

The European Union and the Russia-  
Georgia War of 2008

BACHELOR'S THESIS

handed in by

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I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and effort and that it has not been submitted anywhere for any award. Where sources of information have been used, they have been always fully acknowledged.

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## 1. Introduction and Research Question

Political scientists all over the world developed the idea in the 80s that traditional war between states would go out of style and in the long-run the US would be the sole country and superpower upholding the capability of being able to lead two wars at the same time whenever, wherever and against whomever. Francis Fukuyama called this and the finish of the Cold War the “end of history”. Conflict management and international politics would not be defined through states that go to war with each other due to the US hegemony over the world and thus its democratization. Furthermore an increasingly interconnected world shares too many mutual interests and has to abide to too many multilateral regimes so that conflict becomes less likely. Indeed ever since 1990 there were merely some more or less traditional clashes between African countries or rather groups inside African countries and ethnic conflicts that erupted in the aftermath of the Soviet and the Yugoslav collapse. Either way “war” is a very “fuzzy” category. The science of International Relations expected future conflicts to emerge mainly between a state's formal military and weaker equipped informal insurgents who want to resist or fight a state. This is described as “asymmetrical war”, since the belligerents' strength differs so significantly that it does not even allow comparison. After the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York September 11 2001 the most important war was the War on Terrorism by the US and its allies, characterized by this asymmetric warfare. In the aftermath of the attacks the US went to war in Afghanistan and against Iraq in order to eliminate the threat posed by terrorist groups such as Al Qaida and its associates. With the exception of the US invasion into Iraq, which came about under rather peculiar circumstances and thus has counted as the exception that proves the rule, this new era of disproportional warfare was nothing like “traditional” warfare. The global relative peace, considering the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, basically manifested the idea, that countries do not send their standing armies against each other, especially not neighbouring countries and great powers. In the new millennium also the few last Eurasian war zones became peaceful. The 90s wars in the Balkans and Russia's Muslim territories were settled, India and Pakistan were managing to keep peaceful despite all remaining quarrels after various armed clashes in the Kashmir during the 90s. When Israel went to war against the Hezbollah in 2006, it was officially not fighting the state of Lebanon but the paramilitary Shia group. Admittedly though, people in Israel and the Palestinian territories most certainly would see their different hardships fitting many or all of the traditional war characteristics, but the Middle East Conflict has its unique status for a reason and thus it is difficult to compare it to any other region or state.

On August 8 2008, while billions were watching the welcoming ceremony of the Beijing Olympics, something remarkable and almost anachronistic happened. News agencies all over the world were reporting that all of a sudden troops of the Russian Federation went inside the 4.5 million state of Georgia after Georgian troops started combat in its break-away provinces a day before and a war was raging between both countries. Soon many people all over the world heard about the small Georgian provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia for the first time in their life and the war was almost as quickly over as it has erupted. On August 12 Russia ended all military operations and the young, new President in the Kremlin Dmitri Medvedev agreed to the 6 Point peace plan by EU President in Office Sarkozy. The war displaced hundreds of thousands and killed several hundred South Ossetian, Georgian and Russian civilians and military.

This thesis is supposed to illustrate the role of the EU in the prelude to the war and argues that the EU's policy in the region was a major co-determinant to the war's eruption. In the beginning of the introduction the shift in the understanding and perception of conflict and war from traditional interstate war to the new era after the “end of history” was mentioned, which expels war between states against each other. These two understandings of International Relations are represented by Offensive Realism and Neoliberal Institutionalism, which are both going to be applied on the prelude of the war. The research question is:

**„Did the European Union foster the armed conflict between Georgia and Russia in 2008 by institutionalist engagement in the Caucasus, thus ignoring Moscow’s realist perception and view in the shared neighbourhood?”**

First both theories are going to be presented and the components that are especially helpful to understand the EU's policy and Russia's interpretation of it will be singled out. Then the theories are going to be applied on the EU and Russia respectively, putting the institutional focus on the EU and the realist focus on Russia. The hypothesis or line of argumentation rather, which is going to be argued for by the author, is the competing rationality between both power blocs and that there was a huge misinterpretation of Russian perception by European leaders and stakeholders regarding the EU's policy in the shared neighbourhood due to the EU's core build-up.

The results that are composed in this thesis came about with the methods of qualitative research, particularly via content analysis. The content used for the thesis came from different sources but was chosen under intensive inquiry prior to the composition of the thesis. Actual historic non-informal/institutional events (for example a mobilization of troops) had to be sourced to preferably independent news sources. Insights on the negotiations between institutions and states needed to

come from the primary sources and were always double-checked with content from news sites and/or secondary scientific literature. All scholarly opinion that was used needed to come from well-established and profound think tanks, institutes and publishers and also was double-checked in order to avoid minority opinions. The usage of Russian-speaking media was avoided in order to make the thesis as transparent and neutral as possible, also due to the not always clear status and independence of such media, no matter whether critical or not. The content was entered into the framework of the two crucial theories in this thesis, which generated a series of indicators and matches. The systemic classification and indexing of these indicators taken from the theories on a real case has the characteristics of a traditional IR case study. This thesis however tries to achieve something different than that by bringing face to face two different theories from the perspective of opposed actors on each other in order to “gain” a third set of assumptions (i. e. theory) partially based on the two presented and used in the paper but with the aim of going beyond them and make this thesis relevant. Indeed this thesis does allow generalizations though which go beyond the case at hand and is intended as such. The main arguments made over the course of it are supposed to give the reader inspiration to convey them on other cases with one or both of the main actors involved.

## **2. Neoliberal Institutionalism and the Concept of Complex Interdependencies by Keohane & Nye**

In their landmark work „Power and Interdependence“ published in 2001, Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye gave the tutorial on how to perceive and portray the reality of international politics through the lens of what is called today “Neoliberal Institutionalism”. What was so ground-breaking about their work was the systemic attack on Defensive Realism in the interpretation of its probably most prominent proponent Kenneth Waltz - which according to the authors hitherto was the dominant and entrenched concept for the interpretation of international relations - through the introduction of the concept of “Complex Interdependence” (Keohane & Nye 2011, pp. 20-25). According to them, Complex Interdependence has three main features and all three are very important for the understanding of the theoretical framework’s application and operationalization on this paper’s research question:

1. Societies are connected via multiple channels such as official contracts on mutually operating embassies, informal and unofficial meetings, talks and communication via the news between state

leaders. But there is also a similar kind of communication between non-governmental organizations such as NGOs, private companies and banks. The channels, through which both governmental and nongovernmental communication is being practiced, can be described as interstate, transgovernmental and transnational. Keohane and Nye say that “Interstate” relations between monolithic states is where realists have their focus, whereas “Transgovernmental” means that the assumption that states act as coherent units is already softened and “Transnational” should be applied when also other actors apart from states can be identified (Ibid.). The communication between all kinds of actors in two states is important because the national policy-making process is designed under the influence of that very communication and thus is more sensory to one another.

2. The set of assumptions that come with “Complex Interdependence” neglects a hierarchy of issues, and does not differentiate between high politics and low politics, which means that security-, military-, war- and peace-issues are not permanently dominating the agenda of an IR actor necessarily. This is one reason why Keohane and Nye are considered as “liberal” scholars, or to be more precise as the third wave of liberal Institutional scholarship, introducing transnationalism and Complex Interdependence. The roots lie in the functional integration studies of the 1940s and the regional integration studies of 1950, which were co-influenced by traditional economic liberalism, promoting market liberalism and free-trade in an ever more pluralist world (Baylis, Smith and Owens 2008, pp. 130-133). These scholarships were the first to suggest that the path leading to peace and prosperity for states is to pool their resources and even give up some of their sovereignty in order to create economic growth. This kind of sophistication and pragmatism was the main feature that clearly distinguished the early liberals and their successors from rather depauperate Wilsonian inter-war-period idealism (Ibid.). Furthermore, many issues in international politics derive from what once was considered to lie in the sphere of domestic policy, however this distinction has been watered down tremendously (Keohane & Nye 2011, pp. 20-25). International Issues are being dealt with by various divisions of the state in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and not only by the foreign office. The principles of rational choice and profit maximization (this is where the “neoliberal” label strikes the eye strongest), to which according to the Keohane & Nye each actor has to abide, dictate cost efficiency. This way the actions of actors become calculable: in a world in which everyone is trying to “play” positive-sum games, unexpected counter-productive behaviour can be ruled out or its likelihood at least reduced significantly. Actors also join alliances and coalitions that may vary from issue to issue, which does not mean that every alliance and every common goal is equally important to every player. An example: player 1 and 2 form an alliance in order to achieve their cultural goal X more efficiently. At the same time player 1 and 3 go into an

alliance in order to achieve their security goal Y more efficiently, even though player 2 does not like player 3 and goal Y at all. “Complex Interdependence” assumes that even though player 2 does not like Y he must not take action against it, because otherwise he would harm player 1 and thus jeopardize their common goal X, which could be more important to him than Y. Realism on the other hand would not allow the assumption that a “low politics” issue such as culture can prevail against “high politics” such as security.

3. The example can be directly transferred to the third characteristic of “Complex Interdependence”: two allies or members of a common constitutive institution will not go to battle with each other because their institutional framework already has produced too many spill-overs and thus the military does not play any (or only a minor) role in their disputes anymore. The fear of industrialized and modern countries to be attacked by each other as was the case in both World Wars has practically vanished and even during the Cold War countries from the Warsaw Pact and NATO did not directly fight wars with each other but got tangled up in indirect proxy wars instead, because direct confrontation would have been too disastrous and thus too *expensive* considering the nuclear weapons arsenal on both sides.

At this point it is helpful to go deeper into how “Complex Interdependence” works as an analytical concept and can help us with the research question. Dependence describes a situation in which one (a person, state, party, government etc.) is tremendously exposed to or influenced by an external force in a subordinate way. Interdependence describes the same situation in a mutual way. In IR mutual dependence, or interdependence, is achieved or fabricated by flows of transaction such as investments, trade, fast transportation, tourism and common regimes signed bilaterally by both states (Keohane & Nye 2011, pp. 7-19.), so generally speaking, through economic factors that are in principal used to describe globalization. A factor that is according to the authors underrated by realists, especially since these mainly tend to use their theoretical concepts for armed conflicts that erupted before the end of the Cold War or the start of it: namely the World Wars (Morgenthau) and the wars of/between great powers from ancient times (Thucydides), the Medieval and Renaissance (Hobbes, Machiavelli etc.) until the fall of the USSR (Waltz) - all which are eras in which globalization and thus interdependence were significantly less unfurled than they are in the decades after the Cold War.

