GEORGIAN-SOUTH OSSETIAN CONFLICT: RESEARCHING PEACE

GEORGIAN PAPERS

2011

Georgian-South Ossetian Conflict: Researching Peace

Collection of Georgian Papers

2011

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Design: Artem Melik-Nubarov
Copies printed: 250

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ISBN 978-9941-0-3534-0

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INTRODUCTION

The two sets of papers presented here were once simply an idea that seemed perhaps crazy. Without an introduction, the reader may find this volume schizophrenic. Holding the book in one direction, the reader will find three articles by Georgian researchers. Holding the book in another direction, the reader will find three articles by South Ossetian researchers. To read the other perspective, the reader must change orientation. Different terminology is used in each chapter, and contradictory statements appear from one chapter to another.

All this makes sense in the context of the initial question raised as people with good intentions brainstormed potential confidence building steps: Would there be any chance of engaging scholars to bridge across the Georgian-South Ossetian divide with their writing, and offer some contribution to policy makers? Such confidence building measures once seemed almost impossible, when the first Point of View Civic Process discussion convened civil society peacebuilders in the immediate aftermath of the August 2008 war. But, I have been continuously impressed with the resilience, perseverance, and vision of people on both sides who want to create a stable peace in which Georgian and Ossetian children can grow up feeling at home in the world. After one Point of View discussion in Istanbul in October 2010, Kosta Dzugaev and Archil Gegeshidze decided to give this idea a try. The book you hold in your hands is proof they succeeded.

The two research groups worked independently, but coordinated with each other enough to end up with very different articles assembled together in this one book. After discussions together in Istanbul, the two teams of researchers identified different research priorities, which are reflected in the three articles from each group. Each group sought topics that would offer the most constructive contribution to policymakers on both sides, in the views of that group of authors. Each author worked independently to conduct his or her research. My editorial role was limited and did not engage at all with the content of the research. However, the authors did meet in Istanbul again as they completed drafts, and the articles are richer as a result of that discussion.

Readers will quickly notice that the authors agreed to disagree about terminology. What a Georgian author calls "Georgia proper" may be described as "Georgia" by an Ossetian author. What an Ossetian author refers to as "government" may be described as "leadership" by a Georgian author. Geographic names are also different, as are references to displaced people. The same people are referred to by Georgians as Internally Displaced People and by Ossetians as Forcefully Displaced People or Refugees. The word "border" takes on different significance, as the Ossetians describe an international border, and the Georgians see an administrative border.

This project did not attempt to force any standard terminology. Rather, the project goals are to highlight areas of potential confidence building, build a channel of communication amongst scholars bridging across the divide, and contribute policy relevant writing on areas that have been neglected by research in recent years.

All this would not have been possible without the dedication of Kosta Dzugaev and Archil Gegeshidze, each author, the translators, and a project support staff that kept the two separate projects coordinated with each other enough that they have ended up under one cover.

I hope each reader will find something of value in each chapter—even those chapters with which a reader will want to argue. Understanding the arguments across the current divide requires first knowing what they are. May these two sets of articles be a small step in that direction.

Prof. Susan Allen Nan
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FOREWORD TO THE GEORGIAN COLLECTION

The following collection of articles by notable Georgian researchers George Tarkhan-Mouravi, Ivlian Khaindrava and Revaz Gachechiladze was prepared as part of the project - "Georgian-Ossetian Conflict: Researching Peace," implemented by the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies in 2011. The articles discuss the perspectives of the displaced population, restoring the peacemaking potential of civil society, and the role of the human factor in confidence building between Georgians and Ossetians. The selection and focus of the research areas was defined by two considerations. On the one hand, the results of the August war, which had a profound impact on the life of the population living in the conflict zone, required serious reconsideration. Considering the sharp political standoff between the conflicting parties, the emphasis was placed on the humanitarian and social problems left by the war. On the other hand, the spirit of the project suggested identifying the potential for confidence building between the parties and thus to contributing to the peace process. Accordingly, it was necessary to determine the conditions and resources required for building bridges between Georgian and Ossetian societies in order to identify obstacles on the path to reconciliation.

Considering these circumstances, the Georgian researchers deemed it necessary to look to the future, towards opportunities to escape from the current deadlock. Thus, these articles purposely avoided any political evaluation of the conditions leading to the tragic events of August 2008.

At the same time, the researchers acknowledge the breadth and multidimensionality of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, and the impossibility of conducting a full and large-scale analysis of the topic under the limited time and other constraints such as the paucity of information available. Simultaneously, we are pleased to note that the following compilation of papers represents the first post-war attempt to scientifically evaluate complicated processes of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict without which it is impossible to find the key to the current state of affairs.

We note that our colleagues from South Ossetia in the framework of a similar project led by the George Mason University (the United States) performed similar research. These two projects together create a platform for dialogue between the Georgian and Ossetian researchers. Two working meetings proceeded with an atmosphere of trust and respect and let the participants clarify the research goals and agenda and create a mechanism for the dialogue and cooperation that is necessary in the current conditions of alienation of these two close people.

Archil Gegeshidze
Project Coordinator
Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies
Tbilisi, June 2011

CONFLICT IN SOUTH OSSETIA: CURRENT PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES OF IDP RETURN

George Tarkhan-Mouravi

Introduction

More than twenty years ago, the breakup of the Soviet Union shaped the factors that increased the likelihood for ethnic conflicts in early 1990s Georgia. They, together with the prolonged process of state building, led to the tragic events of 2008.

Since the dramatic crash of the Soviet Union, ethnic relations within Georgia, and in particular, Georgian-Ossetian relations, experienced tensions that went through periods of severe ups and downs. Rarely was there ever a stage reached of common, mutually friendly cooperation. Moreover, soon after the end of the first, active phase of the conflicts in 1990s, they were then termed as "frozen" by international experts. This definition never meant that the conflicts couldn't be transformed or that the danger of reemerging conflict had passed. After the tragic events of 1991-1992 and short-term intensification of conflict in 2004, Georgian-Ossetian and Georgian-Russian relations again reached a disastrous low point during the August 2008 war and since then have been mired in a state of latent enmity with a risk of renewed crisis.

On a cluster of key issues, the official positions of Tskhinvali and Tbilisi are utterly contradictory. The first issue relates to the discussion of legal status of South Ossetia. The point of view of Tbilisi is that South Ossetia is a part of Georgian territory and the ruling regime there is first of all illegal, and also a puppet government, as Russia possesses the real power, occupying its territory. Tskhinvali considers South Ossetia as an independent state with all attributes of a sovereign country and regards Russia as its major protector and guardian from the illegal claims of the Georgian government.

The second key contradiction is the interpretation of 2008 August war. Tbilisi believes the war was provoked by the bombardment of Georgian villages and illicit invasion of Russian troops in the northern region of the sovereign state of Georgia, while the Tskhinvali leadership holds that Russian troops saved Ossetians from genocide and slaughter. Georgia (and the great majority of the international community) views the Russian troops in the Georgian territory as an occupying force, stationed there in violation of Medvedev/Sarkozy agreement which foresaw their going back to the pre-war positions, and that the Russian troops represent a threat to Georgian security. Tskhinvali believes that the Russian military bases are legally stationed based on an agreement reached between two independent states - South Ossetia and Russia, and that they are the guarantors of security for South Ossetia.

