income, although secretive, was until recently the illegal transit of goods between Russia and Georgia, which was uncontrolled by the Georgian authorities.

⁴⁷ "Rossiya sozdast bazy voennix korablei ChF v Abkhazskom Portu Ochamchira" ("Russia will establish the base for military ships of the Black Sea Fleet in the Abkhazian port of Ochamchira"), Gazeta.ru, January 26, 2009 (http://www.gazeta.ru/news/lastnews/2009/01/26/n_1321526.shtml).

In South Ossetia another rational stimulus was guiding Russian actions – the need to completely secure control over transportation of the Caspian Sea energy resources to Europe. The oil and gas deposits of the Caspian are quite significant: according to the January 2007 Report of the US Energy Information Administration, the volumes of proven oil reserves vary from 17 to 49 billion barrels (comparable to those of Qatar and Libya) and proven gas deposits amount to 232 trillion cubic feet (comparable to Nigerian gas).⁴⁸ The Baku-Tbilisi-Supsa, Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipelines and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline, operated by British Petroleum with strong support from Europe and the US, connected the Caspian Sea with Europe via Turkey, bypassing Russia. This increased the dissatisfaction of Russia, which does not want to be outside of the oil game.⁴⁹

A competitor of these transit facilities is the Baku-Grozni-Novorossiysk pipeline passing in the North Caucasus through the recent conflict territory of Chechnya, quite close to North and South Ossetia. According to some experts, because of the operation of the pipelines through Georgia Russia loses annually around 10 million tons of oil that would have otherwise been pumped via its own pipeline: the turnover of the Baku-Supsa pipeline alone is three times more than its northern counterpart.⁵⁰

Given the benefits which oil and gas transit provides to the countries involved, the Caucasus is gradually becoming a battlefield for energy resource transportation rights, where control over the pipelines brings even more significant strategic and political leverage. Indeed, as O'Hara points out, "Who controls the export routes, controls the oil and gas; who controls the oil and gas, controls the Heartland",⁵¹ the latter being Europe. The power to turn on and off the pipelines' valves at will became a matter of increased competition in the Caucasian and Caspian region and of concern to the West.

Existence of the hot spots in the Caucasus and the high susceptibility of pipelines to insurgent attacks caused serious concern for the owners and lobbyists of the pipelines from the very beginning of their construction. Renewed hostilities in Georgia revealed how vulnerable the oil transit is: the BP leadership decreased twice the volumes of oil passing through Georgia compared to before the conflict and even shut down its pipelines in August 2008, resuming it only after hostilities had ceased. As a result of the war in South Ossetia, and having been seriously concerned with the fate of its own oil revenues, Azerbaijan started negotiations with Russia to double the volumes of oil transit from the Caspian via the northern route. According to some estimates, the complete transfer of the oil current to the Baku-Novorossiysk pipeline would bring Russia \$1.3 million per month.⁵² Despite being worth rather a small amount, this rerouting coupled with the transit of other energy resources,

⁴⁸ The US Energy Information Administration report on the Caspian Sea Region (available at <http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/Caspian/Background.html>).

⁴⁹ One of the recent Russian successes in the oil field was signature of a major agreement with Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan in December 2007 to transit their oil and gas through the Russian territory by a future pipeline.

⁵⁰ Kharitonova, N. "Marshruty Transportirovki Azerbajdzhanskoi Nefti – Istochnik Politicheskix Raznoglasiy ns Mejdunarodnom Urovne" (Transportation Routes of the Azerbaijan Oil – a Source of Political Disputes on International Level), policy brief, 2006, in: *Information-analytical Agency of the Center for the Studies of Public-Political Processes on the Post-Soviet Space*. (available from www.kreml.org/opinions/112939144).

⁵¹ O'Hara, S.L. "Great Game or Grubby Game? The Struggle for Control over the Caspian", in Paul Le Billon (ed.). "The Geopolitics of Resource Wars. Resource Dependence, Governance and Violence" (Frank Cass, 2005), p. 148.

⁵² Hanson, Philip, "The August 2008 Conflict: Economic Consequences for Russia", *Chatham House Policy Brief*, REP BN 08/06, 2008 (available from http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/files/12219_0908rep_hanson.pdf).

would leave the control over oil flows within the hands of Moscow and nearly completely out of the reach of the West.

Conclusion

When separation between the two logics occurs, states suffer from their related drawbacks: interventions guided entirely by the logic of appropriateness, and taken on the basis of the specific identities of interveners, makes it difficult to correctly anticipate the results such actions would bring in both the long and short terms. Similarly, when intervening solely on the basis of self-benefits relevant to the logic of expected circumstances, states face problems on a much larger scale, especially when their actions infringe the moral laws and normative standards of the society they are part of. When combined, however, the two logics complement each other and have the propensity of bringing the best results to states.

The “hat of appropriateness” would help the intervener to find justifiable excuses for its actions, both domestically and internationally. At home, this logic helps interventions look more legitimate and moral which would lessen the power of local veto-players to block their country’s foreign actions and decrease the opposition of other states it would otherwise face. This is especially true in relation to the casualties that interveners incur – they have to justify to their fellow-citizens that the death of their family members in the armed forces would serve the highest common (at least on the domestic scale) good.

Through appealing to a higher international authority, as well as norms and moral principles shared by the majority of states, the logic of appropriateness brings in the “...require[d] ... stamp of institutional legitimacy upon which long-term measures depend”⁵³ by internationalizing the legitimacy of intervention outcomes. Indeed, as Fenwick noted, “[w]hat would be arbitrary for the individual state would in the case of the whole body of states be no more than the exercise of the higher right of the community to maintain law and order and to see to the observance by separate states of their obligations as members of the community”⁵⁴

The “hat of expected consequences”, on the other hand, would assure clarity of interveners’ agendas and result-oriented actions. It would make the interveners more determined in pursuit of their high stakes at high costs, since, as state governments undertaking interventions, they are at all times accountable to domestic constituencies and taxpayers. The logic of expected consequences would make interveners act more “wholeheartedly” to achieve best results since they would see the benefits their actions would bring them.

As with the logic of appropriateness, it will also help give good reasons for the deaths of fellow-countrymen by the benefits their deaths would bring each and every living citizen. Similarly, if the benefits are not high enough or vague to justify expenses, this logic would prevent otherwise costly and unnecessary interventions, responsible for the loss of human lives and damage to a country’s international prestige and domestic standing of the intervener’s government.

⁵³ Carment, David and Harvey, Frank, “Using Force to Prevent Ethnic Violence: An Evaluation of Theory and Evidence”, (Westport, Connecticut, London: Praeger Studies on Ethnic and National Identities in Politics, 2001), p. 129.

⁵⁴ Fenwick, Charles G., (1945). “Intervention: Individual and Collective”, in: *The American Journal of International Law*, vol. 39:4, 1945, p. 663.