However it is important to state that the main difference between the realist interpretation of politics and the interpretation of economic interdependence is not the difference between zero-sum and positive-sum games (Ibid.), or as the authors call it: “baking a larger pie does not stop disputes over



the size of the slices.” (Keohane & Nye 2011, p. 9). Just because there is economic interdependence that does not mean that both sides have an equal perception of the gains that the mutual relationship holds for both sides. So while one side may be perfectly at ease with the situation and expect the other side to have a similar perception of the relationship, this must not be so. Being at ease with a situation normally also includes the devaluation of any military instruments and the security question is stated less loudly, because there is no need for it. This might lead to the false assumption that the military question is equally devalued on the other side, especially since power capabilities are not necessarily bound to military strength anymore. The EU, which is the crucial object of analysis in this thesis, is the perfect example here: while despite all economic difficulties it is still the most powerful and important economic bloc of the world, its military capabilities are in no proportion to the economic ones, also because the EU is not a substantive state like the USA but has many characteristics of an institution, which - as we learned from Keohane & Nye - have the purpose of maximizing profit via economic interdependence (Ibid., pp. 228-235). When we look into the history of the EU we can affirm this argument to be valid. The peace in Europe began through economic cooperation, starting with the Coal and Steel Community, which ultimately resulted in the single market and extensive adjustment in most political fields. Ironically, the same adjustment did not take place in the military and security sector as extensively, simply first and foremost - unlike economics - because the military is of no importance amongst one another. Germany would never use military threats in order to make another country do something, whereas fiscal-economic threats are perfectly possible and on the daily agenda.

Indeed, there is cooperation between armies, weapon industries and security stakeholders, but military and security policy is not conjointly orchestrated and cooperation in this field is absolutely underdeveloped. When the UK and Poland chose to support the US in the 2003 Iraq War, this did not mean for Germany and France to do likewise. The same would not be possible for the economic field. Sweden and Portugal could not decide to bypass the sanctions on Iran single-handedly since the EU committed itself to enforce them. For realists this becomes especially blatant when one compares the prioritization amongst member states of allegedly “low politics” fields such as agriculture or education to military and security. According to Baylis, Smith and Owens this is due to the EU’ self-perception as a bloc which despite differentiating policy of its members has a set of values of its own accord that is different from the US and also - to use another *institution* - NATO (even though the most of the EU’s members are also NATO members). This culminated in the European Security Strategy in 2003 (ESS), which Baylis, Smith and Owens describe as a strategy

that proves how “Europe was compelled by the logic of interdependence to engage seriously with international affairs” (Baylis, Smith and Owens 2008, p. 78).

As described in the second main characteristic of “Complex Interdependence”, this is due to the lack of issue hierarchy. Keohane & Nye argue that military issues are simply not as important for the EU, or helpful to be more precise, in order to maximize profit as are other instruments for the creation of interdependence and spill-overs. That might be different in the EU’s partner countries but then these do not carry “Complex Interdependence” as their nucleus and do not have it as their sole reason for existence. Of importance is only, that both sides are aware of this discrepancy in how to look at the world, how to read the other side’s actions and bring to mind that oneself can see own actions very differently than the other side. It is believed by the author of this thesis that the EU intemperately misapprehended how Russia would perceive the EU’s actions both directly and indirectly, and that this misapprehension culminated in the Caucasus War of 2008. Furthermore the author will try to make the argument that the EU’s self-perception of being a neoliberal institutionalist force in Russia’s interest sphere helped foster the war by acting very “realistically” in the eyes of Moscow.

### **3. Mearsheimer’s Offensive Realism and how Great Powers see the World**

As examined above, many scholars argue that with the end of the Cold War there have been major transformations of world politics and international relations that make it impossible for realists to apply their theory and its various subspecies in order to describe and understand IR. Countries prefer to cooperate in the economic realm and are not concerned about security competition anymore, which means that a theory that focuses on conflict and on countries’ struggle to become or remain great powers, has no explanatory power.

John J. Mearsheimer, probably the most famous proponent of Offensive Realism (which is insofar different to Defensive Realism (Kenneth Waltz) as it assumes that states are obsessed with achieving power which brings security with it, whereas Defensive Realism assumes that security is the primary objective and a state can even cede power in order to gain security (Mearsheimer 2001, pp. 30-31)), has a rather contradistinctive view in his classic “The Tragedy of Great Power Politics”. It is important to note at this point that the book was published in 2001 just prior to the attack on the World Trade Center and therefore one might argue that it is invalid to apply his theoretical framework, which mostly deals with security, the military and war, on an event that occurred seven

years after what Kofi Annan called the “[entrance into] the third millennium through a gate of fire” in his Nobel lecture in Oslo December 2001. After all there is obvious evidence that the first decade of the new millennium was highly influenced by this incredibly important event as was stated in the introduction. The argument is valid, however this would also be the case for the first edition of “Power and Interdependence” by Keohane & Nye then, which coincidentally was published the same year as Mearsheimer’s book, even though it does not emphasize security as much. However, Keohane and Nye's theory is still considered to be one the best-suited ways to explain and analyse current international politics, despite its appearance before 9/11 (Baylis, Smith and Owens 2008, pp. 130-133). Evidence for this claim are Nye, Keohane and Mearsheimer themselves, who did not abandon their theories in their subsequent books “After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy” (Keohane 2005), “The Future of Power: And the Use of it in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” (Nye 2010) and “Why Leaders Lie” (Mearsheimer 2011) but rather according to their personal testimonials reaffirmed and enhanced the theories from their prior works.

Mearsheimer calls the United Nations to be the only institution capable of limiting the action of an average given country or even a great power, nevertheless according to him even that little capability is questionable since the UN, or Security Council respectively, was not even able to prevent or abort the Bosnia war between 1992 and 1995. He admits that both the European Union and also NATO can be described as “impressive” (Ibid., p. 364), but mostly for the lack of effect that they have on the behaviour of great powers. While Mearsheimer admits that states are able and also can be willing to operate through institutions, this is never due to or for the creation of interdependence but merely because institutions function as “arenas for acting out power relationships”. He also dismisses the economic approach and does not see significant changes that happened between the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Globalization unleashed by capitalism and creating economic interdependence does not count for him as a shift strong enough to change the rules of international politics since then, especially when compared with the domestic economic dealings which according to him have evolved proportionally (p. 365). He attributes this constant to international anarchy amongst the world’s states, which could not be replaced by any other system or body.

Just because a country signs a regime or joins an institution that does not mean that it will uphold the values and arrangements embedded in it, if it sees advantages in not doing so and thus adding power. What makes Mearsheimer’s theory so interesting and important for this thesis is especially that point. Institutionalists often criticize Realists of “[reducing] international politics to micro-economic rational choice or instrumental thinking also [minimizing] the idiosyncratic attributes of

individual decision-makers and the different cultural and historical factors that shape politics within a state.” (Baylis, Smith and Owens 2008, p. 138). Or in short: of not looking inside the state when analysing a development or event. But actually that is one of the theory’s strengths here: Mearsheimer circumvents looking inside the “black box” state by arguing that not the actor but his perception of opponent actions is the dependent variable for his own actions. In his realist understanding states act on a from case to case basis depending on the state’s preference (independent variable) regarding a certain issue whereas in his opinion Institutionalism is insofar a too systemic approach as it constrains everything into path-dependency and walls out exceptions from its rules: Democracies go not to war with each other? What if they do! Deep economic interdependence prevents military conflict? What if it does not! When the EU is friendly towards a country then the country will not jeopardize this friendliness by any means? What if it does!

Keohane & Nye’s theory is not able to explain the exceptions without making use of external templates, mostly deriving from the realist vocabulary whereas a Realist can always simply say: “Told you so.” On the other hand Realists have to wait for these exceptions - a war with modern warfare between two states does not erupt on a daily basis, while economic cooperation is far more ordinary. As the author will try to show in this paper, this ordinariness can be treacherous because it can lull leaders into the assumption that the occurrence of an exception is unlikely: war, and be it not direct confrontation (e. g. Russian versus EU troops) but a proxy war or indirect military confrontation (e. g. Russian troops versus troops of an EU protégé).

Mearsheimer uses a set of vocabulary in order to make his theory workable. For instance he argues that countries always try to become or remain the hegemon in their particular region, in order to become or stay great powers (Mearsheimer 2001, pp. 138-146), which is going to be especially important for us later on. He also admits that wealth is something states strive for, but not so that the population is satisfied and prosperous but again because of power for which wealth (e. g. gas, oil, transit capabilities) is a valid mean. Here certain countries come to mind that use their resource capabilities as a tool to wield power. Wealth through resources is particularly predestined to be connected to a strong military presence and deterrence because there is need to protect the acquisition process, the transportation and hence to keep the prices stable. Mearsheimer calls this “wealth maximization and preeminent land power” (Ibid.). Already mentioned was the concept of anarchy, which does not mean that the international system is characterized by chaos and disorder. In the IR understanding, “anarchy” means that there is simply no ruling authority or body in the international system to watch over countries’ behaviour and that a state or institution (i. e. EU) for that matter *should never be* certain about the intention of another country, *because it cannot be*

certain. Not because all states are necessarily hostile towards each other, but simply because states do not act systemically or ideologically but rather ad hoc (Ibid., pp. 30-31).

There is more to say about both Realism and Neoliberal Institutionalism but this part of the paper had mainly the purpose to illustrate how both theories are designed, what their many differences and focuses are, which main assumptions they have (that are by far not all presented here) and how they can be helpful in answering the research question. In the following part both theories will be operationalized and used as applied frameworks on both the EU and Russia with regard to the Caucasus War of 2008.

Last but not least the author would like to say that he is aware of the inaccuracy when he equates the European Union with any given great power state. It is clear to him that the EU is more than just an institution, has significant differences (e. g. depth of integration) compared to the OECD, NATO or ASEAN, yet can also hardly be called a state. There is wide debate what the EU actually is and therefore it may be questionable whether it is valid to apply the presented theories on the EU without a profound discussion what the EU's actual nature is. However, this is not possible in a thesis that is supposed to be as short as this one and the reader therefore is asked to overlook this theoretical inadmissibility. This thesis tries to mitigate the problem above by examining how the EU is carrying the "neoliberal institutionalist nucleus" and thus is unable to see things through the realist lens in order to prevent one of the general criticisms on realism's explanatory power: if one side is acting like Mearsheimer has predicted it than why did the other side not act equally realistic (Snyder 2002, pp. 155-156)? Transferred to this thesis the question is: If Russia acted realistically when going to war with Georgia than why did the European Union not act equally prior to the conflict? The author himself answers this question by disagreeing with Mearsheimer when he says that all countries act similarly, i. e. realistically. One can be sure that Mearsheimer would be able to explain the EU's actions prior to the conflict with Realism. This thesis however will explain the EU's actions vis-à-vis Georgia and the countries of the region with Neoliberal Institutionalism because the two theories are not mutually exclusive and have just as much explanatory power when applied at once, especially since IR is despite all the positive-sum and zero-sum games that one might construct, not mathematics. Or to borrow the words of the British-Austrian philosopher Karl Popper: "Whenever a theory appears to you as the only possible one, take this as a sign that you have neither understood the theory nor the problem which it was intended to solve." (Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach 1979). This is even truer in a social science discipline as IR.