Ethnic tension and conflict since its beginning affected not only ethnic Ossetians permanently living outside of South Ossetia within Georgia's territory but also Georgians, living in South Ossetia. This has been a matter of vital importance for tens of thousands of individuals on both sides of the demarcation line. However, it is evident that protection of so called "national interests" should not lead, intentionally, to the violation of the rights and interests of the population who suffered as a result of irresponsible acts of respective authorities before, during and after the end of the military conflict of August 2008.

Tbilisi believes that the majority of the population of Georgian villages in South Ossetia who, due to ethnic cleansing, were forced to leave the region, have the right to return and get restitution for their lost property. Tskhinvali does not deny ousting Georgians and purposely destroying the majority of Georgian settlements, but does not agree that this should be categorized as ethnic

cleansing and concurrently will not allow Georgian refugees to return (except to Akhalgori/Leningori region where return is encouraged).

There are also other principal disagreements with roots in the deep mutual mistrust in addition to the lack of desire from the Ossetians of South Ossetia to live in the Georgian state, which is blamed for all their troubles. Given the irreconcilable differences between the political elites in Tbilisi and Tskhinvali (and also in Moscow) on specific issues, in particular the legal status of South Ossetia and the stationing of the Russian military bases and border guards there, there is no expectation that in the immediate future relations will improve.

Below we attempt to define the foremost problems in Ossetian-Georgian relations, and review and analyze them without bias that might contribute to mitigating the current standoff and assist in finding the optimal model of peaceful coexistence even within current limitations.

One of the key obstacles to achieving a truly impartial analysis presented below is the extremely limited availability of reliable information on all aspects of the functioning of society in South Ossetia.[1] While it is somewhat easier to obtain information in Georgia proper, nevertheless here too information regarding the conditions of IDPs, or ethnic Ossetians, is not easily attainable or fully reliable. Limited time and lack of opportunities to visit South Ossetia was a major constraint for the current research.

General Context: Peace, Russia, North Caucasus

In order to discuss the possible modes of Ossetian-Georgian relations in various time perspectives, it is essential to consider these relations as a geopolitical subsystem defined by many factors, such as: general geopolitical context, objectives pursued by the parties, country specifics, trends and possible scenarios of political developments. It should be noted, however, that taking into consideration the extreme isolation of South Ossetia from the rest of the world, global processes influence the region only indirectly, through economic and political processes in Russia, particularly in the North Caucasus, and also in Georgia. Georgia, in its turn, is directly connected to the international community and is extremely sensitive towards geopolitical shifts and events.

Since the summer of 2008 a few important processes influenced the course of developments in the region and in the world. These have been: the global economic crisis, leading to a reshuffle of the distribution of economic influence in the world; "Reset" of relations between Russia and the West, the most importantly, the United States; unrest and uprisings in the Arab world that have raised renewed questions regarding the stability of authoritarian regimes;[2] and finally, the recent rash of terrorist acts in Russia and the related increase in nationalistic mood not only among Russians but

[1] "Despite the information content stated in the reports, we can state with confidence that none of them gives the complete information about situation which was created in South Ossetia after the war and even if we compare all reports together we still can't create full picture. Last year South Ossetia became the "grey zone" in fact where there are obstacles to almost all humanitarian organizations to work. The government and civil society in South Ossetia also don't provide detailed information. It is possible that limited resources are the reason behind poor collection and analyses of information, or insufficiency of professionalism, or – in certain cases – the silence motivated by political reasons or distortion of certain facts. At present there is no publicly accessible information for individual who is willing to be aware of humanitarian problems of the region" – Pakhomenko, Varvara - *Populated island, Notes on the Demography of South Ossetian Conflict,* Caucasian Knot, 08.26.2010, http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/173406, (in Russian - *Обитаемый остров. Заметки о демографии юго-осетинского конфликта.* Кавказский Узел. 26.08. 2010, http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/173406

[2] The topic about possible repeat of Arab events in the former USSR region is becoming more popular. See: Hrant Kostanyan. *Spillovers from the Arab Revolts: Is Armenia next in line?* CEPS Policy Brief No. 236, 15 March 2011 http://www.ceps.eu/book/spillovers-arab-revolts-armenia-next-line

also among ethnic minorities. In the near future, the important events will include upcoming elections in South Ossetia, Russia and Georgia, as the election results could indicate the direction in which relations will develop in the asymmetric triangle – Moscow-Tbilisi-Tskhinvali.

Russia went through an economic crisis rather painfully,[3] though the recovery too began comparatively quickly.[4] According to the World Bank forecast, the GDP in Russia is expected to grow by 4.2% in 2011, though high inflation will remain as the central problem. In a more long term perspective the big threat to the Russian economy is high dependency on the price of oil in international markets. Taking into consideration the weakness of institutions within Russia, the "resource curse" can become a markedly restrictive factor for stable economic growth.[5] The second most important factor limiting growth prospects is a monotonic decline of the workforce in the country.[6] Under such circumstances, it is hard to expect long-term stable growth in the economy, even though the standard of living of the aging population (due to low birth rates), oriented toward export of raw materials, might temporarily increase while oil prices remain high. In conclusion, comparatively low rate of growth of economy (2.5%-4% annually) and low growth rate or stagnation of real income appears to be the most plausible inertial scenario for the near future (provided market conditions for raw materials are favorable).[7] Nevertheless, Russia intends to increase expenses not only in the social sphere, but also plans to spend trillions of rubles on rearmament of the military in the next several years.[8]

In general, the changing geopolitical context over the past several years has not favored Russia, burdened by multiple problems and weaknesses.[9] Even the deep economic crisis of 2008-2009 did not generate sufficient stimulus for undertaking radical reforms intended to modernize the country and restore democratic institutions that have been abolished or weakened during the last decade.

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[3] «The world economic crisis indicated that our affairs aren't in the best state. Twenty years of stormy transformations still didn't save our country from humiliating raw material dependency. Our current economy copied the worst defect from the Soviet past– to a bigger extent ignore the demand of the individuals. Our own businesses, with few exceptions, don't create anything, don't produce technology and goods for consumers. They trade what they didn't make – raw material, or imported goods. The majority of products made in Russia are very uncompetitive yet», D. Medvedev, Russia Go Ahead!, September 10, 2009, http://kremlin.ru/news/5413 (in Russian, Д.Медведев. *Россия, вперед!* 10 сентября 2009. http://kremlin.ru/news/5413)

[4] In addition, situation in the majority of regions is too far from prosperity. According to the statement of Director of the Regional Programs at the Independent Institute for Social Policy – Natalya Zubarevich: "the country is divided into parts. If we look at the dynamics of income the majority of regions couldn't compensate the fall. We are coming through the crisis slowly and shaking. It can be stated that the regions didn't recover from the crisis yet" , Sergei Kulikov, Half of the Regions in Russia Didn't Exit the Crisis. Nezavisimaia Gazeta, 31.03.2011. http://www.ng.ru/economics/2011-03-31/1_crisis.html (in Russian, Сергей Куликов, *Половина регионов России еще не вышла из кризиса*. Независимая Газета, 31.03.2011. http://www.ng.ru/economics/2011-03-31/1_crisis.html

[5] See - Roland Beck, Annette Kamps and Elitza Mileva. Long-term growth prospects for the Russian economy. European Central Bank, Frankfurt. March 2007. http://ssrn.com/abstract_id=967603

