

## The August 2008 war in Georgia: from ethnic conflict to border wars

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Following the five days' war between Georgia and Russia, a highly politicized debate began about 'who started the war'. While this debate is far from over, it is important to analyse whether the 2008 war marks an important evolution in the series of conflicts that started in the Caucasus simultaneously with the weakening and collapse of the Soviet Union. While in the late 1980s and early 1990s the conflicts were the result of mass mobilization around the banner of the nation, marking a revolutionary period of paradigm shifts, the 2008 war was much closer to classical wars between states and their centrally commanded armies. The direct Russian military intervention, Moscow's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as 'independent' states, further modifies the nature of the Caucasus conflicts. The 2008 war also reveals how much the Georgian state has evolved since the Rose Revolution, from one described as 'weak state' to a state capable of surviving a military defeat without internal collapse.

**Keywords:** war; ethnic conflict; geopolitics; minorities; sovereignty; nationalism

### Introduction

The attention of world leaders and the public was focused on Beijing on 8 August 2008, to witness the opening of the 29th Olympic Games, broadcast across the world as the new power of an old empire. The programmes were interrupted, and news flashes followed about a war erupting in the far away Caucasus. The Caucasus briefly captured global attention as a new conflict erupted in Georgia. Few people had heard about Tskhinvali, or South Ossetia, when news bulletins reported the attempt by the Georgian army to take control of Tskhinvali, the main urban centre of South Ossetia, illustrated with footage of the well-armed Georgian military firing multiple-grenade launchers into the town. What made this 'little war' so sensitive was that it was a neighbour of Russia, a continent-sized country and a world power. It also involved Georgia, a country closely allied with the US and host to a significant number of US military personnel. A major pipeline from the Azerbaijani capital, Baku, crossing Georgia and Turkey to the Turkish Mediterranean port of Ceyhan, added to the strategic dimension of this region and the stakes of the conflict.

Soon enough, the Russian army poured into South Ossetia and Georgia, which changed the nature of the war. It was no longer a local dispute between Caucasus mountain villages, but a major conflict involving a major power: that of Russia under Putin. It did not take long for the Russian forces, vastly superior in numbers and arms, to push the Georgian army out of South Ossetia and advance towards strategic Georgian positions. At one point, Russian tanks were within one hour of the Georgian capital. Without insistent Western pressure to cease hostilities, it is difficult to anticipate what the Russian General Staff may have done. On 12 August 2008, under dynamic French mediation, the French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, declared a ceasefire agreement. The Russian leadership insisted on adding additional clauses (the fifth

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and sixth points of the declaration), to ensure it could continue its ‘security’ sweeps. The Russian army seized further strategic points and destroyed Georgian military installations (Kramer 2008). The ceasefire agreement did not put an immediate end to the acts of violence – Georgian villages continued to be attacked and civilians were expelled from their houses – nor to the political surprises that followed. On 26 August 2008, Moscow officially recognized South Ossetia, as well as Abkhazia, as independent states.

Since the conflict, the controversy has persisted about the circumstances in which the ‘August war’ erupted. Russia accused Georgia of having committed ‘genocide’ in South Ossetia, of having attacked lightly armed Russian peacekeeping troops stationed in South Ossetia, and killing and injuring dozens of them. In this narrative the role of Russia was the defence of the Ossetian people, many of whom are holders of Russian passports. On the other hand, the Georgian authorities argued that the war was triggered by Russian troop movements from North Ossetia (part of the Russian Federation) into South Ossetia. Investigative journalists, as well as human rights centres, have carried out studies to determine the responsibilities for starting the war, as well as the war crimes committed during the military operations. The Georgian parliament has launched hearings, and the European Union began an independent investigation, headed by the Swiss diplomat Heidi Tagliavini, to clarify responsibilities for the war.

As much as it is important to study what happened in the days preceding and following the August war, it is equally important to discuss how the August 2008 events have changed the nature of conflict in the Caucasus. This was not yet another episode of confrontation between the central Georgian authorities and separatist entities. Nor is the direct involvement of the Russian military in the conflict the only element of a changing paradigm. The August 2008 war moved the conflicts in the Caucasus from ethnic conflicts powered by mass nationalist mobilization, to conflicts between centralized state structures around borders and territorial control. This article starts with a short description of the conflicts between the Georgian state, on the one hand, and Ossetians and Abkhazians on the other, starting in the late 1980s. The circumstances of the August war will then be discussed in some detail. Finally, the article draws conclusions on how the August 2008 events changed the dynamics of conflict, as well as the nature of conflict resolution.

### **Defining the conflicts: nationalism or separatism?**

When did the latest Georgian–South Ossetian war start? Was it on the night of 7 August 2008? Or, should we look back to the 1920s to understand the dynamics of the conflict, as a US Congressional Report suggests in its own analysis of the 2008 events (Nichol 2008, p. 2)? The August 2008 war started on the night of 7 August following an increase in the intensity of military operations, including a major ground attack on Tskhinvali. However, South Ossetia was a far from peaceful region before then. Although it is inadequate to trace the current conflict to the nineteenth century or even to the first decades of the twentieth century, it is plausible to look at the late 1980s, when the collapse of the Soviet Union and competing national projects emerged and tried to fill the political void that was left behind.

Three short comments on the wars in Georgia that erupted at the time of the Soviet collapse are pertinent here. First, the Georgian national movement, with its various tendencies, articulated its struggle for independence against the centre of Soviet power, against Moscow. Whether it was Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the leader of the reformist coalition ‘Round Table – Free Georgia’ and later the first President of Georgia, or Giorgi Chanturia and Irakli Tsereteli, leaders of the opposition National Congress, all saw political struggles in the early 1990s through the prism of the anti-Soviet struggle. In the words of Ghia Nodia:

Georgia's nationalist movement was probably the most radical in style in the former Soviet Union, at least among the movements at the union republic level. However, this radicalism was primarily targeted at the imperial centre, not ethnic minorities. For Georgians, the Abkhazian problem did not exist on its own – it was merely a corollary of the problem of 'the empire vs. Georgia'. (Nodia 1997, p. 30)