# Operationalization of the Theories, Interpretation of the Player's Behaviour and of Indicators



Source: Fischer Weltatlas, Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 2009

## 4. The EU's Neoliberal Institutionalism in the Caucasus

### Institutionalization of the EU-Georgia Relations

#### 4.1. Introduction to the First Operational Part and Explanation of Procedure

The operational part of this thesis is going to start on the premise of the main point in Keohane & Nye's theory that cooperation and institutionalization create complex interdependencies and so the author would like to illustrate the institutional interconnectedness that the EU had with Georgia prior to the Caucasus war of 2008. It is necessary to mention here that the author will be “jumping” back and forth between the 90s and the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century when examining institutionalization and cooperation between Georgia and the EU, which is necessary due to the many parallel yet reciprocal effects and interactions that the manifold developments and projects had on each other. As well, this is fully in accordance with *Complex Interdependency*: it is often

hard to say what arose from what, what is the dependent and what is the interdependent variable. The author will therefore present developments and cooperative projects that he considers most important and will try to link them heuristically with each other in order to create a “spider-web” of interdependence without overworking them by examining too many details and applying the theoretical framework on them. The point in this whole part is entirely the illustration of Complex Interdependence, it is therefore not always important what the specific pillars of a specific agreement were, be it education, health care, civic society etc., it is the cooperation itself that is the crucial point, not its nature.

Furthermore at this point it is probably worth mentioning that one might call the endeavour of this thesis as somewhat unorthodox: over the course of the paper it will sometimes seem as if theories not only explain and fit the rationale, the conduct and the perception of actors respectively, but as if actors actually *act* according to the presented theories as though these were manuals or guidelines for real politics. This impression is fully intentional, however it should not be understood this way. It is always the theory that fits the politics and never the other way around, the author of this thesis does not suggest that the various actors are that ideological. Theories are seen in this paper as simplifications, models and constructs that provide the observer with indicators, causal connections and ways to suggest inference. The author makes an argument in this paper, based on readings and experience of different positions, from different institutions and organizations, from different countries, in different languages - subsumed in this paper and open to challenge at any time. But with the honest conviction, that this argument is entitled to be heard and as such has not been raised.

## **4.2 Humanitarian Aid after South Caucasian Independence and TACIS**

The EU started to really look at what was happening in the Caucasus after the Soviet Union fell apart and Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan became independent from the Soviet Union and/or any kind of successor state. Many European states substantially started their activity in the region by mediating conflicts, mainly in the Nagorno-Karabakh War in Azerbaijan between ethnic Armenians (backed by Armenia) and the Republic of Azerbaijan between 1991 when Azerbaijan became independent (even though the war started in 1988) until 1994. Simultaneously, there was a war from 1992 to 1993 in the Georgian province of Abkhazia between conjoint Sunni and Orthodox Abkhazian separatists backed by Russia and the Republic of Georgia. The EU provided humanitarian aid through the establishment of the so-called European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) by the Delors Commission (Jawad 2006, pp. 18-20). The EU's rationale was sheer

containment of potential threats of all sorts triggered by a devastated Caucasus - one should not forget that Russia was facing an enormous debacle in Chechnya which led to the First Chechen war 1994-1996 with according to GlobalSecurity.org an estimated death toll of about 100.000, 200.000 wounded and 500.000 displaced. Additionally, Russia was facing worrisome problems all over the North-Caucasus including constant insurgencies (in Ingushetia, Dagestan, North Ossetia-Alania and Kabardino-Balkaria). So the EU had every reason to do as much stabilization of the region as possible, i. e. off Russian sovereign territory, especially since the borders could be rather transparent at the time, without fully understanding or knowing the new Kremlin strategy in the Caucasus. The European ECHO aid allocated between €160 and €171 million to Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia each (International Crisis Group 2006, p. 5) from 1992 until 2004, which Russia had to swallow due to its own interest in a stabilized region and its economic turmoil of the 90s.

Georgia alone received about €420 million in assistance from the EU in that time period. Humanitarian assistance has accounted for €160 million via ECHO, the Food Aid Operations of the Agricultural Guarantee and Guidance Fund (EAGGF) and the Food Security Program allocated €70 million (ENP Country Report Georgia 2005, p. 5). But already in 1992 it became clear for EU officials that investments have to have deeper purpose than just humanitarian aid in order to bring the receivers on their feet and create mutually beneficial interdependence and therefore TACIS (Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States) was created, the “mother” of institutional cooperation between former Soviet republics and the EU. What is noteworthy here is that also Russia itself was a beneficiary of TACIS aid: an attempt to include Moscow into the creation of interdependency. TACIS had the function to provide assistance in the transition process from a socialist-authoritarian state towards a free-market pluralist democracy, however because of the enormous size of the CIS region and its diversity, TACIS' goals had to be adjusted from case to case: what might work for the Ukraine could be inappropriate for Tajikistan. As for the Caucasus, the EU's know-how in the creation of institutions and infrastructure was supposed to diminish the region's dependence on Moscow, increase the countries' fresh independence and create interdependence with Brussels (Ibid., pp. 4-6), for which Georgia received more than €110 million by TACIS. But according to theory the EU's calculation could have been something else: the target was not only to establish Brussels-Tbilisi-, Brussels-Baku- and Brussels-Yerevan-cooperation but also amongst the three Caucasus states themselves so that they were able to speak with a common voice after multilateral dialogue with each other and could establish themselves as a *region* in the institutional sense of the word internationally, similar to BeNeLux, the Baltics or to the Visegrád



Group, which - admittedly - was far more complicated in the Caucasus to achieve due to the many historic conflicts and ethnic & religious differences they had with each other.

### **4.3 INOGATE & TRACECA**

That is why TACIS was followed by the regional programs TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe - Caucasus - Asia) and INOGATE (Interstate Oil and Gas to Europe) in 1993 and 1995 on behalf of the EU's initiation. The EU saw a chance to establish interconnectedness amongst the three with each other so that they speak with a common voice when dealing with the other member countries and thus have them occupied with common projects instead of common antagonisms (Cornell and Starr 2006, pp. 86-90).

The author sees this as evidence that the EU had no particular power interest in the region but merely an economic one since it would have been a lot easier to make each of the three states fully dependent on Brussels, which also could have further fostered conflicts between the three on a low flame and would have made the region less approachable for Moscow as well, who was hardly able to feed its own population at the time and was too tired of conflict. Instead, the EU took the contrary way and helped the Caucasus to get on its own feet (Mayer 2007, pp. 15-18). Both, INOGATE and TRACECA were supposed to revive and diversify the transport routes from Central Asia over the Caucasus to Europe in the tradition of the historic Great Silk Road but mainly make energy trade a binding factor amongst all the participants, which was later summarized under the EU's so-called "Baku Initiative", a constant dialogue between the EU and the littoral states of the Black Sea and the Caspian on energy matters, explicitly addressed in the European Neighbourhood Policy of 2004. This is one example where it is not effectively possible to say what came first. Both, TRACECA and INOGATE's development began in the 90s, however they are emphasized as integral parts of the "Baku Initiative" (also sometimes "Baku Strategy"), that is the aggregation of conclusions agreed upon at the First Ministerial Conference on Energy Cooperation between the EU and the littoral states in Baku November 2004 (Gültekin-Punsmann 2008, pp. 5-11). In the author's opinion the idea is not entirely dissimilar to the one of the European Coal and Steel Community. TRACECA, developed in 1993 and inaugurated in 2001, was supposed to modernize the already existing pipeline systems and to increase Europe's accessibility of it, including building bridges and repairing facilities. It got its own office in Baku in 2000, originally financed by the EU Commission until 2009, and includes Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Moldova, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Iran, Moldova, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

More important was and is INOGATE though, which “is an international energy co-operation programme between the European Union and [...] Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. They have agreed to work together toward achieving the following four major objectives: 1. Converging energy markets on the basis of the principles of the EU internal energy market taking into account of the particularities of the involved countries. 2. Enhancing energy security by addressing the issues of energy exports/imports, supply diversification, energy transit and energy demand. 3. Supporting sustainable energy development, including the development of energy efficiency, renewable energy and demand side management. 4. Attracting investment towards energy projects of common and regional interest.” (INOGATE Homepage) This reads as classic Complex Interdependence through the vocabulary of energy cooperation, especially since INOGATE is entirely funded by the EU Commission while having its main office in Kiev and the Regional Coordination Office for the Caucasus Region in Tbilisi since 1995. Furthermore Georgia was the beneficiary of 30 out of 56 projects carried out by INOGATE since 1996 (Ibid.). Since 2004, INOGATE has initiated 16 projects - mainly in the Caucasus and Eastern Europe, not so much Central Asia - that were still active in 2008 during the war and received funds from the organization amounting to 51.831.355€, paid by the EU Commission (INOGATE Annual Report 2009, p. 27). However, the idea was not only to contain Moscow's role in the region but to simply make conflict too expensive for all actors involved due to the high benefits for all participants, including Moscow and not excluding it (Tonus 2008, p. 6-9) so that the Russian Federation is an official Observer Country of the program. This is in in full congruence with the Keohane & Nye theory: inclusion instead of exclusion.

#### **4.4 European non-economic and security interests in the Caucasus**

Apart from the project-oriented institutional approach developed in the 90s, the relationship between the EU and the Caucasus countries was further intensified through the respective partnership and cooperation agreements (PCAs) in 1999 which increased cooperation in terms of political dialogue, supported democratic and free-market transition, encouraged trade and investments, and promoted cultural and social exchange with the Caucasian countries. The same year Georgia joined the Council for Europe, Armenia and Azerbaijan followed in 2001 (even though no EU body, the point is the cooperation via institutionalization). The EU increasingly cared about the region and tried to initiate mutually beneficial cooperation going beyond merely

humanitarian aid compared to the very beginning of the relationship, as it is foreseen in the concept of positive-sum games. Of course Europe's rising hunger for energy had plenty to do with it, especially in the face of the dependence on Russian gas, but this is no discrepancy with Keohane & Nye: resources are a fully legitimate trigger for cooperation (even though they also play quite a role in Mearsheimer's theory which will be important when we look at Russia's perception of what is described in this whole segment).