[6] « Among the key challenges that determine the model with which we need to go further, is demography. Russia will face a demographic problem more acute than in many countries. According to the Ministry of Economic Development, employment in the economy since 2011 in the amount of 67.9 million decrease in 2020 to 64.6 million, which means that each year we will diminish the number of employed in economy by about 300-400 thousand.» Speech by A.L. Kudrin at the VIII Krasnoyarsk Economic Forum, February 18, 2011. (in Russian- Стенограмма выступления А.Л. Кудрина на VIII Красноярском экономическом форуме, 18 февраля 2011 г.) http://www.minfin.ru/ru/press/transcripts/printable.php?id4=12090

[7] Kiril Rogov, Hypothesis of the Third Cycle, Pro et Contra. July/October, 2010, p.11, (in Russian - Кирилл Рогов. Гипотеза третьего цикла. Pro et Contra. Июль-октябрь 2010. Стр. 11.) http://carnegieendowment.org/files/ProetContra_50_6-22.pdf

[8] « Russia will spend 20 trillion rubles on military expenditures through 2020, stated Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. Nearly 5 trillion of them will go to upgrading the Navy complex country, the head of the government said at a meeting on the issue of drafting the state program of armament for 2011-2020 in Severodvinsk Weekly». http://www.newsru.com/russia/13dec2010/strashno.html

[9] « Thus, the inefficient economy, semi-Soviet social sphere, the fledgling democracy, demographic trends, an unstable Caucasus, this is a very big problem, even for a state like Russia», Д. Медведев. Россия, вперед! 10 сентября 2009 года. http://www.kremlin.ru/news/5413

Although Russia continues to play an important role in global affairs, its key factors of international influence remain its nuclear potential and hydrocarbon wealth, in addition to the political unpredictability and ambitions. A decline in the demand for Russian energy resources led to fundamental changes in the energy policy of the Russian Government, as made clear by the approaching agony of the much advertised construction of the South Stream pipeline.[10]

It is evident that the influence of Russia in the region and in the world in short- and mid-term perspective will further decline. Even in the post-Soviet space, where Russia remains much more powerful than any of its neighbors, its influence is in fact limited, as has been revealed by their unanimous refusal to recognize the independence of South Ossetia (and Abkhazia). And, of course, Russia also appeared unable to turn around the process of the disintegration of the former Soviet space.

Among the most significant processes defining the situation in Russia, and which dangerously threaten it in the long-term perspective, is the steady decline of its population, in addition to its structural change.[11] Experts predict that in following decades the population in Russia will continue to shrink, as the decline in the birth rate is only partly compensated by the inflow of migrants, mainly from the former Soviet Republics. Based on the recent census, RossStat estimated the population in Russia in 2010, as determined by the number of permanent citizens in the country.[12] According to the preliminary data of census, the population of Russia by January 1, 2010 was 142.96 million people, i.e. for the last eight years the population was reduced by 2.2 million people. Experts are worried not just by the population decline and increased gender imbalance,[13] but more so by the imbalances in the geographical and ethnic distribution of the population.[14] In fact, the process of decline of ethnic Russian population is partially compensated by the increase in the numbers of ethnic minorities, and first of all – the Caucasians, and also of emigrants from Central Asia. Based on the preliminary census data, the highest rate of population growth was observed in the North Caucasus Federal District (6.3%), where the population has reached 9.5 million – this figure is only two times less than the total population living in huge territories of Siberia (where 19.3 million people reside, this number gradually declining, i.e. just 14% of total Russia's population is spread over 57% of the entire territory of Russia).

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[10] Anton Kliuchin, Something Strange Happened. Lenta ru. Comments: 03.18.1011 (in Russian, Антон Ключкин. Случилось странное. Lenta.ru: Комментарии: 18.03.2011) http://lenta.ru/articles/2011/03/18/potok/

[11] The famous demographer colorfully described this unhappy situation: "A specter is haunting Russia today. It is not the specter of Communism—that ghost has been chained in the attic of the past—but rather of depopulation —a relentless, unremitting, and perhaps unstoppable depopulation". Nicolas Eberstadt. Drunken Nation: Russia's Depopulation Bomb. World Affairs, Spring 2009. http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/articles/2009-Spring/full-Eberstadt.html See also, Nicholas Eberstadt. Russia's Peacetime Demographic Crisis: Dimensions, Causes, Implications. The National Bureau of Asian Research. May 2010. http://www.nbr.org/publications/specialreport/pdf/preview/Russia_demography_preview.pdf

[12] Rosstat darkened the picture on extinction of Russian population based on the new data, see Novosti (the News), newsru.com, March 29, 2011. http://newsru.com/russia/29mar2011/rosstat2010.html. See also, Disappearing World Power, Das Berlin-Institut für Bevölkerung und Entwicklung, 2011. http://www.berlin-institut.org/selected-studies/the-waning-world-power.html

[13] The population of Russia steadily was decreasing since the USSR broke apart in 1991, where the average lifespan for men fell to 60 years comparing to 72 for women. Social and economic factors for this decline were ascribed as alcoholism, depression and in other diseases..Tony Halpin. Millions of men disappear as demon drink takes its toll. The Times, 29.03.2011 http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/europe/article2964251.ece. См. также: Nicholas Eberstadt. Drunken Nation: Russia's Depopulation Bomb. World Affairs, Spring 2010. http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/articles/2009-Spring/full-Eberstadt.html

[14] For example, Director of Institute of Globalization Problems, Mychail Delyagin stated that Russia is experiencing a process of extinction of the Russian part of the population through ethno-cultural balance in Russia and if we keep up this trend, in 8 to 20 Russia will be governed by Caucasians. Russian News Service, 03.28.2011. http://www.rusnovosti.ru/guests/visitor/56172

The above mentioned processes, along with ongoing (though creeping) war in the North Caucasus, terrorist acts reaching the capital of country, and artificially pumped up alarmist and nationalist rhetoric in mass media, all encourage an increase in Russian ethnic nationalism which is capable of setting up the spiral of violence and destabilization. The December 2010 events in Manege square of Moscow and in some other cities became the first signs of the possibility that the above mentioned government-cultivated ethnic nationalism may slip out of control. The redefining of the Russian state in ethnic terms has the potential to become the most dangerous development in its entire post-Soviet history. Putting forward this type of political objective has the potential to tear apart Russia's integrity and lead to a reexamination of its borders.

In recent years, Russian ethno-nationalism has assumed primarily the form of xenophobia.[15] Large numbers of racially motivated crimes have been observed in Moscow and Petersburg regions. Moreover, the extremists appear to act in a rather favorable public environment. Based on opinion polls conducted by the Levada-Center, 58% of respondents share the idea of "Russia for Russians," an increase from 43% in 1998.[16] Along with the growth of ethnic nationalism, there is also a gradual increase in regional nationalism, which highlights the core differences between regions and the central government, as the latter is regarded as having led a colonial-style robbery of the local population. So, the last census revealed a large number of individuals living in Siberia who claimed their nationality as "Siberian."[17]

In connection to South Ossetia the most vital issues to focus on are the alarming processes in the North Caucasus. However, the Russian Government is not simply passive against the background of an increasingly tense situation, but appeared fully incapable of adequately assessing the situation and identifying proactive responses to stabilize the region.[18] The processes in the North Caucasus, gradually spreading elsewhere in Russia, are extremely dangerous for the country. Quoting Aleksei Malashenko, "the entire North Caucasus is in a state of latent war."[19] Russian officials are also no less alarmed. So, Prime Minister Putin, during the meeting of the government commission on social-economic development of the North Caucasus, underlined the role of social factors,[20] and