In their efforts to attain national liberation, Georgian leaders disregarded the grievances of the national minorities. They expected ethnic groups such as the Abkhazians or the Ossetians to follow them rather than articulate independent positions, even less demands that could have slowed down Georgia's drive to independence from the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, national minorities, particularly the Ossetians and the Abkhazians who enjoyed different degrees of autonomy, feared that the Georgian national movement would undermine the political, economic, linguistic and cultural rights they enjoyed under Soviet rule. As a result, they progressively took a conservative stand in favour of preserving the Soviet state. From the perspective of the Georgian national movement, the political stand of Abkhazians and the Ossetians served Moscow. They were seen as a tool of the KGB. The result was the emergence of a triangular struggle: Georgia fighting the Soviet Union for its national liberation; Moscow fighting the Georgian drive for secession; leaders of autonomous Abkhazia and South Ossetia trying to defend their political rights against Georgian nationalism and seeking the protection of Moscow (Cheterian 2008, pp. 171–72).<sup>1</sup>

Second, this period witnessed the collapse of existing political institutions, as well as the emergence of new ones. However, it is important to underline that in the early 1990s until the final collapse of the USSR in December 1991, national independence was a political project, and not a reality. Even after the end of the Soviet Union, it took years to build Georgian statehood. It could be argued that this project was realized only after the Rose Revolution in 2003. Therefore, during the war in South Ossetia and Abkhazia in the early 1990s, Georgia had just begun to construct its state structures, including its armed forces, and the conflicts were led by semi-official armed formations inspired by national ideology and often motivated by criminal interests (Shelley 2007).

Finally, the conflicts in Georgia in the early 1990s were characterized by mass mobilization and clashes between popular movements. This is also true of the mobilization in neighbouring Armenia, Azerbaijan and Chechnya during the same period. In the Balkans, established elites and elements of the *nomenklatura* manipulated the masses through nationalist ideologies to create a new legitimacy for their own power. In Central Asia, the old *nomenklatura* simply changed its skin and continued to rule as 'nationalized' elites. In the Caucasus, mass mobilization under nationalist slogans overthrew the ruling Communist *nomenklatura* and replaced them with former dissidents and intellectuals. The conflicts in the Caucasus involved clashes between mass mobilized movements attempting to define their strength, their territory and their reach.

During most of the 1990s the Georgian authorities employed ambivalent policies towards what became known as the *de facto* republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. On one level, the Shevardnadze administration promised a peaceful, negotiated solution to the conflicts, and promised broad autonomy. On the other hand, regular threats were issued when the *de facto* authorities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia rejected Georgian offers. Here, one should distinguish between the case of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Tbilisi rightly considered Abkhazia as the most difficult case and strategically the more important one. Tbilisi's conclusion was – to the regret of many mediating international organizations – to first address the Abkhazian issue, largely ignoring South Ossetia. The result was a concentration of Georgian official efforts on resolving the Abkhazian knot, while tension in and around South Ossetia eased to a large degree, and regular exchanges between Ossetians and neighbouring Georgian villages neared normal

levels by the end of the 1990s. In Abkhazia, two additional attempts to use force in 1998 and 2001 failed, which served to further radicalize the Abkhazians' position.<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that in both 1998 and 2001, the attacks against Abkhazia were carried out by proxy forces – partisans – supported by the Georgian Interior Ministry, but did not involve official Georgian forces. In 1998, the fighting was initiated by the White Legion and Forest Brothers – two guerrilla groups active in the Gali region, and in 2001 the attack from Kodori Gorge in the direction of Sukhumi was led by Chechen rebel Ruslan Gelayev.

The coming to power of Putin and Saakashvili changed the policies of Moscow and Tbilisi towards the Caucasus region, and nurtured the preconditions for new clashes. Both leaders wanted to strengthen their respective states. Putin wanted to arrest the retreat of Russian power. Saakashvili wanted the reunification of Georgia and the return of territories lost by previous Georgian administrations. Putin strengthened the grip of the Russian *siloviki* (the Russian power ministries) over South Ossetia, and tried to expand Russian influence over the Abkhazian *de facto* authorities, although with less success.<sup>3</sup>

The Rose Revolution was a project that aimed to transform Georgia. Saakashvili had a dual project – modernizing Georgia and bringing territorial reunification. The best expression of this double project was offered when the Georgian president, during an official opening of a portion of a newly-built highway, made the following comment:

This is a historic day because for the first time in Georgia, in our history, a modern, high-quality, world-standard motorway is being built that will link Tbilisi and Tskhinvali in 2008 ... During the first term of our presidency, my presidency, I am planning to complete Tbilisi-Tskhinvali highway and during the second term finally to complete the Tbilisi-Sukhumi motorway. So, now I declare the construction of the Tbilisi-Tskhinvali-Sukhumi motorway open. Today is 15 March 2006. In 2008, we will travel to Tskhinvali by this road, and in 2010, or at the beginning of 2011 at the latest, this road will take us to Sukhumi, although I expect to arrive in Sukhumi much earlier than that.<sup>4</sup>

Saakashvili not only built motorways, but also a modern army. Two modern military bases were strategically placed in Senaki, near Abkhazia, and in Gori near South Ossetia. Each of these bases housed a brigade, with a capacity of 3000 soldiers (Corso 2007). Beginning in 2004, Georgia dramatically increased its military budget. During the last year of Shevardnadze's administration in 2003, the Georgian defence budget was no more than US\$50 million; in 2007 it was 1 billion laris, or the equivalent of US\$600 million. One-quarter of the state budget went on the military effort (Basilaia 2007). The 2008 defence budget reached the impressive US\$1 billion threshold.<sup>5</sup> The official explanation for this sharp increase in the defence budget was to upgrade the Georgian military to NATO standards and to take Georgia one step closer to membership. The Georgian Defence Ministry procured a large number of weapons, including T-72 battle tanks, artillery pieces of various calibres, Israeli-made drones and anti-air systems. Georgia collaborated with the US in training programmes and received valuable equipment from Washington, including military helicopters (Cheterian 2007, Mampaey 2008).