Consecutively the EU Council passed the European Security Strategy (ESS) in December 2003, which particularly emphasized the importance, potentials but also the dangers of the region and diplomatically addressed potential conflict with any other power having interest in the region: "It is not in our interest that enlargement should create new dividing lines in Europe. We need to extend the benefits of economic and political cooperation to our neighbours in the East while tackling political problems there. We should now take a stronger and more active interest in the problems of the South Caucasus, which will in due course also be a neighbouring region." (European Council 2003, p. 8)

The Caucasus had the potential of tremendous hazards for the EU, such as uncontrolled migration into the it, the threat of terrorism, human trafficking and drugs etc. which needed to be revised in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, the Madrid train bombings in March 2004 and the London bombings in July 2005 (the terrorist attack on a theater in Moscow in 2002 and on a school in the Caucasian city Beslan in North Ossetia in 2004, both said to be inflicted by Sunni Caucasians from Ingushetia and Chechnya, should also be mentioned). The region between Black Sea and Caspian became even more important when Romania joined the EU in 2007 and therefore the EU via the Black Sea had basically a direct point of contact with Georgia, and thus the historically problematic regions Adjara and Abkhazia. What is more, the EU with its growing energy demands had interest in stability and good governance because these are said to be a good basis for non-volatile gas prices (Cornell, Tseretli and Socor 2005, p. 29). Strong promoters of this approach within the EU were especially the "New Eastern Members" who joined the EU in 2004 (Romania and Bulgaria in 2007) and had particular incentive to foster cooperation with the former socialist brethren. Another step into this direction was the establishment of an EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus in 2003 (year of the Rose Revolution) who in 2006 was empowered to "assist Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in carrying out political and economic reforms, notably in the fields of rule of law, democratization, human rights, good governance, development and poverty reduction", leading over a team of experts on the region and some 3.000.000€ at his disposal in 2006 (Council Joint Action

2006/121/CFSP), but also to increase the perceived presence of the EU in the region (Cornell and Starr 2006, p. 7).

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2004 the three Baltic States, the Visegrád Group and Slovenia joined the EU (plus Malta and Cyprus). This was a milestone in the EU's Eastern policy because from then on the East was not only an area of European interest but an integral part of the EU itself - after all it absorbed three former republics of the USSR, one former republic of Yugoslavia and four (Czechoslovakia is counted as two here) former Warsaw Pact countries. These countries became embedded and institutionalized into the EU's framework, or to use the wording from the passage on Keohane & Nye: Brussels implanted the neoliberal institutionalist nucleus into them. This of course did not go unnoticed in the Caucasus and in Moscow.

The same month 2004 the EU went through the Eastern enlargement, it also adopted the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which includes Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, all of which were Soviet republics. Georgia just got rid of Eduard Shevardnadze the previous year in the wake of the so-called Rose Revolution and was following an openly pro-European course under the new President Mikheil Saakashvili, a lawyer educated in the USA and at the International Institute of Human Rights in Strasbourg, apart from his mother tongue also fluent in French, English and Russian (this is mentioned because the Caucasus War 2008 happened during the EU's French Presidency). The revolution proved to be more than a mere local incident, after all it is said to have helped spark both the so-called Orange Revolution in the Ukraine November 2004 - only few months after the Eastern enlargement and the introduction of the ENP - and in 2005 the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan (Cornell and Starr 2006, p. 14). In the author's opinion these events were enabled largely by the ENP in an institutionalist sense: in order to achieve the goals put forward in the ESS of 2003, the Commission proposed a strategy paper to the Council in 2004, which illustrated how Brussels should proceed towards a coherent ENP, putting particular emphasis on the Caucasus countries and thus particularly on Georgia, which unlike Azerbaijan (sturdy in the hands of the Aliyev clan) just went through a historical process and was steadily sending signals towards Brussels.

The EU did not leave these signals unanswered and launched its very first Rule of Law mission in the context of the European Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) in Georgia in June 2004 called "EUJUST THEMIS". The program was supposed to bring administrative EU personnel from senior levels to Georgia in order to train, mentor, support and advise Georgian ministers, senior officials and bodies of the central government for twelve months so that the Georgian society could

be adjusted to EU norms in the course of the post-revolutionary reform process (Xymena 2009, pp. 202-210). What is especially interesting about the mission is how it came about: it was the Representative of Lithuania (at that time still a candidate country with observer status) to the Committee for the Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management (CIVCOM) who proposed the mission in February 2004, supported by the Representatives of Estonia, Poland and the UK. The Eastern expertise on Russian sensitivities and behaviour was seen as a further argument to launch the mission after some countries raised doubts on whether the mission might be understood as anti-Russian. And while Georgia proposed to go even further and include some military training and assistance, the EU preferred to keep the endeavour civilian, also because despite all challenges Georgia was going through, CIVCOM was carrying the word “crisis” in its name - which was hardly the case in Georgia at the time (Ibid).

The civilian cooperation targeted at institutionalization and stabilization found further expression in the so-called Action Plans (APs) of 2005 for Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan that derived from the ENP implemented a year earlier. The negotiation on the APs lasted until 2006 and as for Georgia, put a priority on the resolution of the conflicts regarding South Ossetia and Abkhazia and a stronger cooperation with both the UN and the OSCE in the Action Plan (Commission Of the European Communities 2005). Furthermore on well-known understandings regarding good governance, economic development, stronger cooperation within the region and with the EU, and on energy and transportation issues. However, the AP for Georgia was having a large problem: the EU could hardly apply the ENP on the disputed areas of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (the same was the case with Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan) without recognizing them internationally (Popescu 2006b, p. 9). Hence, the same was not possible during the EUJUST THEMIS mission in Georgia. Territorially and strategically crucial zones of at least Georgia were almost fully excluded from the institutionalization process launched by the EU, creating a nation of different speeds within. The EU seemed to be aware of that and thus sent a fact finding team mission consisting of the European Commission Director for Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia and the EU Special Representative to the region in January 2007 who were to initiate talks with leaders of the autonomous regions and find ways how to apply the ENP on these territories as well (Civil Georgia January 22, 2007). However, no substantial consequences or resolutions can be found following that visit. Therefore this visit leaves the question unanswered, whether the EU was fully aware of potential consequences of its actions vis-à-vis Moscow since actions such as meetings with Russian-backed secessionist leaders in order to pull them into the ENP mechanism seem at least in terms of diplomatic etiquette rather simple-hearted and ignorant of Russian interests.

After all one has to make calculations: what is the trade-off in risking to antagonize Moscow and pleasing Tbilisi? It does not seem clear whether European leaders were assessing these trade-offs correctly on the path leading to the war, if at all, maybe also due to the various different foreign policies that EU member states were practising parallelly to the EU's foreign policy. Thus the ENP, the EaP, the independence of Kosovo, etc. might have forced Moscow into interpreting the EU's foreign policy as one conducted by a state, not taking the EU's special nature into account. This reading of Moscow or even its possibility was not considered by EU and member state leaders enough due to the EU's "neoliberal institutionalist nucleus". More on that in the part on Russia's realist interpretation of EU policy.

#### **4.5 Georgian self-selection and integration into the sphere of European interest**

As was illustrated so far, the interest and engagement of the EU in the South Caucasus generally, but especially in the case of Georgia, could be up to 2008 characterized as increasing rapprochement and inclusion into the European custody. During the 90s a large part of the mutual relation was humanitarian aid and the technical assistance with reforms. At the same time the EU had quite plenty on its hands with the Balkans. But slowly the Caucasus' importance grew significantly, especially in the face of European energy hunger and global geo-political shifts, evoked by 9/11 and its aftermath and also because of the European Eastern enlargement. One could say at this point that it was this increased importance that was responsible for the instrumental change that the EU chose in its relationship towards Georgia. While between 1992 and 1999 most of the cooperation happened via programs such as TACIS, TRACECA and INOGATE, in 1999 the EU and Georgia signed a PCA, expanding the dialogue with each other from mere economic issues towards others such as good governance and a reformation of the legal system (Jawad 2006, pp. 18-20). One could argue with Keohane & Nye that it was not merely the external change of circumstances that made the instrumental shift possible but rather the gradual cross-linkage of dependencies, allowing the introduction of a Special Representative to the region in 2003 and a program like EUJUST THEMIS in 2004, both in full accordance with Europe's general Security Strategy (ESS), passed by the Council December 2003 and designed around the new possibilities the EU had due to its previous involvement in the Caucasus but also in other parts of the world.

It is necessary to raise an important question now: If it is all so easy, than why does not all of Eurasia, the Maghreb, Mashriq or any other region of the world that has relations with the EU work the same way? Why are there even differences in the South Caucasus itself and what seemed to

have worked in Georgia in terms of democratization up to the Rose Revolution 2003 and later on until the war, never happened simultaneously and similarly in Azerbaijan? The author would answer this question by stating the obvious: A country has to be willing to actually let any change inflicted by interdependence happen, and here is why: On May 26 2008 during the Slovenian Presidency of the EU Council, only two months prior to the eruption of the Caucasus war, the Polish foreign minister presented the so-called “Eastern Partnership” (EaP) at the EU's General Affairs and External Relations Council in Brussels (inaugurated a year later in Prague), an institutionalized forum “to complement the already existing regional initiatives and to counterbalance the Union for the Mediterranean“ (Schäffer and Tolksdorf, p. 1) for the dialogue on strategic affairs, visa-free travel and free trade agreements with Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Moldova and Belarus, going even beyond the ENP (Ibid., pp. 1-3). The EaP was seen as necessary by the Eastern enlargement countries because the original ENP was seen as deficient by its provision to include non-European (non-) states such as the Palestinian Authority, Lebanon and Egypt under one framework with the GUAM countries (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova), therefore especially the Visegrád Group wanted to create a complementary framework specifically designed for the non-EU countries of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus (Dangerfield 2010, p. 1739). Apparently, the EaP was very open for interpretation, or as Ukrainian deputy premier Hryhoriy Nemyria from the Tymoshenko Bloc said in March 2009: “The strategic priority of our country is integration in the EU. This is the way to modernise our country and we welcome the Eastern Partnership policy, because it uses de facto the same instruments as for EU candidates [...]” Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on the same issue: “[...] The Eastern Partnership [...] is an attempt to extend the EU's sphere of influence, including to Belarus. [...] Is this promoting democracy or is it blackmail? It's about pulling countries from the positions they want to take as sovereign states.” (Pop March 23, 2009)

And this is the author's point too (without supporting Lavrov's argumentation, he just would like to explain it because he finds Russian rhetoric often to be misinterpreted as aggressive when it is rather distraught): countries are “able to choose” their affiliations and with whom they cooperate. As in the case of Belarus, a country often described as Europe's last dictatorship, the affiliation and interdependencies of its elites and rulers lie with Russia despite various institutional cross-linkages with the EU. The Ukraine on the other hand was clearly leaning towards the EU during its Orange period after the Revolution in 2004. However, that attitude was turned around in the course of the 2010 elections, when Yanukovich got back into power. One could argue with Keohane & Nye that Russia managed to act out its own interdependencies with Ukraine (large Russian-speaking

minority, common history, energy issues etc.) and thus was able to re-establish the old order with a pro-Russian leadership in Ukraine. As for Azerbaijan, one could argue with the same theory that a real democratization and Europeanization is harder to achieve than in Georgia because Baku has better (i. e. stronger) cards than Tbilisi and was able to create interdependencies in accordance with its authoritarian leadership and effectively strengthening its position. The author makes this argument in full awareness that it reminds of the terminology used by Mearsheimer as well, however that point is important to him exactly for that very reason because it illustrates how the EU did not consider enough that power matters in the Caucasus and some countries (Georgia) have to be seen as more exposed to Russian self-interest than others (Azerbaijan).