[15]Dimitry Trenin: After the imperial consciousness, ideological consciousness on the front position came national consciousness, nationalism, not always in its best form. To this extent anti Caucasian and anti American sentiments originate from the same roots. In "Face to Face", interview with the Director of the Carnergie Center in Moscow Dmitri Trenin. Danila Ganperovich, Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, March 13th, 2011, http://carnegie.ru/publications/?fa=43158

[16] Results of opinion poll based on representative selection of 1,600 Russians ages between 18 and up in 130 residential areas in 45 regions of Russia, took place in January 21-24, 2011 and was carried by Iuri Levada Analytic Centre (Levada – Centre). http://www.levada.ru/press/2011020407.html

[17] Vladimir Antilin, The Citizen of Syberia, Russian Reporter, February 22, 2011, No. 7 (185. http://rusrep.ru/article/2011/02/22/sibir/

[18] « The present policy of the Kremlin in the Caucasus cannot succeed. The federal government focuses on short-term, quick-results strategy to stabilize the North Caucasus and the preparation for the 2014 Olympics instead of adopting a long-term approach on a national scale that would ensure long-lasting stability and development in the region.. Maria Lipman, Nikolai Petrov, "Tandem" system of governance and decision-making in Russia, presentation in Carnegie Fund for International Peace Washington D.C., October 19, 2010 http://russian.carnegieendowment.org/events/?fa=eventDetail&id=3100

[19] See also his recent interview: - - Do you think that the situation in the North Caucasus in general was desperate? - Alas, desperate. For all that it should not be viewed in black and white: that is having positive and highly efficient state, good law enforcement agencies - the Interior Ministry and Federal Security Service, is a kind of civil society, on the one hand, and there are bad people called "Wahhabis" who are constantly stirring up the water - on the other. As you can imagine, this is a very primitive approach, and it does not reflect the seriousness of the situation. Today the North Caucasus has witnessed such overlapping of contradictions - and the social, political, religious and ethnic - that getting rid of them, acting "linear" is practically impossible. Profile, No. 10 (709), March 21, 2011 (in Russian - Профиль №10 (709), 21 марта 2011 г.), http://www.profile.ru/items/?item=31859

[20] « I would like to reaffirm that our objective is to radically change the situation in the North Caucasus, primarily by improving the quality of life of the people, ensuring their security and giving them the opportunity to work and leave in peace. We must eradicate the roots of terrorism and extremism, first of all poverty, unemployment, ignorance and inadequate levels of education, corruption and lawlessness.» http://www.premier.gov.ru/events/news/13920/

promised to invest only in 2011 more than 400 billion rubles for development in the region. In September 2010 the 'Strategy for Social-Economic Development of the North Caucasus Federal District until 2025' was approved. In January 2011, at the Davos summit, Russian officials put forward grand plans for the development of ski tourism in Dagestan and Adygea.[21] In reality, Moscow is losing control of these regions and is unable to pacify the Caucasus either by military means or through multibillion financial injections.

Attempts of "Kadirovization" of different autonomous entities in the North Caucasus carry with them serious risks of the further loss of control over the region, all the more so as the ethnic Russian population continues its slow but steady exit from there. The possible strengthening of coordination between the Caucasus Emirate and radical West-Caucasian groups is capable of sharply exacerbating the situation, and even poses a threat to the Winter Olympics in Sochi of 2014. In the North Caucasus, we not only see the local versions of nationalism and secessionism sprouting up, aggravated by harsh social conditions, poverty and widespread unemployment, but also lawlesness, clanism and corruption, as well as radical branches of Islam are attracting more and more individuals among young Caucasians and not infrequently even ethnic Russians. Moreover, radical Islam threatens to spread widely in the course of time through the Volga-Ural region, where Muslims represent the majority of the population, in particular to Tatarstan and Bashkortostan.[22]

The possibility of isolation or separation of the North Caucasus from Russia is becoming a topic of more frequent discussions, while just a few years ago, this theme was entirely exotic and practically not discussed. Many residents of Russia's central regions are irritated by the cultural and behavioral distinctiveness of the Caucasians, their connection to organized crime (real or imaginary), terrorism, or commonplace violence (especially widespread in the Russian army). Even discussions over issues like a proposed no-visa regime with the European Union, according to many experts, are delayed significantly because of the "Caucasian problem."[23]

State of Affairs in Georgia Proper

The state of affairs in Georgia can be divided here into economic (economic development and growth, macroeconomic trends, investment, manufacture and trade), social (poverty, unemployment, social security, demography, social infrastructure) and finally, - political (government, elections, political groups, internal and foreign policy) areas. The events of August 2008 profoundly shocked Georgian society, and will definitely have far-reaching political, social and economic consequences, further exacerbated by the global crisis. However, against the backdrop of the geopolitical and geo-economic realities described above, equally important are the reforms and public policies implemented by the Georgian government.

[21] « In terms of socio-economic development it is only a concept of large-scale development of ski resorts in all of the Caucasian republics. Even though this idea seems absurd, it is expected that this idea really will attract tourists and creates jobs for the rapidly growing population. It seems to be more rational if we consider it as a fee for the loyalty of local elites and stability plus the development of construction, which can really give people jobs.», Nikolai Petrov, Grani, 02.28.2011 (in Russian, Николай Петров. Грани, 28.02.2011), http://grani.ru/opinion/petrov/m.186617.html

[22] As recently was noted by retired Major-General of Police, Vladimir Ovchinski in the New Times, « In addition, Volga region is under a fire. In fact every week one terrorist group we have to liquidate in Bashkiria and Tatarstan, just Mass Media doesn't write on them....» http://newtimes.ru/articles/detail/34785/

[23] « The European Union does not want to introduce visa-free regime with Russia, and soon will not even ease the visa regime. Even if Russia unilaterally will abolish visas for EU citizens, the EU did not respond in kind and will not abolish visas for Russians", - said the Belgian ambassador in Moscow, Guy Trouveroy in an interview with the Russian News Service. The main reason for lack of interest in the abolition of EU visas - problem in the North Caucasus, the diplomat explained: Europe fears a large influx of refugees from troubled regions of Russia". Belgian Ambassador: Europe Would Not Cancel Visa for Russians is Afraid for Caucasians, NEWSru.com, March 1rst, 2011. http://newsru.com/russia/31mar2011/boitso.html

Despite the fact that the Georgian economy still is weakly integrated into the global economic system, the world economic crisis inevitably hit the already frail economy of the country. The volatility of Georgian economy is determined also by the fact that its prosperity is directly connected to the realization of its transit potential, and furthermore by the prices of transported goods, chiefly energy resources. In contrast to its neighbors Azerbaijan and Russia, Georgia is comparatively poor in hydrocarbon resources, although some moderate optimism is related to already exploited deposits of oil in East Georgia, near the Azerbaijan border, and also the first signs of oil in the Black Sea shelf.[24] Still, currently the key factor of development of Georgia is coupled with its transit function, as a few vital oil and gas pipelines cross the country.