Georgia also tried to bring various provinces under central control. In May 2004, just a few months after Saakashvili took power, military pressure from outside and pro-government activists from inside forced Aslan Abashidze to leave Achara, an autonomous republic within Georgia on the Turkish border. From July–August in the same year, pressure from Tbilisi on South Ossetia's *de facto* authorities led to violent clashes leading to dozens of victims. Tbilisi backed down without bringing any change on the ground. The Saakashvili administration pushed for an 'alternative government' in South Ossetia, loyal to Tbilisi, led by Dmitri Sanakoev, to isolate the Moscow-sponsored government of Eduard Kokoity. In 2006, Georgian troops entered the Kodori Gorge in Abkhazia in a police operation to remove a local Georgian rebel, and a pro-Georgian Abkhazian government in exile was established there. The region was

immediately renamed 'Upper Abkhazia'. These were clear signals that the Georgian intention went beyond replacing a local rebel. It was a step toward Georgia's reunification.

Politically, Georgia wanted to weaken Russian influence by its own integration into the Euro-Atlantic alliance, and by using pressure in international forums for the withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers from the conflict zones. The Georgian authorities were hastily trying to bring change on the ground, in the process they under-estimated the risks they were taking.

### The eruption of war

There were increasing clashes between Georgian troops and South Ossetian paramilitaries in and around Tskhinvali for at least a week before 7 August 2008. On 1 August, five Georgian peacekeepers were wounded in a bomb attack attributed to Ossetian paramilitaries. Heavy fighting in Tskhinvali led to the death of six Ossetians and the wounding of 15 others later that night (International Crisis Group 2008, p. 2). More clashes were reported on 6 August, with numerous wounded on both sides. The Ossetian authorities began evacuating civilians from Tskhinvali, fearing an escalation of violence. Late on 7 August, a massive artillery attack began from the Georgian positions on Tskhinvali, followed by a ground attack with tanks and armoured vehicles, which soon reached the centre of the city. Brigadier-General Mamuka Kurashvili, the chief of peacekeeping operations at the Georgian Defence Ministry, declared that the government had 'decided to restore constitutional order' in South Ossetia.<sup>6</sup> Early on 8 August, the Georgian president announced that several regions of South Ossetia were 'already liberated' by Georgian forces', including 'Znauri, Tsinagari, as well as the villages of Dmenisi, Gromi and Khetagurovo. He added that most 'of Tskhinvali is now liberated and fighting is ongoing in the center of Tskhinvali'.<sup>7</sup> Georgian Prime Minister, Lado Gurgenzidze, argued that the reason for Georgian military action in South Ossetia was an attack on Georgian villages in the region: 'Government troops were forced to launch measures for the establishment of peace in the region after separatist forces responded to President Saakashvili's peace initiatives by shelling Georgian villages.'<sup>8</sup> The South Ossetia *de facto* President, Eduard Kokoity, declared that Tskhinvali was being attacked from all directions: 'The storming of Tskhinvali has started' he declared (Walker 2008).

Temur Yakobashvili, the Georgian Minister of State for Reintegration, defined two objectives for the military operation in Tskhinvali:

To put an end to the pockets of armed resistance, and to close down the Roki tunnel which has become the crossing point of multiple trafficking, of drugs, arms and counterfeit currency, before it transforms the enclave into a criminal black hole. (Mandeville 2008, p. 7)

By midday on 8 August, the Georgian President declared that Georgian troops had 'liberated most of South Ossetia'. The Georgian government announced that it would recall its 2000 troops from Iraq to resist the Russian invasion. The Georgian media reported that advancing Georgian forces were poised to take control of the Roki tunnel.<sup>9</sup> In the first few days the Georgian official narrative described the goal in terms of a change in the military and political realities on the ground. Whether it was an act of self-defence is debatable.

Already on 8 August, some seven hours after the start of the Georgian attack on Tskhinvali, Russian troops were pouring through the Roki tunnel to engage Georgian forces. During the next 48 hours, Russian tank columns engaged Georgian troops in and around Tskhinvali, while Russian fighter-bombers attacked Georgian support lines. On 10 August, Russian forces succeeded in pushing the Georgian troops out of Tskhinvali.<sup>10</sup> The Russian air force attacked military targets in Gori, Vaziani, Senaki and Poti, and destroyed Georgian anti-aircraft defences, communication systems and radars, as well as most of the Georgian naval forces. The



Russian air force recognized the loss of four warplanes, including a Tupolev-22 strategic bomber. Georgian military sources say this number is under-estimated, and claim that 19–20 Russian warplanes were either shot down or seriously damaged.<sup>11</sup> A second front was opened when Russian troops, supported by Abkhazian forces, occupied Kodori Gorge, a region inside the administrative borders of what was Soviet Abkhazia, but left under Georgian control in the aftermath of the Abkhazian-Georgian war of 1992–1993. Russian troops also attacked and took the towns of Zugdidi to the south of Abkhazia (Harding and Traynor 2008). Gori was captured on 13 August, thereby cutting the country in two.

The Georgian authorities dispute Russian claims that the war was triggered by a direct Georgian attack on Tskhinvali in an attempt to seize the rest of South Ossetia outside Georgian control. The Georgian<sup>12</sup> authorities insist that their attack on South Ossetia was provoked by reports they had received concerning the movement of a large number of Russian military vehicles from North Ossetia into South Ossetian territories. To support its claims, Georgian officials released transcripts of Russian mobile telephone conversations with an Ossetian border guard at Roki tunnel, which suggested Russian military columns were moving towards South Ossetia before the Georgian attack. Five days after the start of the hostilities, and thanks to the efforts of French President Nicholas Sarkozy, a ceasefire agreement was reached on 12 August 2008. The agreement was first signed by the Georgian President on 15 August; the following day, it was signed by Russian President Medvedev. Military operations were halted within the next few days. Russia finally withdrew its troops from regions outside the borders of South Ossetia and Abkhazia on 8 October, following the introduction of the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM).