Georgia is a transit country, whereas the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) produces Azeri oil and gas for the EU. The balance of power between EU-Georgia and EU-Azerbaijan is and was therefore entirely different. While Georgia had an absolute and immediate interest in converging with EU norms in order to become a candidate country at some point, the matter was and is less urgent for the Aliyev clan, ruling the country since 1993. Furthermore, Azerbaijan has more than twice the population of Georgia, is a predominantly Shi'a Muslim Turk country, has good relations with Iran (Azeris who want to get to Azerbaijan's exclave Kakhichivan Republic must pass over Iranian soil because the territory is cut off from the mainland and blockaded by Armenia) and was always supporting Turkish EU membership, while opposing Armenian allegations against Turkey due to Azerbaijan's own conflict with Yerevan (Cornell and Starr 2006). Azerbaijan's many special characteristics and its unique geo-strategic position, abutting the Caspian, Iran, Russia and Turkey while having large impact on Tbilisi itself and thus emanating its sphere of influence into the Black Sea via Georgia (Baku-Supsa-Pipeline) and Mediterranean via Turkey (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline) allow the Azeri leadership an outplay of power that is able to enjoy the advantages of the EU's institutionalization while being able to prevent democratization that assumingly would come with it. A power that Georgia did not have and probably will not in the foreseeable future.

The institutionalist argument here is that Georgia not only was pulled into the European sphere of interest by Complex Interdependency accidentally but also due to the given circumstances it was provided with regarding Russian pressure and interests in the Caucasus. Tbilisi decided to endorse “European values” and dedicate itself to them assertively by own choice, ultimately providing the EU with problems that neither side could foresee and self-deceiving Georgia with false hopes. The Rose Revolution, in which the Georgian people got rid of Eduard Shevardnadze (who was ruling Soviet Georgia from 1972-1985 and free Georgia from 1995-2003) therefore could be interpreted as



a Georgian wake-up call for the EU, shouting: “Let us in, already!” Another important step undertaken by Georgia that needs to be interpreted this way was to participate in the establishment of the GUAM group (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan (withdrew), Azerbaijan, Moldova), which combined various Russian fears into one organization. Initially founded in 1997 as the GUAM Consultation Forum during the Council of Europe Summit in Strasbourg, the GUAM Yalta Charter was signed by the respective heads of state in 2001. In 2005 however Russia persuaded Uzbekistan to leave the organization which was a member from 1999 to 2005 in exchange for international support of President Islam Karimov, who faced harsh international criticism for his oppressive internal policy regarding the 2005 uprisings with estimated 400-600 dead. In 2008 the group reorganized as the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development GUAM during the Kiev Summit end of May 2008, less than 2,5 months prior to the war. The proclaimed main objectives were the implementation of democratic institutions, human rights, European integration for common European security and an amplification of economic potential, especially on energy matters. The goals chosen by the group members illustrated the ambition to wrest themselves out of the influence sphere of Moscow and to counterbalance the own weight against the weight of Russia within the CIS, thus becoming the connecting link between EU and CIS- the political-institutionalist corridor Caspian-Caucasus-Black Sea, which it already was for energy. The project received support and praise by the EU whereas Russia’s policy towards the group is one of rejection until today (Donat 2009). When one cross-reads the charter of GUAM and the main statutes of the EaP, one cannot help but notice the striking complementary conformance of both texts. GUAM was supposed to achieve for a while what was intended by the EU for the three Caucasus countries: to speak with one voice and establish a “common voice” together.

## **5. Russia's Realist perception of the EU's foreign policy in the shared neighbourhood**

### **5.1 Prerequisite for Understanding the Nexus between Theoretical Application and actual Policy & History: The Prelude to the Russia-Georgia War**

The Russian citizens elected President Dmitri A. Medvedev (born like his predecessor in Leningrad (St. Petersburg) in 1965) on March 3 2008 as the successor of Vladimir Putin to become the third leader of the Russian Federation and thus the decider of Russia's foreign policy as foreseen in the

constitution. This however, did not mean that Vladimir Putin left center-stage. He became Prime-Minister on May 7, ending his term as President at the highest popular ratings ever achieved in the Russian Federation's polling history (Donaldson and Noguee 2009, p. 372). The West was largely optimistic regarding Dmitri Medvedev's Presidency due to his youth, the rhetoric about liberalizing and democratizing the country and his lack of a secret service background. Medvedev was Chairman of Gazprom's board of directors before he became President and was the Presidential campaign manager of Putin in 2000. So despite all the aspects that raised optimism it was clear that he had Putin's farmyard smell. Or as Putin himself said at a press conference in March 2008 in Berlin: "Medvedev will not have to try to convince people of his liberal views. But he is no less a Russian nationalist, in the good sense of the word than I am. I don't think our partners will find him easier to deal with. At any rate, he is someone who is patriotic and who will most energetically assert the interests of the Russian Federation on the world stage." (Ibid.) In hindsight Putin's words seem like a no-brainer, why else would he have chosen Medvedev to be his seneschal. But nevertheless the fact that the Caucasus War came so shortly after the inauguration of a President who raised so many hopes added to the over-all surprise regarding the conflict, which after all was the anti-climax of Western relations with the Russian Federation. But what erupted on August 7/8 2008, on the opening day of the Beijing Olympics (Putin was present in China), has been brewing for a long while then, even before Saakashvili's Rose Revolution, since it was already under Shevardnadze that Georgia turned its face toward the West (Kleinhanß 2008, pp. 83-88).

Moscow was accusing Tbilisi in 2002 to provide shelter for Chechen rebels in the Pankisi Gorge, the natural mountain border of both states and Russia's foreign minister went even as far as suggesting that Osama Bin Laden found his new home there indirectly protected by Georgia after the 9/11 attacks (Peuch February 20, 2002). Shevardnadze invited American CIA and army officials to the country without notifying his former work place the Kremlin, in which he served as Soviet foreign minister (CNN March 1, 2001). This was accepted by Putin who had congruent policy regarding the threat of terrorism with the West and did not make the favour to Tbilisi of being upset by the move. Diplomatic clashes between both countries went back and forth, for instance was Russia providing visas to citizens of Adjara (the third secessionist region in Georgia) that was ruled by local dictator Aslan Abashidze at the time. Adjara does not have borders with Russia unlike South Ossetia and Abkhazia, however it contained a Russian military base at the time and is home to the city of Batumi, Georgia's second-largest city with the country's most-important port from which Central-Asian oil is shipped to destinations all over Europe. In 2003 Shevardnadze had to leave office, because despite the Georgian support of his Western advances, the country was ridden

by corruption and the government's nepotism. The fact that Georgians were living with him as their political figurehead and their voice since 1972, when he was appointed to First Secretaryship of the Georgian Communist Party (after seven years as Georgian Minister of Internal Affairs) and thus de facto leader of the Georgian Soviet Republic, surely also contributed to the revolution. Plus, Saakashvili was simply able to seize the moment and to channelize the over-all atmosphere of departure and change combined with the massive dissatisfaction regarding social standards, employment, etc. into political power (Kleinhanß 2008, pp. 39-44). In the course of the revolution, Putin sent his Foreign Minister Ivanov to Tbilisi to attend the negotiation talks between opposition and Shevardnadze government, after which the dyed-in-the-wool leader had to resign and the then 36-year-old Saakashvili (Medvedev is two years older) became new President. Saakashvili basically inherited his predecessor's problems: first and foremost the frozen conflicts regarding South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Adjara which were still unresolved. Plus, the country was in a devastating economic situation despite its much potential. Furthermore he was not happy about the Russian military presence in his country which he accentuated at his inauguration ceremony by inviting Colin Powell, US Secretary of State and saying: "I am not pro-American or pro-Russian. I am pro-Georgian." Russian military bases of course were also an useful excuse for various own domestic mistakes and conditions not directly linked to the conflicts, so Saakashvili was forced by own commitment to deliver action against them in order to improve the over-all situation in the country.

In March 2004 the conflict in Adjara almost erupted into military confrontation when Adjara's warlord Aslan Abashidze refused to participate in the nation-wide parliamentary elections. Saakashvili responded to the refusal by imposing an economy embargo on Adjara (thus taking the chance of hurting the whole nation's economy because of Batumi), which led to Abashidze's resignation requested by Moscow after Saakashvili won the parliamentary election March 28. At first Abashidze refused to accept the Georgian vote and mobilized his militia which almost clashed with the Georgian army that besieged Adjara at its border. However, violence was averted due to Russia's diplomatic interference by sending once again Foreign Minister Ivanov to the region, who brokered a peace between both sides. After the crisis Abashidze was able to move to Moscow in accordance with Saakashvili, where he still lives. In the aftermath Russia agreed to shut down its military base in Adjara by 2007, which it did (BBC November 22, 2011). The Adjara crisis created a precedent in which Georgia and Russia were able to cooperate in favour of Tbilisi peacefully. Optimistic institutionalism would suggest that it maybe also created path-dependency for future conjoint management of issues regarding break-away regions.

Saakashvili proved to his people to be an ambitious leader at the beginning of his leadership and quickly earned the respect of many Georgians and also the Russian government so that he was invited to make use of the momentum once again and tried to reintegrate the other break-away regions after Adjara, which however was not successful so that instead Moscow and Tbilisi went back to their diplomatic confrontations. When one compares rhetoric between Moscow and Tbilisi in 2004 and 2008 then one cannot help but admit that many things must have happened. Some of them will be further presented below. It is hence important to know about the beginnings of Saakashvili's rule and his first encounters with Russian diplomacy in order to understand what happened in August 2008.