Indeed, Georgia was severely affected by the economic crisis that coincided with the urgency to restore its economy after war damage, even though the generous support from the West played a significant role in cushioning the impact of the crisis. While the GDP grew by more than 10% in 2006-2007, the growth rate fell in 2008 and became negative in 2009. Despite major obstacles, such as inflation and stumbling foreign investment, the economy began recovering in 2010. The IMF in its prognosis (made in February, 2011) upped the expected growth rate for Georgia in 2011 from 4.5% to 5.5%. It also forecast a reduced inflation rate - 8% at the end of the year (inflation was 11.8% in December 2010, 12.3% in January and 13.7% in February 2011).[25] At the same time, in 2012-2014 the government was expected to face significant international obligations related to servicing its external debt, which should have reached the maximum – more than $1 billion USD in 2013 (8% of GDP).[26] A slight improvement was forecast by the major rating agencies - for example – Fitch Ratings reviewed the long-term prognosis of the Georgian debt and changed "stable" into "positive" and approved B+ level. Fitch agency evaluated the real GDP growth as 6.5% in 2010 after the negative growth of -3.9% in 2009. It also forecast growth by 5% and 6% in 2011 and 2012 respectively.[27]

Notwithstanding considerable macroeconomic success before the August 2008 war, while widespread poverty saw a slight drop, the unemployment and disparity in wealth remained high. Poverty to a great extent is due to high unemployment and low productivity of labor, especially in agriculture. Regardless of economic growth, the majority of the population has continued to work in agriculture. And while this work provides the bare necessities, there are very few who are able to improve their economic and social conditions. At the same time, while more than half the population is residing in the rural areas and 55% of the workforce is employed in agriculture, its portion in GDP is only 8%-9%.[28] Beyond a doubt, it is still unemployment that remains the most severe social problem, and it continues to grow (12% - in 2004, 16% in 2009).

The state system of social welfare acquired particular significance against the background of widespread poverty. Respectively, social welfare – including pensions and pension subsidies for specific groups of individuals, children subsidies, disability benefits, and recently created (in 2006) individual social assistance – takes away a large portion of the state budget. Solidarity based pensions remain the biggest part of the social welfare budget, due to the large number of pensioners in the country (about 838,000 individuals in 2010). At the same time the pension rate of 80 Lari per month is very low, as the subsistence wage in winter 2011 was 150-160 Lari.[29] In addition to poverty, other factors stymie the ability to improve standards of living in Georgia. For example, the

[24] See: Boyko Nitzov. The Black Sea as the New North Sea. New Atlanticist, May 19, 2010. http://www.acus.org/new_atlanticist/black-sea-new-north-sea
[25] http://civil.ge/rus/article.php?id=21765
[26] IMF. Georgia — 2011 Article IV Consultation Mission Concluding Statement. February 22, 2011 http://www.imf.org/external/np/ms/2011/022211.htm. (Later, significant part of this debt got rescheduled).
[27] http://www.interpressnews.ge/en/society/25892-fitch-revises-georgias-outlook-from-stable-to-positive.html
[28] http://www.geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&p_id=428&lang=eng
[29] http://www.geostat.ge/?action=page&p_id=178&lang=geo

prospect of offering housing to vulnerable groups of the population remains limited and unsatisfactory. Construction of new homes is almost fully controlled by the private sector, and since the rushed privatization of residences in the beginning of the 1990s, the government almost entirely stopped its involvement in residential building, with the exception of very rare cases of construction for the internally displaced population (in particular in Fall 2008).

Migration still remains a popular way for solving economic and social problems. Traditionally, the Georgian population was not inclined to emigrate and previously only small groups of Georgian Diaspora lived abroad. Nonetheless, since the beginning of the 1990s, the permanent economic crisis and political instability have forced hundreds of thousands of Georgian citizens to leave the country, in order to find security, livelihood, and better opportunities for self-realization. As a result, Georgia has lost to date almost one fifth of its population. Russia and the CIS countries at first were the most popular destinations for migrants; however more recently, Europe and the United States have become more attractive places to emigrate, because of the higher standard and quality of life there, but also due to the deteriorating situation in Russia. Migration leads to the loss of a qualified and able workforce; however, assistance received from abroad, mainly in the form of remittances sent to their kin by the migrants, is extremely important for supporting living standards of many families, and the economy of the country as a whole. At the same time, after a long period of declining numbers, the first sign of Georgian population increase was noted in 2010[30] based on the positive balance of the natural growth rate and migration.

Naturally, migration affected ethnic minorities even more than ethnic Georgians, and this has led to a considerable proportional increase of the ethnic Georgian population in the country (67% in 1989 and 82% in 2002). This process was also influenced by the conflicts and nationalistic mood in the beginning of 1990s, as well as by better opportunities for migration for some ethnic minorities – Jews, Greeks, etc. Still, poly-ethnicity remains in Georgia with considerable compactly settled populations of Armenians and Azeris, and some smaller groups. Here, we are primarily interested in ethnic Ossetians residing in Georgia proper, i.e. outside of South Ossetia.

The Ossetian population of Georgia in 1989 [i.e. prior to the breakup of the Soviet Union] numbered 164,000, while out of this number about 99,000 lived in South Ossetia. 33,138 Ossetians resided in Tbilisi. The outcome of 1991-1992 events significantly affected the Ossetian populations. Either by force or willingly, many Ossetians abandoned their homes, mainly in the Borjomi gorge and East Georgian settlements, and moved primarily to North Ossetia. In 2002, the Ossetian population in the Georgian controlled territories (outside of South Ossetia) was 38,000 people. The number of Ossetians in Tbilisi fell to 10,000. Migration of the Ossetian population from Georgia proper continued later as well, particularly from the Pankisi gorge, mainly as a result of pressure by the Chechen refugees resettled there from Russia. Relatively large groups of the ethnic Ossetian population are found in Shida Kartli, Kakheti, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, and to a lesser extent in other regions. Ossetians live in Georgia proper in 130 villages and in most of big urban settlements.[31] Since no exact demographic data regarding the number of ethnic Ossetians are available, one has to depend on expert projections, estimating their number at approximately 25,000-30,000. It is impossible to avail any exact figures also because there is no clear definition of ethnicity, due to mixed families and high rates of assimilation, reflected in part by assuming Georgian endings to Ossetian family names. In any case, one can conclude that approximately the same number of Ossetians live in Georgia proper, outside of South Ossetia, as those who reside in South Ossetia itself.

[30] For a year number of population in Georgia was increased by 51,000, Business Georgia, 08.18.2010 http://bizzone.info/stats/EklkEEVVyy.php

[31] Giorgi Sordia. Ossetians in Georgia in the Wake of the 2008 War. ECMI Working Paper #45, Flensburg: ECMI, August 2009. http://www.ecmicaucasus.org/upload/publications/working_paper_45_en.pdf

There was no noticeable major exodus of Ossetians from Georgia following the August 2008 war, nor was there any notable enmity expressed towards them. In general, outside of South Ossetia there were no major changes in relations between Georgians and Ossetians. At the same time, uncertainty and anxiety is observed among many rural residents of Ossetian ethnicity, with regards to future prospects of their life in Georgia, along with the renewal of military action and its potential consequences.[32]

As a result of the optimization process, many schools in Georgia with a small number of students were closed down and merged with bigger schools. This process has also affected Ossetian schools (both those schools entirely teaching in Ossetian, and schools with some classes in Ossetian language), so that there are only a few Ossetian schools left.[33] No less important a problem is the lack of modern textbooks in Ossetian language and lack of qualified teachers (these problems remain unsolved also for the recently opened Ossetian Sunday school in Tbilisi). As for mass media in Georgia – the Public Channel has a 30 minute news report in Ossetian once a week and a short weekly radio program also is aired. In general, there remain big problems with the preservation and usage of the Ossetian language, and unless radical measures are taken, its fate does not cause much optimism. While there are a few Ossetian associations working in Georgia, they do not seem to act vigorously in this direction. Among them is the biggest organization – Association of Ossetians in Georgia Vsimaron (brotherhood), established in 1998.[34] These associations focus their activity on organizing cultural events, preserving Ossetian traditions, strengthening ethnic minority rights, and building trust between Georgians and Ossetians. The lack of financial resources and somewhat inert attitudes limit these organizations' work. Since the August 2008 war, Ossetians in Georgia proper are even less visible in society or in state politics.