### **Contested narratives: ‘who started the war?’**

The question of who was the aggressor in the August war has become a subject of heated controversy. Both inside Georgia and on the international scene there have been several calls for an investigation. The first prominent Georgian politician to raise the issue, as early as 18 August 2008, was Nino Burjanadze, former Speaker of the Georgian parliament. Burjanadze declared that following the Russian military withdrawal, the Georgian leadership would face ‘tough questions’ about the circumstances in which the war was launched.<sup>13</sup> Burjanadze, a long-time political ally of Saakashvili, split with him in April 2008, just prior to the May 2008 parliamentary elections. The European Union has launched a commission to study the circumstances leading to the conflict, headed by Swiss diplomat Heidi Tagliavini (Runner 2008). The Georgian parliament set up an ad hoc parliamentary commission to investigate the war, headed by a member of the Georgian parliament, Paata Davitaia.<sup>14</sup>

The Russian version is relatively straightforward. Georgian troops ‘invaded’ South Ossetia, firing indiscriminately on the civilian population, many of whom hold Russian citizenship, as well as on Russian peacekeepers stationed in and around Tskhinvali. The Russian leadership described the Georgian operation in South Ossetia as ‘genocide’, and declared that more than 2000 civilians were killed in Tskhinvali by Georgian troops. South Ossetian leader Eduard Kokoity put the figure of civilian victims at 1400. The Russian prosecutor’s office launched its own investigation to verify these accusations. Later reports by Human Rights Watch confirmed violations of international humanitarian law by the Georgian military, but found no evidence for the high numbers of victims publicized by the Russian side (Human Rights Watch 2009, pp. 71–78).

Interestingly, Russia argued that its military intervention was to save civilians from military aggression, very much in line with NATO’s arguments for ‘humanitarian interventions’ in Kosovo. Russia felt that its position in the South Caucasus, and its prestige as a great power,

was under threat. The Russian reaction was a condensed version of what Moscow condemned Western powers for in Kosovo: massive violation of human rights by the state (in this case, Georgia), which led to the intervention of a great power to protect civilians, culminating in recognition of the right of the oppressed minorities to statehood. In the case of Kosovo, this narrative unfolded over a decade. In the case of Russian policy towards Abkhazia and South Ossetia, three weeks were enough to settle the issue.

The Georgian narrative was more complex. Georgian authorities justified their military intervention in South Ossetia, initially at least, as a response to the escalation of violence by South Ossetian militias. Some reports argue that the bomb attack on 1 August, which wounded five Georgian interior ministry officers, was the beginning of the conflict. Tbilisi accused Russia of direct intervention to support the Ossetian armed formations. Georgian officials declare that reports of approximately 150 Russian military vehicles crossing the Roki tunnel towards the Georgian village of Kurta, just north of Tskhinvali where the pro-Georgian South Ossetian administration was situated, was the reason behind Georgian military action. On 13 August, President Saakashvili declared:

I am sickened by the speculation that Georgia started anything . . . We clearly responded to the Russians . . . The point here is that around 11 o'clock, Russian tanks started to move into Georgian territory, 150 at first. And that was a clear-cut invasion. That was the moment when we started to open fire with artillery, because otherwise they would have crossed the bridge and moved into Tskhinvali. (Clover 2008)

According to the official Georgian narrative, it was the Russian attack on Georgian troops already inside Tskhinvali that caused the massive destruction and most of the civilian casualties.

The official Georgian version has a number of weaknesses. From a strictly military perspective, it makes no sense to respond to military movements coming from mountain passes by attacking a city of 30,000 inhabitants at the foot of the mountains. The Georgian troops were bogged down in Tskhinvali and lost valuable time there instead of blocking the mountain passes. This exposed the Georgian forces to Russian air-attacks, while the Russian forces crossed the mountainous terrain unhindered and reached the fields around Tskhinvali where they could use their superior armoured forces to their full capacity. The Georgian narrative has also come under criticism from a number of Western media outlets, which reported that the Georgian troops initiated massive artillery fire and then an attack by tanks to capture Tskhinvali on the night of 7 August. These reports criticized the Georgian military for indiscriminate fire by Grad multiple rocket-launchers on Tskhinvali, which are designed for saturation shelling and lack precision (Milne 2008, Whewell 2008).<sup>15</sup> More damaging to the Georgian version was the leaking of confidential information from two OSCE military observers, who were based in South Ossetia and who briefed Western diplomats on several occasions. They confirmed that a Georgian military build-up to the south of Tskhinvali had started by the early afternoon of 7 August, and that the Georgian attack aimed to capture Tskhinvali. One of the two officers, Ryan Grist, a retired British Army captain, was quoted in the *New York Times*:

It was clear to me that the attack was completely indiscriminate and disproportionate to any, if indeed there had been any, provocation, . . . the attack was clearly, in my mind, an indiscriminate attack on the town, as a town. (Chivers and Barry 2008)

US Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Eric S. Edelman, in his testimony before the Defense Senate Armed Services Committee, also presented a chronology which stated – after provocation from South Ossetian militia – it was the Georgian ground forces that initiated an attack on 7 August. He added:

The Georgian leadership's decision to employ force in the conflict zone was unwise. Although much is still unclear, it appears the Georgians conducted what they thought was a limited military

operation with the political aim of restoring Georgian sovereignty over South Ossetia to eliminate the harassing fire from the South Ossetian separatists on Georgian civilians. This operation was hastily planned and implemented'.<sup>16</sup>

### Five days of war

The Georgian military concentrated the bulk of their forces to take the South Ossetian capital Tskhinvali, while a small number of troops were sent to secure the strategic passes in the highlands. In the early days of August, half of the Georgian fighting force – some 13,000 Georgian soldiers took part in the fighting (Lomsadze 2008) – with most of its advanced armour and artillery systems deployed near South Ossetia. The Georgian military's plan consisted of moving the bulk of its forces into Tskhinvali, with a secondary force moving north to cut off the Roki tunnel. Georgian military leadership planned to execute these objectives in a matter of hours in order to secure the South Ossetian capital, and to block any possible reinforcements by North Ossetian volunteers.<sup>17</sup> Such a military scenario clearly excluded the possibility of confrontation with a major Russian military force, at least for two or three days after the start of the military operations, enough time to control the strategic tunnels and passes. The Georgian forces had to face some 3000 South Ossetian militias, plus some 500 lightly armed Russian peacekeepers based in Tskhinvali. Even a highly professional army would have had difficulties executing this *blitzkrieg*.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the Georgian plan had two fundamental flaws. First, they pushed their army into an urban area. Securing a town is time consuming and exposes the invading armoured forces to light anti-tank weapons. The strategic tunnels were left to a smaller force, which suggested this was considered a secondary objective. Second, the Georgian planners did not expect a rapid and overwhelming Russian reaction (Giragosian 2008). In fact, the Georgian Defence Ministry thought Russia would not enter into a direct military confrontation at all, but would choose to provide support to the Ossetian militia. Alexander Lomaia declared: 'We expected that the Russians would fight with the hands of the separatists' (Lomsadze 2008). However, international observers, who were alarmed by the military build-up in the South Ossetia conflict region, did not doubt that any major military offensive from the Georgian side would lead to a Russo-Georgian war (Antonenko 2008).