Due to Moscow's refusal to give Tbilisi the same control over South Ossetia and Abkhazia as it has over Adjara in 2004 and the subsequent return to confrontational foreign policy, Saakashvili decided to have Georgian peace-keepers trained by US instructors in 2005 which could be counted as retaliation for Russia's interference in the Abkhazian presidential elections in late 2004 (Shariya October 2, 2004). Furthermore Georgia was never too happy about the immense Russian military presence with “peace-keeping troops” in South Ossetia and Abkhazia which Russia also used to reach its large military base in Armenia, which can only be accessed from Russian soil via air. In May 2005 both Tbilisi and Moscow decided to remove these two bases and all troops by the end of 2008 (Grachev April 26, 2005). This agreement however did not achieve a normalization of the two countries' relations with each other. Moscow granted Russian passports to citizens of both break-away regions (and to those of the Trans-Dniestr Republic) in 2006. The same year the diplomatic tensions escalated, Georgia arrested Russian officers in accusation of being spies and Russia stopped granting visas to Georgians, even leading to an emergency debate at the Security Council in 2007, which extended its Observer Mission in Georgia established in 1993 to verify the ceasefire between Georgia and Abkhazian separatist militias (Security Council Resolution 1781 October 15, 2007), followed by a domestic uprising in Tbilisi against Saakashvili's government which the government attributed to Russian interference (BBC November 8, 2007). Human Rights Watch criticized the government's “excessive” response (BBC January 31, 2012). Later that year first violence erupted between both countries when a Russian guided missile “accidentally” fell on Georgian soil about 70km from the shared border. A condemnation of the incident was blocked by Russian veto in the Security Council. In January 2008 Saakashvili was reelected and received many friendly official letters from the EU (Barroso January 22, 2008): “President of the European Commission to His Excellency Mr Mikheïl Saakashvili, President of Georgia: *“Dear Mr President, On behalf of the European Commission, I want to offer my congratulations and wish you every success as*

*you begin your second mandate as President of Georgia. Let me at the same time express my appreciation for the strong attachment to democracy and the rule of law that the people of Georgia have demonstrated throughout the electoral process. I welcome the pledge in your inauguration speech to further strengthen ties between Georgia and the European Union as well as the confirmation of Georgia's continued attachment to a set of shared basic values. Indeed, full compliance with democracy, the rule of law and human rights are at the very heart of our bilateral relationship. In the past four years Georgia has achieved undeniable success in promoting economic reforms, fighting corruption and modernizing state institutions. The events of November 2007 and the recent electoral round has, however, shown that Georgia still faces formidable challenges to foster a genuine democratic culture in its political body and to achieve a more effective separation of institutional powers. “*

Two months later the parliaments of both Abkhazia and South Ossetia pledged the Russian Duma to officially recognize their independence similarly to the Kosovo's and Moscow and Tbilisi came closer and closer to war. Russia sent 300 additional troops to Abkhazia in May 2008 and cut all diplomatic ties with Tbilisi in June. On June 19 Saakashvili met with Javier Solana, which sounded as follows in an official EU communique (Delegation of the EU to Georgia 2008): “*President Saakashvili discussed his meeting with the Russian authorities in particular with President Medvedev. Mr. Solana reiterated the willingness of the EU to enhance its engagement in order to help to broker a resolution to the current situation. He underlined the attachment that the European Union holds to the territorial integrity of Georgia.*” On August 2007 the capital of South Ossetia Tskhinvali was attacked by the Georgian army with rocket launchers, air force and artillery. A day later - 08.08.08 - the Russian forces counter-attacked. The Independent International Fact Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, established by the EU Council in December 2008 and headed by Swiss diplomat Heidi Tagliavini, has found the following in its report published September 2009: “19.) There is the question of whether the use of force by Georgia in South Ossetia, beginning with the shelling of Tskhinvali during the night of 7/8 August 2008, was justifiable under international law. It was not. [...] 21.) When considering the legality of Russian military force against Georgia, the answer needs to be differentiated. The Russian reaction to the Georgian attack can be divided into two phases: first, the immediate reaction in order to defend Russian peacekeepers, and second, the invasion of Georgia by Russian armed forces reaching far beyond the administrative boundary of South Ossetia. In the first instance, there seems to be little doubt that if the Russian peacekeepers were attacked, Russia had the right to defend them using military means proportionate to the attack. Hence the Russian use of force for defensive purposes during the first phase of the conflict would be legal. On the second item, it must be ascertained whether the subsequent Russian military campaign deeper into Georgia was necessary and proportionate in terms of defensive action against the initial

Georgian attack. Although it should be admitted that it is not easy to decide where the line must be drawn, it seems, however, that much of the Russian military action went far beyond the reasonable limits of defense. [...] It follows from this that insofar as such extended Russian military action reaching out into Georgia was conducted in violation of international law, Georgian military forces were acting in legitimate self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter. In a matter of a very few days, the pattern of legitimate and illegitimate military action had thus turned around between the two main actors Georgia and Russia.” (Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia 2009, pp. 22-23)

There is international consensus that Georgia's start of the war was illegal. There is also international consensus that Russia's retaliation in the course of the Five-Day-War was anything but appropriate. However this thesis cannot provide a legal analysis of the actual events that took place during the war and does not intend to do so but rather aims at demonstrating what might have actually led to the various resentments on all sides and among all actors that led to the war. None of the actions undertaken by any actor are supposed to be justified.

## **5.2 Preliminary Remarks on the Moral Scope for the Analysis of Russian Foreign Policy**

So far this thesis has examined the relations between Georgia and the EU and has applied Neoliberal Institutionalism on them, or rather explained them through the theory and a brief overview has been given of what has led to the war. In the next part of this thesis the author will go on by illustrating how Moscow perceived the EU's involvement in the South Caucasus but also in the rest of the shared neighbourhood prior to the war. The mind-set of Neoliberal Institutionalism and Complex Interdependency will be left aside and the author will start looking at the time-frame for the EU-Georgia relations that were examined so far, only now through the Russian perspective, insinuating that Russia was looking and perceiving things fully through the lens of Mearsheimer realism and thus had to interpret the EU's actions equally as such - this basically is the “punch-line” of the research question: was Russia's realist perception of the events leading up to the war ignored? The author furthermore will make the case that Russia's inappropriate retaliation and conduct in the course of the war have the same reason.

It is important to note at this point that the author is not trying to justify or defend Russia's conduct or that of any other player but merely tries to make it more understandable according to the research

question and by applying the theories in the light of what has been examined so far. He is fully aware of the many deficits that Russia has in comparison to the countries of the European Union and democracies elsewhere, especially when it comes to the enforcement of human rights, free speech and the division of powers and therefore does not try to argue that Brussels and Moscow swim in the same boat when it comes to moral. Nevertheless he finds an analysis of Russian foreign policy inadequate that merely deducts from Russia's inner contraventions of what is usually described as “Western values”. Russia's foreign policy is shaped by external factors as well, maybe even more than that of other great powers due to the many internal and external humiliations and injuries that Russia's Tsarist-, Bolshevik-, Stalinist-, Post-Stalinist-, Perestroika- and Post-Cold War leadership had to incur, all too often subsequently resulting in the infliction of humiliations and the application of force against others. Or to use Winston Churchill's words from a BBC radio broadcast October 1<sup>st</sup> 1939: *“I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma; but perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian national interest.”*

### **5.3 Understanding the Russian Rationale**

There is little doubt that Russia and most of the countries of Eastern and Central Europe have chosen or were put on different paths since the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact vaporized. Whereas Poland, the Baltic states, the Czech Republic etc. have chosen a liberal-democratic evolution, there is no consensus about Moscow (Averre 2009, p. 1689). This puts Brussels into a complicated position since there is simply no ignoring Russia or hiding away from it, because it is the EU's biggest neighbour and the world's largest country with both a grave European (Christian) and a grave Asian (Islamic) dimension and even with global entitlement. It has borders with Poland and Lithuania (both abutting the exclave Kaliningrad), Latvia, Estonia and Finland (& Norway). In Asia Russia borders most importantly on China, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and North Korea and has maritime borders with Turkey, Iran and Japan. Interestingly, Russia agreed with Syria upon the establishment of a naval base in Tartus on September 12 2008<sup>1</sup>, thus giving Moscow permanent access to the Mediterranean in addition to its old Soviet naval base in Vietnam with access to the South China Sea. The distance via the Arctic Ocean to the USA is also far closer from Russian to American soil than from European via the Atlantic<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore the Russian state-owned

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<sup>1</sup> Four days earlier Russia agreed with Venezuela to deploy conjoint naval training with nuclear-armed battleships in the Caribbean Sea, exercised the following month – the first show of Russian force in that region since the end of the Cold War, furthermore it sent vessels to patrol the Somali coast that September (Reuters September 8, 2008)

<sup>2</sup> As Sarah Palin also notably accentuated during the Presidential election campaign of McCain in 2008.

companies Lukoil, Gazprom and Rosneft<sup>3</sup> are amongst the world's most important energy suppliers. Russia is a major trade partner for the EU, the official successor state of the USSR, the world's second largest possessor of nuclear weapons and veto power in the UN's Security Council. All these factors are stated here because they are massive capabilities in the understanding of Mearsheimer.

To make it short: European foreign policy that does not take a major variable Russia into account is simply not thinkable. This also finds expression in the institutionalized framework for the EU's foreign policy vis-à-vis Moscow. Russia is the only country in the EU's direct neighbourhood that does not belong to the ENP. Instead, Russia opted to create an extra framework for the EU-Russia relations, accentuating that Moscow sees itself on equal terms with Brussels as opposed to the junior partnership designed in the ENP. This framework was passed at the EU-Russia Summit in St. Petersburg 2003 and called "Four Common Spaces": Economic Space; Space of Freedom, Security and Justice; Space on External Relations; Space on Research, Science and Culture. The framework was basically a deepening of the already existing PCA established in 1997. However, the symbolic scope of Russia's obstinacy to create a separate realm for the EU's relations with Moscow is serious, because it clarifies how "the EU's neighbourhood policy [i. e. ENP] has come to be interpreted by Moscow, on the one hand, as a challenge to its "CIS integration" agenda and, on the other, as undermining its partnership with the EU." (Allison, Light and White 2006, p. 168). However, that was not necessarily so from the very beginning: There is evidence that the EU was actually quite optimistic regarding Russia's integration into the "European idea", without that the EU ever has exactly defined what this idea is supposed to be - the EU has put forward almost the same aims in the PCA with Russia as with all the other accession states. The Common Strategy of the EU on Russia, ratified by the Council in 1999, welcomes "Russia's return to its rightful place in the European family [...] on the foundation of shared values enshrined in the common heritage of European civilization." (Ibid., p. 167). A wording which the author finds absolutely remarkable considering the (alleged) over-all image of Russia on Western streets nowadays and even prior to the Caucasus war 2008.