Recent political activity in Georgia is largely focused on the upcoming 2012-2013 parliamentary and presidential elections. Major changes in the ethnic policy or policy towards South Ossetia are not to be expected prior to these elections. The reputation of the Georgian Government has suffered somewhat in the West, but along with the issues of territorial integrity and the deployment of Russian military bases in the Georgian territory, the Georgian Government still considers Euro-Atlantic integration as the major focus of its foreign policy. The West is still worried that in addition to the conflicts and volatility of the political situation, Georgia is considered to be a part of the major transit channels for illegal drugs to Europe.[35] Multiple arrests were also made in Georgia during attempts to send enriched uranium from Russia (mainly through South Ossetia).[36]

In addition, instability and the spread of terrorism in the North Caucasus is a headache not just for Russia, but for Georgia as well. It should be also noted that the problem of integration of ethnic minorities, and in particular Azeris and Armenians residing in South-East Georgia, has become somewhat less acute in recent years.

Over the last twenty years, Georgia has endured numerous shocks and challenges, and it is not surprising that the population's collective consciousness has been afflicted by a "post-colonial syndrome" along with certain irrational attitudes. Vamik Volkan has defined this affliction, in a

[32] G. Sordia. op.cit.

[33] Naira Bepievi. Issue of Ossetians' Education. 2010. http://www.bspn.gfsis.org/articles/87-issue-of-ossetians-education

[34] Interview with the President of Association of Georgia Tengiz Gagloev, Moscow Ossetian Community (2004), http://www.iriston.ru/ru/more_news_diaspora.php?aid=33

[35] «Law enforcement bodies in European countries have intercepted seven to eight tons of illicit narcotics in 2009 in long-haul trucks that had at one point passed through Georgia». The 2011 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report. http://www.state.gov/p/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2011/vol1/156360.htm#georgia

[36] A. Kupatadze. Radiological Smuggling and Uncontrolled Territories: The Case Of Georgia. Global Crime, Vol. 8, Issue 1, 2007, pp. 40–57. http://cns.miis.edu/npr/pdfs/npr_17-2_kupatadze.pdf

psychoanalytic tradition, as "group regression."[37] The opinion polls demonstrate a deep anxiety caused by the present state of affairs, in particular, by relations with Russia, as well as by distress over the loss of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Maps and borders play a significantly symbolic role in general, and people tend to react sensitively to any territorial losses, as they are considered the most essential elements of a nation's existence. The population's foreign policy orientation is defined by these events, and the West and NATO are associated with security, the hope of restoring territorial integrity, and economic prosperity. Russia, in its turn, threatens Georgia's independence and statehood. This is the main reason why pro-Russian political groups do not enjoy popular support in Georgia.

The official concept of national interests fully reflects public opinion: the war initiated by Russia represents the major threat to state security, with its military bases in occupied territories of Georgia. The vital national task is the return of South Ossetia and Abkhazia under the control of the Georgian government. The major foreign policy task is Euro Atlantic integration. Other important elements of the national concept are: strengthening of government institutions and speedy economic reforms leading to prosperity of country, resolving all social problems.

With no strong logic behind it, either Switzerland or Singapore or any other country is stated as model for Georgia, depending on which place the head of the state has recently visited and liked. However, the actual actions by the government are often in conflict with the declared objectives, and may sometimes appear inconsistent, not thought through, and ineffective. So, one may observe the declaration of pursuing democratic values and freedoms not fully consistent with: establishing effective control over most of the electronic mass media; unwillingness to consult with citizens and opposition on key political decisions; violations in the run-up to the elections; or weakening local governance and the court system. The officially declared deregulation and economic liberalism coexist alongside with weak and often violated property rights and informal methods to pressure businesses. Declared orientation to European integration stands in contrast to excessive deregulation and some of the new laws (for example, the Labor Code), which are not in line with EU standards. Consequently, the impression is that the ruling elites are concerned first of all with retaining power, and many decisions are made under the influence of random and sometimes irrational factors.

Displaced Persons

One of the most painful problems of Georgian reality is the situation of internally displaced persons. It serves as an obstacle for the country's socio-economic development and stabilization. The great majority of IDPs does not have proper living conditions and live in poverty. They do not have permanent and sustainable incomes and are not fully integrated with the local population, while there is no immediate expectation that they will be able to return home any time soon.

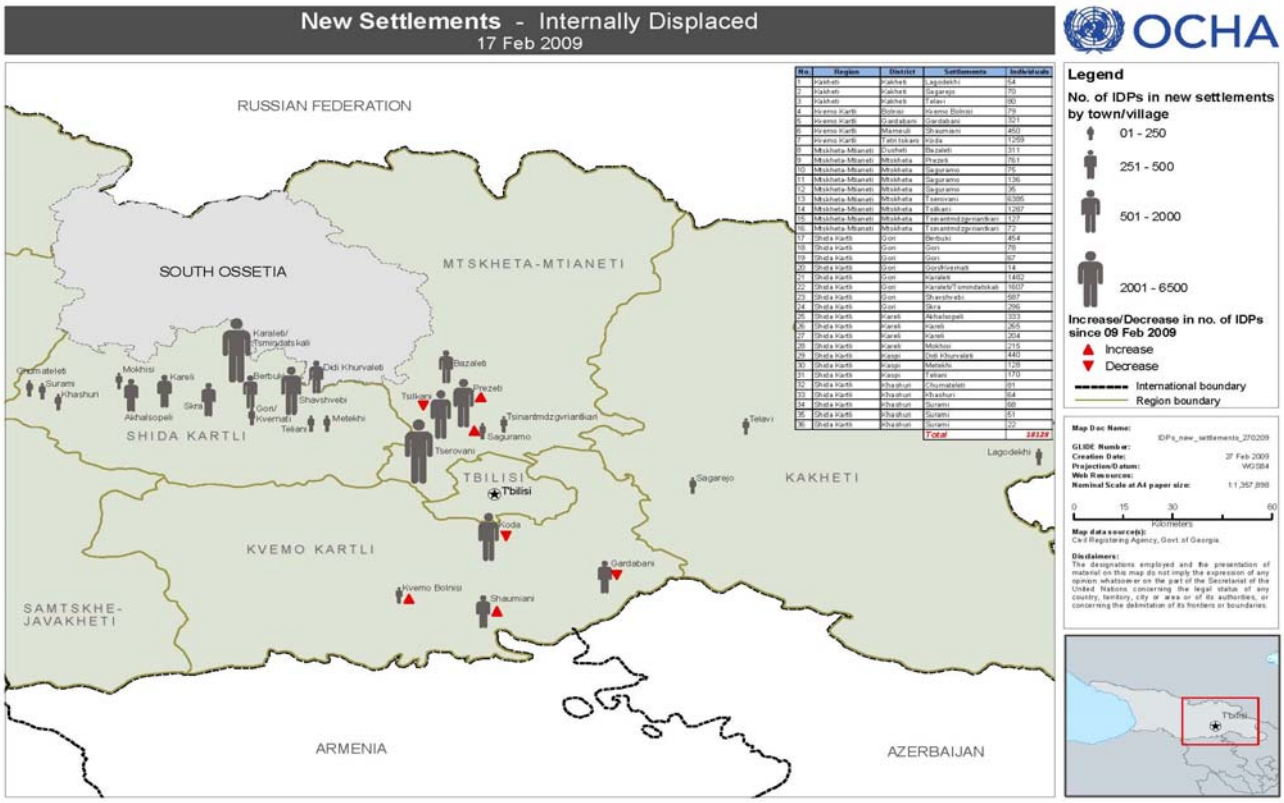
The humanitarian situation in Georgia was unfavorable even before the 2008 war, due to the great numbers of IDPs from the conflict zones, from the early 1990s. Since August 2008, the condition worsened with tens of thousands of additional IDPs expelled (some of them forced to migrate not for the first time).