After the ground attack on Tskhinvali started, the Georgian army succeeded in entering the town and reaching its centre, but was pinned down by Ossetian militias fighting with infantry weapons. Georgian efforts to secure the road linking Tskhinvali with North Ossetia faced fierce resistance and failed to reach their target. This provided the 58th Russian army with a secure passage from the Caucasian heights to the theatre of operations. Was the hasty Georgian decision to impose its constitutional order over South Ossetia linked with the US elections and the possibility of the Republican Party losing power in Washington? Georgia invested heavily in its alliance with the Bush administration. Georgian troops served in Kosovo as well as in Iraq, where, before their withdrawal following the August 2008 events, they had 2000 soldiers. They were the third largest contingent following the US and the UK. However, Georgia did not receive any strategic dividends as a result. Georgia did not receive a firm promise that it would join NATO in the near future. Georgia's Membership Action Plan (MAP) was rejected during the NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008. Georgian co-operation with Washington was closely linked with the Bush administration and its policies, hence the urgency felt among influential circles in Tbilisi to bring change to the conflict zones before Georgia lost its friends in Washington. The Georgian authorities were frustrated with negotiations with Russia that did not yield any results. Russian influence in the two *de facto* republics had increased, especially in South Ossetia.<sup>19</sup> The Georgian authorities knew that any military action was a serious risk, but they also hoped to change the status quo, which was not working to their advantage.



However, the Georgian calculations counted on a high performance from its armed forces. The Georgian military had received training and new equipment during the previous four years, yet they lacked any fighting experience. It was unknown how they would perform in a real battle. Moreover, and in spite of the multiple US-sponsored training programmes, the Georgian forces never received the type of training that would enable them to launch major military operations. Ronald Magnum, a retired US Army General, in charge of the US-backed Georgia Defence Reform Programme, rejects Russian accusations that US military co-operation provided Georgia with military capacity for the summer 2008 attacks. 'The US never provided the combined arms training [to the Georgian armed forces]. The Georgians did not have a cohesive combat force,' necessary for the type of operation launched in August 2008. He added: 'What the Georgians did in Iraq was checkpoint and convoy operations. This did not prepare them for modern military operations.'<sup>20</sup> The same idea can be found in the testimony of Eric S. Edelman, who declared that 'the Georgian armed forces were never trained or equipped by the U.S. to fight the Russians'.<sup>21</sup>

The Georgian military planners failed to evaluate correctly the Russian military build-up and Russian military plans. According to Irakli Aladashvili, a military expert: 'The biggest Georgian mistake in the war was not to avoid it.' The Georgian side 'did not imagine that the Russian military would directly intervene, in a massive way'.<sup>22</sup> That is why the Georgian military aimed to capture Tskhinvali in 24 hours after the start of combat activities. Reaching the mountain passes and the tunnels within 48 hours was based on the assumption that the Russian army would not intervene. Neither of these objectives was reached because the basic assumption proved to be faulty. Russia reacted immediately to the Georgian military movements, and both its direct engagement in the battle and the speed of its military deployment surprised the Georgian military. The Russian direct engagement in the conflict exposed Western Georgia and made it impossible to defend. The Georgian leadership was hoping for more direct assistance from the West, especially from the US, as did some of the public and the Georgian military. A Georgian reporter asked:

On 8, 9 and 10 August, troops standing on the front line at Karaleti, Meghvrekisi and Ergneti were receiving information that US forces in the form of cruisers and fighters would soon be assisting them. I have often been asked, why did the West betray us? Where is the promised US military assistance? So did we start a war with Russia by ourselves?<sup>23</sup>

### **'The Russian trap'**

The Russian military was evidently ready for an eventual war with the Georgian armed forces. By all accounts, the Russian 58th Army started moving into South Ossetia in the early hours of 8 August, within hours of the Georgian attack on Tskhinvali. This means the Russian leadership was seriously preparing for an eventual war with its southern neighbour. Some Georgian opposition figures and Western diplomats go even further, suggesting that Russia prepared a trap in which the Georgians were snared. This narrative acknowledges that it was the Georgian side that unleashed the hostilities, but within the context of 'provocations' and 'mistakes'. Matthew Bryza, a State Department envoy to the South Caucasus declared: 'I did indeed advise the Georgian leadership not to get drawn into a trap. That was our consistent advice for several years' (Clover 2008). The rapid Russian intervention, hours after the start of the Georgian offensive on Tskhinvali, has reinforced the impression among a number of analysts that the Russian military had plans to attack Georgia and was waiting for a pretext. 'What happened in South Ossetia was a provocation prepared in Russia a long time ago' declared Nino Burjanadze in an interview, but added 'the problem is that our government led us into the trap'.<sup>24</sup>

The Russian leadership was increasingly aggressive towards Georgia, starting from early 2008. The August war came at a moment of acute tension between Russia and the West. The Russian leadership was especially bitter about recent NATO plans to consider Georgian and Ukrainian membership, as well as a US decision to install an anti-ballistic missile shield in the Czech Republic and Poland. The unilateral declaration of Kosovan independence and its immediate recognition by the US and key European states was another major political controversy between the Kremlin and Western capitals. Without taking into account the events of Kosovo in February 2008, it is difficult to understand the Russo–Georgian war six months later.