Such naivety once again is attributed by the author to Europe's fundamentally institutionalist core which assumed that Russia simply strayed away from the European family during the Soviet era and from now on, like the prodigal son, will be home again. Unfortunately, Vladimir Putin, who became Russia's second President after Boris Yeltsin in 2000, had slightly different plans for his country: re-establishment of domestic order and external great power status likewise. Russian policy towards the EU represented an extension of both these projects. The "sovereign democracy"

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<sup>3</sup> To just name the three largest amongst many other.



of, by and under the ruling party United Russia, of which Putin only officially became a member in 2008, even though it supported him in the 2001 elections, indeed did achieve economic improvement and a halt to Russia's population decline. The sovereign democracy concept is rather vague and often described by pundits, journalists and authors simply as a modern name for old authoritarian practices. But according to Nicu Popescu (2006a, pp. 1-2) the concept goes further and must be also understood as the over-accentuation and idealization of Western non-interference and as a counter-example to the destabilization in the wake of the revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia, which were ruled from the outside in Russia's eyes of 2006. Popescu implies that Western values therefore cannot be accepted in Russia since this would mean an equal appropriation of Russia by the West as in the cases of Ukraine and Georgia.

This rationale managed to generate popularity for the President, the Prime-Minister and for the United Russia Duma majority. The dismissal of the colour revolutions was Russian consensus, so that ultimately European interference in Russia's "privileged interests with countries that traditionally have been connected with the Russian Federation" could not be accepted, as Russia's third President Dmitri Medvedev has put it in November 2008 at a panel with former US Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright, organized by the Council on Foreign Relations (CoFR 2008). Similarities in the internal policy approach and external policy approach do become obvious here after all, but it is nevertheless questionable whether the internal "sovereign democracy" (also called "managed democracy") is an apt source for normative means in Russia's external relations as well. The author would therefore dismiss the idea that Russia's foreign policy is the way it is simply due to Russia's internal structure and approach on democracy and governance and would argue that there is more to it. Either way, it is not key to fully answer whether Russia's inner structure defines its foreign policy. For the application of realism Russia can remain a "black box". Without looking inside that black box, the author sees three main events or rather developments that particularly became contentious issues making Russia weary of the EU and the West in general: 1. the Kosovo's independence, 2. the cooperation of the EU states Czech Republic and Poland regarding the US missile defense shield and 3. the plans for admission of the Ukraine and Georgia to both EU and NATO.

After the Serbs were cast out of the Kosovo, it was put under UN administration. However the negotiations between UN, Pristina and Belgrade were without results, Kosovo's Muslim majority wanted independence, whereas Serbia who was and is an ally of Moscow demanded integration into the Serbian federal structure, which was supported by Russia. After all, Russia had to deal itself with break-away regions. One therefore could have expected sympathy from Russia for the

Georgian position, which had the very similar problem with South Ossetia and Abkhazia, but this was not so - a major inconsistency based on self-interest.

Georgia used the same argument for its regions as Russia for Kosovo and Chechnya: international law ranks national integrity higher than the principal of national self-determination. On February 17 2008, the Kosovar parliament declared its independence, against the will of Belgrade and Moscow. Most<sup>4</sup> of the EU recognized Pristina's independence. Georgia and Moldova were following the same reasoning as Moscow, but were not as resolute in their rhetoric as Vladimir Putin on February 22 about the Western countries: "They have not thought through the results of what they are doing. At the end of the day it is a two-ended stick and the second end will come back and hit them in the face." (Bromwich August 21, 2008) Based on the Russian capabilities at the time regarding all frozen conflicts in which Russia played a role, Putin could only have meant South Ossetia and Abkhazia (and to a minor degree Trans-Dniestr). Saakashvili's response sounded less determined on May 9 2008, but rather concerned about the manifold potential domestic implications of the Kosovo independence: "We are saying loud and clear that we have never planned to recognize Kosovo. Nor do we plan to do so in the future. The way out of the situation that has been chosen is not the best one. The Serbs should have been given more time for negotiations. The solution for Kosovo was a hasty one." (B92.net May 9, 2008)

While the Kosovo question was only an indirect security issue for Russia because of the separatist and Islamist threats in the North Caucasus, the plan to deploy US missile defenses in the Eastern EU (the European Interceptor Site) had direct ramifications for Russia in store. Poland was supposed to receive a missile interceptor and the Czech Republic a radar system. The assurances from Washington, Prague and Warsaw that the shield was only protection from an Iranian and a North-Korean aggression was little persuasive for Moscow since Iran and Russia were following a strategic partnership themselves. The Iran has observer status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization since 2005 and was offered cooperation with the Collective Security Treaty Organization CSTO<sup>5</sup> in 2007, furthermore Russia has a say in North-Korean foreign policy and in that of Iran's partner Syria. On the other hand Russia found deterrence in the fact that such a shield could be expandable whenever desired (Harding April 11, 2007). Furthermore Russian opposition to ballistic missile defense dates back to the Soviet Union: both Gorbachev and his Soviet right-wing opposition were against Ronald Reagan's "Star Wars" program, which after all was prohibited by

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<sup>4</sup> France and the UK, the two EU countries with nuclear capabilities, were the first EU countries to recognize Kosovo the following day, followed by Germany a day after. Spain and Greece on the other hand have not until day.

<sup>5</sup> A military alliance between former Soviet Republics born out of the CIS and seated in Moscow.

the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty from 1972. In 2001 George W. Bush unilaterally withdrew from the treaty, not fearing any significant ramifications from Moscow, where defense shields in its neighbourhood are seen as a deterrent to its own nuclear capabilities and thus a threat to the great power status. The idea of Russia using its nuclear weapon obviously seems anachronistic; the Kremlin is not an irrational mad player. However, nuclear deterrence is a major capability and linked to prestige.

Russia's worries and suspicions might have been somewhat legitimate, since Washington and Warsaw have come to a final agreement regarding the Pole's demands for a stationing of the defense shield only one day after the war in Georgia after being approached in 2006. Poland was promised to receive a Patriot Air Defense system including Patriot missiles and aircraft (Shanker August 14, 2008). Iran had little to do with the Russia-Georgia war, thus the timing seems suspiciously coincidental. However, the author does not see the US defense shield (which was cancelled by Obama in 2009 due to internal objections as well) as the main reason for Russia's exaggerated conduct in the war with Georgia but rather the plans to expand NATO by including Georgia and Ukraine. According to Fernandes and Simão (2010, p. 105), the relations between Russia and the EU always have reflected the relations Russia-USA and the Russia-NATO reflections interconnectedly and vice versa, even when there were significant differences like at the NATO Bucharest Summit in 2008. Hence it was not possible to find common ground in order to manage security issues and questions regarding the common neighbourhood efficiently and satisfactory for all sides in a positive-sum manner, especially apparent in the third pillar of the Four Common Spaces on external Security. Georgian NATO membership would have put Brussels (after all that is where NATO has its headquarters) and Washington right in the center of the Caucasus, overlooking Caspian energy supply and infrastructure. The NATO summit of 2008 in Bucharest was bad enough as it was for Russia since Croatia and Albania were allowed to join the organization, but the constant push of the US to grant the same right to Ukraine and Georgia even raised concern in the EU: London, Paris and Berlin formed an opposition to the plan due to concerns about Russian sensitivities and capabilities such as the Russian Black Sea Fleet located in the Crimean Sevastopol and the large Russian population of the former Soviet Republic which was the birth country of Mikhail Gorbachev and starting point of Nikita Khrushchev's political career.

The EU is a crucial part of the transatlantic idea historically and even if that might be not so noticeable for many EU citizens and many of their governments, especially under the two George W. Bush administrations, it always was for Moscow. The dual, often simultaneous and parallel reality in the shared neighbourhood between the EU's and NATO's shaping of the post-Soviet space

and Russia's proclaimed exceptional status has very different normative implications for the whole region and indeed it seems logical that a model with a sovereign democracy as in Russia would have been already an achievement compared to the democratic status quo of many countries (Belarus, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan etc.) that the EU tried and tries to pull closer via institutionalization but also through other means. The disintegration of Yugoslavia and bombing of Belgrade in 1999, commanded by then Secretary General of NATO Javier Solana, can also count as an example here. Moscow does not forget.

Russia's strategic rationale to keep the EU and therefore NATO and USA out of its “space of privileged interest” was repeatedly rekindled: the Iraq War Coalition (including Ukraine and Georgia from 2004-2008, Georgia withdrew its Iraq troops in the middle of the Caucasus war, the Ukraine in December), NATO and EU enlargement, democracy promotion and maybe also the finalization of the overtrumping by China have contributed to Russia putting a rule to the test in the course of its war with Georgia. The Russian philosopher Sergei Gavrilov has anticipated this policy towards the West in his essay “Is the transition to authoritarianism irreversible?” in 2007 by demonstrating how Putinist Russia needs and perceives external Western enemies in order to constitute domestic dominion and public acceptance: “The threats are utopian, the probability of their implementation is negligible, but their emergence is a sign. This sign - a message to “the city and the world” - surely lends itself to decoding and interpretation: we will defend from Western claims our ancient right to use our imperial (authoritarian and totalitarian) domestic socio-cultural traditions within which power does not exist to serve people but people exist to serve power.” Gavrilov in so far was right as Russia did not go to war with a NATO country in its clash with Georgia, nor with an EU country. That would have been outside of its capabilities and outside of its self-interest, despite all rhetoric and threats on the domestic level. However, Russia went to war with a country that by then was strongly associated with both the EU and NATO as was demonstrated in this paper. Hence Moscow sent a strong signal towards Brussels and Washington to stay off what it considered its turf and delivered payback for many humiliations and developments since the end of the cold war. Humiliations that according to this thesis' framework at least Brussels not always was fully aware off due to the “institutionalist nucleus” and could not be. Arguably, at least to the author in the course of many readings the picture conveyed that the EU sometimes was played by the rather hawkish Bush administration in order to create antagonism and friction with Russia. For example it is truly complicated to make the case how the missile shield in Warsaw and the Czech Republic was in any of the involved players' interest and apparently the new American administration had the same opinion.