[37] [National and ethnic conflicts] can not be understood if we only focus on material aspects of it, such as: economic, military, legal and political factors. In fact the problems of "material world" are psychological in their highest meaning and they are influenced of specific perceptions, thoughts, fantasies, and emotions (conscious and subconscious), which are tied to the heroic past or memory of traumas received, losses, humiliation and moments of deep sorrow, also the feeling of vengeance, and resistance to accept changed circumstances. Vamık D. Volkan. Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 1997., p.117

The Government of Georgia was forced to change the already approved "Action Plan for the Implementation of the State Strategy for Internally Displaced Persons", and at the same time to urgently solve problems of 24,000 new forced migrants from South Ossetia. This number added to the approximately 13,000 migrants who fled South Ossetia in the beginning of the 1990s and lived in Tbilisi, Gori and some rural areas of Shida Kartli, and more than 200,000 IDPs from Abkhazia (even though a part of these IDPs live in Gali region of Abkhazia and their IDP status is questionable).

Based on government data, by the end of December 2008, 95% of IDPs were provided with housing – which made 16, 528 individuals. They moved into 3,963 new homes (the average cost of a house was 27,933 Lari) and 9,342 damaged houses were restored in areas nearby South Ossetia (average cost was 2,000 Lari). Some IDPs could get residence in the cities – mainly in Gori. The IDPs who refused to move into new houses built in Shida Kartli, Kvemo Kartli, and in Mtskheta-Mtianeti had the right to request monetary compensation. The families that moved into restored houses received some small monetary compensation as well.

The state program to assist "old" IDPs aimed to provide the housing through exercising property rights (in most cases the temporary residence was legally privatized) or to pay monetary compensation. In addition, all registered IDPs have the right to receive a small but permanent allowance and some benefits – for example, free health care.



Map of IDP settlements, data based on UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Obviously, providing housing and monetary assistance does not guarantee proper living conditions for IDPs, and in fact the most important problem remains unemployment and the lack of permanent income.[38] While living conditions of some IDPs cannot be considered worse than some other groups of the population (for example some ethnic minorities, people living in isolated mountain

[38] G. Tarkhan-Mouravi. Assessment of IDP Livelihoods in Georgia: Facts and Policies. UNHCR, Tbilisi. May 2009 http://www.unhcr.org/4ad827b12.pdf

regions, etc.) Still, their problems have specific features. Among the number of specific problems or risks is uncertainty of future and; low income/unemployment; generally inadequate living conditions; degraded social capital; and, post traumatic disorders common among IDPs).

Poverty is the biggest scourge for IDPs, although it also plagues the large majority of the entire Georgian population. To a large extent, poverty is tied to two interconnected factors: whether the members of a family are unemployed or have a job; and the second– the quality of human capital in the family (education, health care, and profession). Many IDPs are struggling daily to survive, as unemployment is high in the country, although IDPs encounter often additional obstacles due to having few connections and resources as they have to compete with locals, overcome administrative barriers and adapt to the unfamiliar labor market.

As already mentioned above, members of households with access to arable land are not considered unemployed. Local government officials can temporarily give land to IDPs on their request, and the officials are authorized to choose the land and its size. Even if the land is there and it is suitable for agricultural cultivation, the IDPs need the fertilizers, machinery and fuel – in other words – all these require additional financial resources that often are missing. Accordingly, the major problem is the lack of property that could be used as collateral for taking credit.

The inability to earn an income means that many IDPs have to depend on temporary income from small trade, remittances and assistance from other family members and friends, subsistence agriculture in small vegetable gardens (if they have the land) and the sale of agriculture products. With time, the habit of permanently depending on outside assistance develops a syndrome of dependency and social apathy, and may lead to extended depression. The biggest concern is the future of children and young adults, as missing their needs can lead to future disasters in their physical and spiritual development. Isolated settlements and poor living conditions are not just problems per se, but can affect educational achievement and social standing as well.

One of the new IDPs settlements. Photo by Sintija Smite

The future of IDPs resettled often in a rush and into poor quality housing is extremely alarming.[39] Many of the new IDP settlements often lack all necessary infrastructures, though some measures to improve their conditions are currently taken. In the photo above, one can see an IDP settlement

[39] Experts criticize the quality of cottages constructed for the refugees in Georgia, Caucasian Knot, April 28, 2010, http://chechnya.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/168208/ The houses for refugees were constructed without maintaining quality standards, stated the Association of Young Lawyers, Caucasian Knot, June 22, 2010 http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/170527/

with outdoor wooden toilets. This arrangement makes it harder for IDPs to keep sanitary/hygienic conditions, in particular during the winter season. Still, the central problem remains whether the IDPs can maintain acceptable living standards in poorly built residences, and also the most important one – whether the small allowance they get will remain the major source of income for the inhabitants of these cheerless houses, or whether these settlements will become slums for empoverished people with no present and no future. Equally alarming is the fate of Georgians from Akhalgori, who in search of income make permanent shuttle trips between these settlements and their residence and land in Akhalgori. In addition to the difficulties encountered while crossing the administrative border, their future itself remains quite unclear.

Situation in South Ossetia

Attempting to evaluate the perspectives of IDPs returning to South Ossteia, we should acknowledge not only the official position of its de facto government, but also the public opinion there, along with existing social problems. Unfortunately, only very little information is available on these matters.

Even comparatively easy issues like the size of the population in South Ossetia is a problem, and these numbers from different sources are very different. Local officials, for whatever reasons, intentionally but quite inconsistently inflate the respective numbers. As it was mentioned above, according to the population census of 1989 the population in South Ossetia was 98,527 at that time, and 40,000 of these lived in Tskhinvali. Based on various data, before the August 2008 war the number of people living in the region was assessed to be between 60,000 to 83,000. At present, the number of people residing in South Ossetia based on the official website of the President of South Ossetia is 72,000,[40] although the same official source states that the number of students in public schools does not exceed 5,000, which would indicate that the population listed on the website is unrealistic.[41] At the same time, the International Crisis Group (ICG) stated that some Georgian officials went to the other extreme and estimated the population in South Ossetia at 15,000. Comparing all sources, the most reliable data seems to be presented by a member of the Russian center "Demos" Varvara Pakhomenko.[42] Based on the data of election commissions, on migration of refugees and on the number of public school students, she estimated that in 2009 the number of population in South Ossetia was in between 26,000 to 32,000. Among these, no more than 17,000 people lived in Tskhinvali district, about 5,000 in Djava district, approximately 4,000 in Znauri district, and almost 2,500 people lived in Akhalgori district.