The Russian military warnings – or provocations – repeatedly multiplied in the spring and early summer of 2008. In April, 3000 Russian military were sent to Abkhazia, officially on a humanitarian mission to repair the Abkhazian railroad. In the same month, a Russian MiG-29 shot down an Israeli-made Georgian drone over Abkhazia. On 8 July, a day before the visit of US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, to Georgia, two Russian military planes violated Georgian airspace.<sup>25</sup> The most important Russian signal was the Kavkaz-2008 military exercises in July 2008 along the whole chain of the northern side of the North Caucasus, neighbouring Georgia. These exercises aimed to prepare the Russian armed forces to intervene and assist Russian peacekeeping troops in South Ossetia from an eventual Georgian attempt to reach the border and close the mountain passes (Mukhin 2008).

### **Mixed messages from Washington?**

The Russian military manoeuvres, Kavkaz – 2008, coincided with joint US–Georgian war games under the title ‘Immediate Response – 2008’, held at Vaziani air base near Tbilisi in the second half of July. Some 1000 US military and 1630 Georgian troops took part in the exercises.<sup>26</sup> A week later, that is during the military escalation in South Ossetia, there were at least 130 American officers present in Georgia. The US military must have known about the military preparations on the Georgian side. There were satellite pictures of the Russian military build-up in North Ossetia. The question is why Washington failed to intervene at the right moment to stop the Georgian military adventure and the humiliation of a US ally, as well as what became a blow to US prestige.

The American side sent mixed messages to the Georgian leadership. US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, visited Georgia on 9 July, less than a month before the hostilities. US diplomatic sources say that during this visit the American official warned Saakashvili not to use force and not to provoke Russia (Cooper and Shanker, 2008). However, the Georgian leadership had a different interpretation of Rice’s visit: it represented US support for Georgian NATO membership and strengthened military co-operation between the two countries. It was proof that Georgia enjoyed the support of American power.

However, the conflict in the Caucasus reflected negatively on American power and prestige. American political influence was seriously undermined by the August war. The first victim could be any future oil and gas projects promoted by the US. Following the war, the US Vice-President, Dick Cheney, visited the region, beginning in Baku, the Azerbaijani capital. The reception of the highest-ranking American politician to Azerbaijan was lukewarm. Cheney was received at the airport by the First Deputy-Prime Minister, Yagub Eyubov, while his discussions on the future Nabucco project<sup>27</sup> did not receive any confirmation from President Ilham Aliiev. A Russian newspaper (predictably) qualified Cheney’s visit to Azerbaijan as a ‘complete failure’ (Gabuev 2008). The US geopolitical withdrawal from the region seems to continue; in early February 2009, under Russian pressure and promises for financial support, Kyrgyzstan declared its intention to close a large US airbase near Manas airport.<sup>28</sup> Manas airport plays a key role in logistical support for the US military effort in Afghanistan.

### The failure of diplomacy

The August war was a failure of the international mediators to find a negotiated and peaceful solution to the conflicts in the Caucasus. Eric Fournier, French Ambassador to Georgia, declared that ‘the structures in charge of a peaceful solution of the conflicts did not do all that was necessary to avoid the war’.<sup>29</sup> The United Nations Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) was mandated to mediate between the Abkhazian and the Georgian leaderships, and the OSCE Mission in Georgia was in charge of the Ossetian–Georgian conflict. International organizations attempted to reach a solution within the framework of the territorial integrity of states, which led them, inevitably, to support the Georgian position over the Abkhazian and Ossetian perspectives. Despite all their efforts, the diplomats in charge of these missions have never had enough power and international support to broker a peace agreement. Great powers’ military and economic interests did not always work hand-in-hand with the UN and OSCE diplomatic solutions. Western oil interests, the US desire to limit Russian influence, and military co-operation with Georgia on the ‘war on terror’, empowered Tbilisi to abandon diplomacy and seek a solution by other means. Two American observers declared that under Saakashvili:

... the United States backed reuniting Georgia’s territorial integrity, rather than acting as an honest broker to resolve the frozen conflicts with South Ossetia and Abkhazia ... U.S. reluctance to encourage Georgia to consider alternative sovereign formulas to resolve the frozen conflicts further emboldened Georgian hardliners. (Cooley and Mitchell, 2009, p. 28)

The Georgian leadership itself was not clear about its strategic choice for conflict resolution. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Georgian leadership used force to regulate ethnic conflicts, with catastrophic results. Following the ceasefire agreements, former president Shevardnadze was ambivalent about his strategy for conflict resolution: while he negotiated with the Abkhazians, he practically ignored South Ossetia. International mediators encouraged talks with the Ossetians, thinking it was the easiest of the two conflicts. A breakthrough in South Ossetia could help find a solution to the Abkhazian–Georgian conflict. The Georgian side thought otherwise: after reaching an agreement with the Abkhazians it would be easier to find a solution for South Ossetia. Alongside negotiations, the Georgian side did not abandon military threats. Abkhazia was attacked twice by irregular paramilitaries with the support of the Georgian Interior Ministry, first in May 1998, and then in October 2001. On coming to power, Saakashvili declared he was for peaceful integration of the two breakaway regions, but after less than a year in office, Georgian troops tried to enter Tskhinvali by force in the summer of 2004. This ambivalence between peaceful negotiations and armed pressure alienated the Abkhazians and the Ossetians.

By pressuring the Abkhazians and the Ossetians, Tbilisi left them with very few choices. South Ossetia moved toward greater union with North Ossetia, while Abkhazia’s initial hopes for positive relations with Turkey did not yield any practical results. Ankara did not engage Sukhumi in any meaningful manner, nor did the large Abkhazian Diaspora in Turkey, despite encouragement to come ‘home’ and help with the Abkhazians’ serious demographic dilemma.<sup>30</sup> However, one major difference between Abkhazia and South Ossetia is the Abkhazians’ political objective of self-rule. The 1999 referendum in Abkhazia made it clear most Abkhazians wanted independence.<sup>31</sup> The South Ossetian leadership rhetorically seeks independence, but its greatest concern is for closer union with North Ossetia (Birch 1999, p. 502). The South Ossetian leader, Eduard Kokoity, declared that his objective was the incorporation of his self-declared republic within the Russian Federation, although he rectified it subsequently – probably after a phone call from Moscow – to a call for sovereignty and independent statehood. In contrast, Abkhazia has never declared its intention to be part of the Russian Federation, and its leadership worries that the August war has put them almost entirely under the shadow of the Kremlin.<sup>32</sup>

The August war showed that diplomatic efforts to mediate the conflicts had failed (Cheterian 2008, pp. 319–354). Following its recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states, Moscow did not lose time dismantling the diplomatic missions in charge of the negotiations. Moscow insists that the OSCE mission in Georgia, the most important OSCE mission in the CIS, should disband itself. The Abkhazians, on the other hand, do not reject a UN or OSCE mission, but insist that it should be mandated for Abkhazia, not just for Georgia, as was the case for the UNOMIG mission.