The Caucasus war in 2008 was very short and quite bloody, but as seen from the perspective of Moscow a significant victory. It showed to the whole CIS area (Georgia withdrew membership because of the war) and to the West that Russia was willing to go lengths in order to protect its capabilities and that it is the hegemon. It was intimidation for the CIS countries and deterrence for the West: mutual alignment with Western countries comes at a price, this loud message was heard all over the world and even pulled the spotlight away from Beijing, which was home to a global party in which politics were forbidden that month. Taking into account Chinese sensitivities regarding its reputation and role, Moscow's exclamation for attention weighs even heavier. The EU was surprised by the Russian demonstration of power and its actions in the wake of the war, however these did not constitute a change in the balance of power with the West, since it already had shifted long before (Donaldson and Noguee 2009, p. 375), unnoticed by the EU. When Putin came into office, Russia was an economic dwarf. In 2008 Russia was back in the club of great powers due to its economic capabilities. The EU, which is no military but an economic institution did not connect the dots vis-à-vis Russia and the war in Georgia was the reminder to better do so. By no means was Russia's claim to be recognized as a great power a revival of the Cold War but clearly Moscow proved how it was willing to go after its self-interests regardless of Western desires. As with Russia's protection of its nuclear deterrence factor, Russia protected another capability in Georgia: its dominion over the energy sector.

#### **5.4 The capability of energy supply and the Caucasus**

Russian foreign and security policy are intertwined with its trade policy regarding energy. Control over the Caucasus is key in that relationship between Russian foreign and energy trade policy. The Caucasus is the primary export line for Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan) and connects the Caspian with both the Mediterranean over Turkey and the Black Sea. Before the war, almost the entire Azeri oil and gas export was going over Georgian territory. The best known component of the South Caucasus Transportation System is the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline (BTC), also because it is the key component in the planned Nabucco pipeline. One effect of the 2008 war was the fact that for several days the Baku-Novorossiysk Oil Pipeline was the only pipeline carrying Caspian oil from Azerbaijan to the world markets, since BP has shut down its oil via the Baku-Supsa pipeline (White August 15, 2008) and also stopped pumping gas. The BTC oil pipeline was completed in 2005 and the Baku-Erzurum gas pipeline in 2006, two important arteries for the diversification of

European energy supply that consciously circumvent Iran, Russia and Russian ally Armenia, mainly because of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (Cornell, Tseretli and Socor 2005, p. 25).

The East-West energy corridor in the Caucasus is predestined to circumvent dependence on Russia and its pipeline system and to acquire access of Central Asian energy. Another advantage of Caspian gas is that it is also not controlled by OPEC. Russia has shown in 2005 and 2007 that it was willing to use its energy power as a deterrent and a capability when Gazprom shut down its supply for the



Source: Wikipedia (including own modification)

Ukraine. In the aftermath of the 2005 dispute even EU countries felt a significant drop in their supply, even though it was officially only shut down for the Ukraine (BBC January 2, 2006). The war between Georgia and Russia was a setback for Nabucco, a project started in 2002 which intends to prevent blackmailing such as the Ukraine had to suffer because of over-dependence on Russian energy. At the same time Russia was protecting its counter-project South Stream and raised its odds significantly. South Stream was sealed via a cooperation deal between Moscow and its partner Serbia in January 2008 (Reuters January 25, 2008).

Neoliberal Institutionalism would expect countries to come closer due to their mutual interest in beneficial business. However, as in the case of Russian oil and gas, both function as realist capabilities with deterrence ability and thus were indirectly protected when Russia went into Georgia and demonstrated that it was willing to use force in the Caucasus, whereas the West was not. Nabucco is supposed to start in Turkey and end in Austria, supplying Central Europe with gas that is fed in through the already existing Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline, which for its part

could potentially provide the whole pipeline system with gas from Turkmenistan, Iraq and Egypt (Nabucco press release August 23, 2010).

Georgia gained huge significance due to its capability of being an important transit country and therefore energy plays a significant role in Georgia's foreign and security policy as well. Its significance was also a guarantee of security because Georgia had reason to assume that Russia would not dare to cut down oil and gas passing through Georgia and thus harm the EU due to its "main comparative advantage" (Papava 2006). Russia proved the opposite. Realism would argue that the conflict over Caucasus dominion between Russia and the West is also a conflict over whether one side is going to maintain its dominion or the other side to attain it with ideological projection beyond: "Thus the Black Sea and Caspian basins, with the South Caucasus uniting them, comprise a functional aggregate, now linked directly to the enlarged Euro-Atlantic alliance. Although located on the Euro-Atlantic world's outer edge, this region has already begun functioning as a rear area or staging ground in terms of projecting Western power and values along with security into Central Asia and the Greater Middle East." (Cornell, Tseretli and Socor 2005, p. 27) Russia managed to put the wheel in that aspect into reverse.

## **6. Conclusion**

The central research goal of this thesis was to apply Neoliberal Institutionalism by Keohane & Nye and Offensive Realism by Mearsheimer on the European Union's role in the run-up of the Caucasus war of 2008 and draw conclusions regarding the EU from the theoretical application: the first theory to show how the EU saw its policy and the second how it was seen by Moscow. The theoretical application illustrates that part of the conflict was caused because of the differentiating interpretation and rationale regarding international policy - Neoliberal Institutionalism *through* the eyes of the EU is Offensive Realism *in* the eyes of Russia. When Europe widened its sphere of influence at the beginning of the 90s into what Russia traditionally describes as its realm of "privileged interest" it was confronted with a weak and bankrupt Russia which seemed to have let its past behind because it had to and was going to become a part of the European family, instead of acting as its traditional antagonist and indeed there were democratic forces in Russia who had a similar idea in mind. However, Russia was about to choose a different path under Vladimir Putin & the United Russia Party and was increasing its efforts during both legislative terms of President Putin to defend traditional interests in the shared neighbourhood. If one were to define a Russian doctrine deriving from the Georgia case, than that the Caucasus and some countries in Eastern

Europe are as of yet not allowed to align themselves with the West as Central Europe has, sealed by the EU enlargement of 2004 and 2007. The colour revolutions and the post-revolutionary policy in Kiev and Tbilisi were the attempt to achieve exactly such alignment but Russia managed to retain its grip on both countries. In Ukraine it flipped the situation around politically, in Georgia it has vast power through the sheer military presence on what Tbilisi considers its soil.

Indeed it is the understanding shared by most international stakeholders and analysts, that it was Georgia who has started the war against Russia and thereby surprised many of its European and Western partners. A motive for Georgia's suicidal move is not easy to find and widely disputed. This thesis suggests that the EU's institutionalist nucleus has lured Tbilisi into the assumption, that international pressure and Georgia's alignment with the West will keep Moscow from responding the way it did. On one hand there is the idea or rather assumption in international politics that democracies do not go to war with each other, the so-called Perpetual Peace, which would mean that either both countries or one of the two conflicting countries could not be described as a democracy at the time. If this country is to be Russia, then one has to conclude that the “managed democracy” under Putin does not qualify as a traditional democracy. This however leaves questions open for the internal situation of other states from the wider BRIC group such as Mexico, India and South Africa which are almost unanimously described as democracies. The Kremlin of course interprets this as a negative bias towards Russia by the EU based on the fact that unlike any other BRICKS country, Russia is the only one with a shared European neighbourhood.

The way Russia responded in the course of the war was just as inappropriate and malicious as Georgia's initial attack, but completely uncalled-for since the power balance between Russia and Georgia could not differ more. The view in which Georgia was aiming for a definitive Western denomination to stand by its side is hence the most likely one but such an avowal failed to appear. The US sent some vessels into the Black Sea and provided some humanitarian aid in the war's aftermath, but this was mainly to save face because the damage already was done and no one could do anything about it. What is more, the fact that Georgia would provoke Russia into a war certainly is also the fault of the West which should have made it unmistakably clear to Tbilisi, not to do so by any means. If it saw the threat of a harsh Russian response in the first place, that is. The harsh rhetoric on Russia ever since the 2008 war could be interpreted as “making-up” for that very fact and hence for the naively institutionalist interpretation of Russia prior to the war. If on the other hand it was Georgia which was lacking the democratic standards so that it would attack South Ossetian civilians, one has to wonder whether the EU was highly overestimating the internal



democratic progress in Georgia apart from Tbilisi's external alignment on economic and institutional issues and thus its actual normative power.

Furthermore this thesis illustrated how Brussels was not thinking through Russian rationale and foreign policy enough, especially when it comes to the ENP and the complementary EaP in view of the tremendous importance of the Caucasus for Russia's energy industry. The European Neighbourhood Policy is a messy process, largely generalizing over what cannot always be put in the same box. Also, it tends to overemphasize the inherently “good” nature of its goals, while overshadowing potentially equally positive effects of Russian policy in its neighbourhood based on economic cooperation. Whether true or false, a common argument in the Russian-speaking world is that for Central Asia, South Asia and the whole Muslim world a Russian-style democracy would be an improvement and is way more realistic than EU-style democracy, an argument that is hardly heard in the West but very common in the Russian-speaking world as a defense of Russian policy. The conclusion that the EU constantly underestimated or neglected Russian sensitivities would not be worth mentioning, if it would not have hurt the EU itself as it has in the course of the war. For the future, Brussels will have to face the reality that its normative ambitions towards Moscow and the countries in the shared neighbourhood are going to be challenged even more despite the economic interdependence between both players, since Russia is becoming stronger, not weaker. The war in Georgia should have taught Brussels the lesson that its relations with Moscow cannot be reduced to technicalities on visas, space technology cooperation and other bilateral talks in the area of “low politics” just as they should not center around values. A mistake the EU once again currently is making in its dialogue with Russia regarding Syria.

Brussels needs to become aware of the fact that it is in conflict with Moscow far more than it would have believed, simply because Russia feels that way. But a retrospective assessment of EU policy towards Moscow cannot merely consist of affronting Moscow either, because there are still too many questions not fully answered in and by the EU, for instance when it comes to the Kosovo which just recently celebrated the five years anniversary of its independence without the presence of a single BRICKS country, Spain, Greece, Romania, Cyprus, Slovakia and dozens more, leaving the global issue of breakaway regions confused. Moreover, there are current threats and problems in the Middle East that cannot be resolved without a mutual and target-oriented dialogue. Admonishing the Kremlin that it needs a democratization process while asking for its secure energy and for its support in Syria and vis-à-vis Iran is an approach that puts Russia and its many internal groups including the opposition in a complicated dilemma. Neither the Russian liberals and committed democrats nor the Kremlin are enabled to fully grasp the EU's policy towards Moscow, simply

because there is no coherent policy as of yet and has not been. And as long as this does not change, European demands regarding Russian democratization will always be seen as the Western wish to weaken Russia to the benefit of the EU, at least as long as Russia is following the Putin doctrine – and this will not change in the foreseeable future.

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