### **Ethnic conflict?**

The August 2008 war differed in nature from the Caucasian conflicts of the late 1980s. It was not the eruption of mass movements inspired by nationalism, as had been the case two decades earlier. This time, the state is not endangered by popular movements. Rather, the state itself is the actor, initiating change through military might rather than popular mobilization. The conflict between Georgian pro-independence forces and South Ossetian authorities in 1989 was sparked by a controversial law that made the Georgian language mandatory in the public sector, a law which caused much resentment among the Ossetian population (Zürcher 2005, p. 90). This time the issue did not touch the heart of what Georgia should be – a nationalist, a democratic, pro-Russian or pro-Western state. The five-day war was about where Georgia's state borders were. The conflicts of the late 1980s were popular-based attempts to define the nature of the state, the essence of the new political project, and its legitimacy. This time the war was a border conflict. Following the fall of Gamsakhurdia in January 1992, Georgian statehood was near collapse, with civil unrest engulfing much of the territory, and the power of the central government largely nominal. Following the military defeat of August 2008, Georgian statehood showed its power to resist the shock of military defeat: its institutions continued to function, and even the armed forces regrouped and reformed their ranks, without undergoing disintegration or collapse.

The war revealed that Georgian society had undergone a significant evolution since Gamsakhurdia's militant nationalism. When the hostilities started, the Georgian authorities jammed Russian TV channels, arguing that the Russian electronic media were a propaganda machine of the Kremlin and were engaged in an information war against Georgia.<sup>33</sup> However, the Georgian public did not become xenophobic. When a Georgian popular TV channel, Rustavi-2, ran anti-Russian video clips, there was uproar and the Ombudsman insisted that the TV channel should stop playing such material, considering it 'insulting towards the Russian people'.<sup>34</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the war, it was still possible to hear Russian spoken in Tbilisi neighbourhoods inhabited by ethnic minorities.<sup>35</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Accounting for the responsibility of unleashing the August war in Georgia will haunt Georgian politics and Saakashvili for years to come. Yet this will not alter Western support for stability in Georgia. The Georgia that emerged from the war was a much-diminished one. The splendour of the Rose Revolution, the success story of political reform and democracy, was already tarnished in November 2007 after clashes between opposition supporters and the police. The reputation of the Rose Revolution and the message it bore was discredited. As a result of the war, Georgia has received an additional blow to its reliability as an ally and to its economy. After the defeat in August 2008, Georgia lost billions of dollars of investment in its military and domestic infrastructure. It lost the deterrence potential its armed forces had gained from US training and increased military equipment. Instability within the Georgian military that was so characteristic

during the Shevardnadze era has returned to haunt Georgia after yet another mutiny at Mukhrovani military base near Tbilisi in May 2009.<sup>36</sup>

The August 2008 war was the consequence of contradictions within the Rose Revolution. The generation that came to power in 2003 had little practical experience, and a short memory of ethnic conflicts. The Rose Revolution led to a centralized political system with few checks and balances over the executive, which gave Saakashvili the opportunity to launch a military campaign without proper deliberation or consultation. Georgia needs to revise its decision-making mechanisms, as well as its military policy, to evaluate the security risks it still faces. The consequences of the war are far reaching. The war and the Russian recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states have drawn a new line across the South Caucasus, which can be preserved only at the price of continued tension and violence. Partition will not solve the problem. The war may have showed that the Georgian public has moved from radical nationalism to a form of state patriotism, when war is made by states and the clash is between regular armies rather than citizen forces. But Georgia has lost two major territories and this will continue to rouse passions when populist politicians wish to kindle them.

## Notes

1. See Broers's article in this issue on the notion of nested colonialism.
2. After the 1992–1993 conflict, the Abkhazian *de facto* authorities demanded that 'sovereignty' as a concept be left open, to be defined later. Following the 1998 fighting, the Abkhazian position radicalized and a referendum was organized the following year on 'independence'.
3. Anataoly Barankevich, a Russian officer, resigned from the Russian defence forces in July 2004. In the same month, he was appointed Defence Minister of South Ossetia from 2004 to 2006, and Head of the Security Council of the *de facto* republic until the August 2008 war. Barankevich was succeeded by two other Russian officers to the post of South Ossetian Defence Minister, first by Vasili Lunev, and after March 2008 by Andrei Laptev. Similarly, the South Ossetian Prime Minister during the August war, Yuri Mirzoev, was a Russian citizen. See *Lenta.Ru*, 'Barankevich, Anatolii', 8 December 2008. Available from: <http://www.lenta.ru/lib/14164877/> [Accessed 8 May 2009]; and Vladimir Soccor: South Ossetia Joint Control Commission ingloriously mothballed, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 5 (44), 7 March 2008. Available from: [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=33440](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=33440) [Accessed 8 May 2009].
4. Georgian Television *Channel 1*: Saakashvili suggests new timetable for Georgian unification. 15 March 2006. Transcript distributed by Johnson's Russia List.
5. *AFP*: Georgia takes on impossible odds, 10 August 2008. For the same year, the Russian defence budget was US\$40 billion, according to the same source.
6. *Tass*: Georgia to 'restore constitutional order' in S. Ossetia, 7 August 2008. *Civil Georgia*: 'Georgia decided to restore constitutional order in S. Ossetia' – MoD Official, 8 August 2008. Available from: <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=18941&search=> [Accessed 27 January 2009].
7. *Civil Georgia*: 'Most of S. Ossetia under Tbilisi's control' – Saakashvili, 8 August 2008. Available from: <http://www.civilgeorgia.ge/eng/article.php?id=18952&search=>
8. *Civil Georgia*: 'Georgia decided to restore constitutional order in S. Ossetia' – MOD, 8 August 2008. Available from: <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=18941> [Accessed 10 December 2008].
9. *Civil Georgia*: MIA: Java and Roki tunnels are next targets, 9 August 2008. Available from: <http://www.civilgeorgia.ge/eng/article.php?id=19001&search=> [Accessed 11 December 2008].
10. *RFE/RL*: Georgia orders cease-fire as fighting continues, 10 August 2008. Available from: [http://www.rferl.org/content/Georgian\\_Forces\\_Leaving\\_South\\_Ossetia\\_Conflict\\_Continues/1189866.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Georgian_Forces_Leaving_South_Ossetia_Conflict_Continues/1189866.html); Helen Womack and Mark Tran, Russia takes control of South Ossetian capital after Georgian retreat, *The Guardian*, 10 August 2008. Available from: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/aug/10/georgia.russia1>
11. Author interview with Irakli Aladashvili, military analyst at *Kviris palitra*, Tbilisi, 13 October 2008.
12. An English translation of the telephone transcripts presented by the Georgian authorities to the international press. Available from: [http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/world/2008/09/20080916\\_Georgia\\_Transcript.pdf](http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/world/2008/09/20080916_Georgia_Transcript.pdf)



13. *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*: South Ossetia debacle could trigger political backlash in Georgia, 21 August 2008. Available from: [http://www.rferl.org/content/South\\_Ossetia\\_Debacle\\_Could\\_Trigger\\_Political\\_Backlash\\_In\\_Georgia/1192751.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/South_Ossetia_Debacle_Could_Trigger_Political_Backlash_In_Georgia/1192751.html) [Accessed 23 August 2008].
14. Paata Davitaia, member of the United Opposition, was a refugee following the war in Abkhazia in 1993. However, the impartiality of the Georgian parliamentary commission was questioned, including by the French Ambassador to Georgia: see *Kavkas-Press*: French diplomat advises Georgia to use 'balanced language' regarding Russia, 13 October 2008.
15. See also *Spiegel Online*: The West begins to doubt Georgian leader, 15 September 2008.
16. Georgia-Russia crisis, implications and US response, *Senate Armed Services Committee*. Testimony of Eric S. Edelman, 10 September 2008. Available from: <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2008/September/20080910120613eaifas0.5277368.html> [Last accessed 24 June 2009].
17. See *Spiegel*: Road to war in Georgia, part 2: practising for war, 25 August 2008. Available from: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,574812-2,00.html> [Accessed 2 May 2009].
18. Russian commentators saw the Georgian military operation as a modern-day 'blitzkrieg'. See Litovkin (2008).
19. After Vladimir Putin came to power, the influence of the Russian military increased in South Ossetia to such a degree that it could be argued that the *siloviki* controlled the republic. The South Ossetian Defence Minister, Vasily Lunev, was a former military commander in the Russian Perm Oblast. He was succeeded by another Russian officer, Anatoly Barankevich, a former Deputy Military Commissar of Stavropol Krai. Interior Minister Mikhail Mindzayev was a former official from North Ossetia. Moscow also sent a Federal Security Service (FSB) officer to head the South Ossetian intelligence.
20. Author interview with Brigadier General Ronald Mangum (retired), and head of Georgia Defence Reform Program, Tbilisi, 17 November 2008.
21. Testimony of Eric S. Edelman, *op cit*.
22. Author's interview with Irakli Aladashvili, military analyst at *Kviris palitra*, Tbilisi, 13 October 2008.
23. *The Messenger*: Questions about the Georgian army, 31 October 2008, from *Georgia News Digest* electronic list, 31 October 2008.
24. Author's interview with Nino Burjanadze, Tbilisi, 12 October 2008.
25. Georgia Ministry of Defence: Georgian airspace violated, 9 July 2008. Available from: <http://www.mod.gov.ge/?l=E&m=11&sm=3&st=275&id=985> [Accessed 3 May 2009].
26. There were 10 military from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine taking part in the manoeuvres, from 16–30 July 2008. See: Tea Kerdzevadze, International large-scale military exercise 'immediate response' 2008, *Georgia Today*, 1 August 2008. Available from: [http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=4981&Itemid=65](http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4981&Itemid=65) [Accessed 2 February 2009].
27. Nabucco is a gas pipeline project to transport natural gas from the Caspian area through Azerbaijan or Iran, Turkey and the Balkans to central Europe, without passing through Russian territories.
28. *Izvestia*: Moskva vinudila Kirgizyu zakrit amerikanskuyu aviabazu, 4 February 2009. Available from: <http://www.izvestia.ru/news/news197238> [Accessed 4 February 2009]; Ellen Barry and Michael Schwartz, Kyrgyzstan plans to close US base. *International Herald Tribune*, 4 February 2009. Available from: <http://www.iht.com/articles/2009/02/03/europe/04kyrgyz.php> [Accessed 4 February 2009].
29. Author's interview with Eric Fournier, Ambassador of France in Georgia, Tbilisi, 16 October 2008.
30. Following their military victory over Georgia in 1993, the Abkhazians hoped to establish commercial ties with Turkey, and to receive thousands of Abkhazians *mouhajirs* from Turkey as permanent returnees to the land of their ancestors.
31. According to official results, 97.7% of the participants voted for independence, while the turnout was 87.6%.
32. *Tass*: Abkhazians do not seek associated relations with Russia, 11 September 2008.
33. *Izvestia*: Gruziia prekratila veshanie vseh rosisikh telekanalov, 9 August 2008. Available from: <http://www.izvestia.ru/news/news185294> [Accessed 4 May 2009].
34. *Civil Georgia*: 'Stop Russophobic music video' – Ombudsman tells Georgian TV, 27 August 2008. Available from: <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=19315> [Accessed 4 May 2009].
35. Author's observations, Tbilisi, October and November 2008.
36. *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*: On eve of NATO exercises, Georgia claims coup plot, 5 May 2009.

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### **Interviews by the author**

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Burjanadze, Nino, former Speaker of the Georgian Parliament, opposition leader, Tbilisi, 12 October 2008.

Fournier, Eric, Ambassador of France in Georgia, Tbilisi, 16 October 2008.

Mangum, Ronald Brigadier General (retired), and head of 'Georgia Defence Reform Program', Tbilisi, 17 November 2008.

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