Economic stagnation and a deadlocked situation in the region deepened by bad governance are causes of permanent depopulation. Consequently, more and more residents of South Ossetia, in particular, young and active individuals, are leaving for North Ossetia or for other parts of Russia. Although the life for the new migrants in North Ossetia is not favorable either, as they often settle in the Prigorodny rayon where Ingush previously resided, and this increases the existing inter-ethnic tensions.

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[40] http://presidentrso.ru/republic/

[41] The first of September five thousand students will go to schools of South Ossetia, Information Agency RES, 08.31.2010. http://cominf.org/node/1166484324. Based on the data from Rosstat even in Russia with its catastrophic birth rate the average number of students is about 11.3% of total population. There are 5,000 students in South Ossetia. http://valery-dzutsev.livejournal.com/177365.html

[42] Varvara Pakhomenko, Populated island, Notes on the Demography of South Ossetian Conflict, Caucasian Knot, 08.26.2010 (in Russian, Варвара Пахоменко. Обитаемый остров. Заметки о демографии юго-осетинского конфликта. Кавказский Узел. 26.08. 2010), http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/173406/, see also – Varvara Pakhomenko, Populated Island, Polit.Ru 09.22.2009 (in Russian: Варвара Пахоменко. Обитаемый остров. Полит.Ру. 22.09.2009.), http://www.polit.ru/analytics/2009/09/22/demo.html

Mass poverty, social insecurity and unemployment are widespread in almost the full entirety of South Ossetia, in particular, among the residents of the areas adjacent to the administrative border, which were significantly affected by the war. The problems of access to quality education, health care and other social services are persistent. Three major problems are: Unemployment, underdeveloped economic and social infrastructure, and, coupled with these, poor quality of life. Since private business is weak,[43] the main sources of income, in addition to remittances received from relatives, and to Russian pensions, remain semi-subsistence agriculture, food production, construction work, and also jobs in the public sector and in services to Russian military bases.

The territory of South Ossetia is surrounded by Georgian districts on three sides; only to the North the Caucasus Mountains form the border with Russia, and its only access to the rest of the world is exercised in fact through the Roki tunnel leading to North Ossetia, Russia. Possibilities to develop local agriculture beyond stock breeding are very limited, and while there are certain opportunities to extract polymetallic ores or to bottle mineral waters, without considerable investment and access to the foreign market the perspectives for development are dire. International Crisis Group wrote in the summer of 2010: "South Ossetia's natural isolation, coupled with the conflict with Tbilisi, has left the economy devastated. After the war and closure of the administrative boundary with Georgia, it has had to be entirely reoriented towards Russia, without whose aid public-sector wages could not be paid. The budget may have increased by half, from 2.7 billion roubles ($87 million) in 2009 to 4.3 billion roubles ($140 million) in 2010, but 98.7 per cent of the total is Russian aid. President Kokoity claimed that 120 million roubles ($3.8 million) were raised in taxes, but the local tax committee claims revenues of only $2.4 million."[44]

Uneasy economic conditions are deepened by the undeveloped civil society and strict authoritarianism of the governance system, which lacks respect among the local population. Small civic society organizations working in South Ossetia experience permanent pressure from the authorities and security services. Several existing local NGOs work mainly on humanitarian issues, democracy, gender problems and public diplomacy. A few NGOs are in fact created by the local officials[45] and hardly represent the independent civic society, although anyway, their influence is merely limited. The activists, journalists or politicians, if they attempt to act independently, without coordination with the official authorities, may experience repressions and/or are forced to leave South Ossetia.[46] One of the evident examples of the political life of South Ossetia can be the fact that even the official protocols of the parliamentary elections of 2009, which Kokoity's supporters won by a great majority, remain unpublished.

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[43] «Small and medium-sized businesses are limited to small scale trade, cafes, markets, hairdressing salons, auto repair shops, bakeries and a few minor enterprises. Around two thirds of local businesses are trade-related.... The near absence of private investment can be explained by the unstable security situation, underdeveloped legal framework and high level of corruption. Even ethnic Ossetian businessmen operating in Russia refrain from investing", considering lack of information regarding to socio-economic conditions we will refer to publication of the International Crisis Group: South Ossetia: The Burden of Recogntion, Europe Report N°205 – 7 June 2010 http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/europe/caucasus/georgia/205%20South%20Ossetia%20-%20the%20Burden%20of%20Recognition%20RUSSIAN.ashx

[44] International Crisis Group. Op.cit.

[45] « Room of the Charitable Foundation Farank, established by Tskhinvali businessman Zurab Kabisov, cut the eyes of Tskhinvali residents with its luxury view » - wrote journalist Olga Timofeeva after visiting the place in the article: Why in Tskhinvali the Promise is No Longer Waiting For? «Russian Reporter», №20 (99), May 28, 2009, http://expert.ru/russian_reporter/2009/20/parlamenskie_vybory/

[46] July 24 editor in chief of the independent newspaper «XXI Century» and one of the founders of the Republican Party – "Iron" Timur Tskhovrebov was attacked by about ten people, among whom were, reportedly, three deputies of the South Ossetian Parliament. The attackers threatened to kill Tskhovrebov for the statement he and Georgian civil activists signed to appeal the Geneva consultations on Matters of the Caucasus, where they call to give priority to the needs of the region's population, including issues of security and freedom of movement. As a result Tskhovrebov was hospitalized with multiple injuries», South Ossetia: An Attack on a Well Known Activist, Human Rights Watch, 07.27.2010. http://www.hrw.org/ru/news/2010/07/27-0

The upcoming "presidential" election in November 2011 is the major political event of 2011, though many observers express skepticism.[47] It is not expected that the possible change of authority will lead to rearrangement of power in the region, or a change of fundamental principles and reorientation of governance. More importantly, it is vital to understand the political discourse and system of values of Ossetian official authorities. This is why one should try to describe South Ossetian national interests as understood by the leading officials in power. These attitudes do not create any complete picture, but are divided into separate clusters. It can be mentioned that the authorities do not have clearly formulated plans and visions, even on such key issues as the legal status of the territory and its future relations with Russia.[48]

The official discourse is of foremost interest, i.e. 'national interests' as propagated among the population, which on certain level echoes the perceptions of the population itself (partially created by the same propaganda): Ossetia was never part of Georgia except for short periods of history; Georgians are imperialists and fascists; South Ossetia has two reliable allies – North Ossetia and Russia; Ossetians in the South and the North should live in one country, in particular – in Russia; The West and most importantly the United States are the enemies (next after the Ingush) and are always ready to support Georgia in accordance with their own interests; Incumbent government of the country is the only guarantor capable of solving all problems successfully…). In accordance with above mentioned statements, one can formulate the officially declared political path: First of all - unification of two Ossetias, maintaining full control over South Ossetia, and if the opportunity comes – further expansion,[49] also keeping control over money transfers from Russia.

As the Tskhinvali officials and several public figures many times expressed their general discontent with the Georgian Government's actions, the claims towards the Georgian Government can be summarized in more concrete terms as follows: the Georgian authorities try to bring South Ossetia under its power and are ready to use force despite the peaceful declarations; the Georgian Government and the Georgian people carry anti-Ossetian (and anti-Russian) sentiments and implement a policy in the region that is favorable to West (to the United States) , thus damaging Ossetian and Russian interests; Georgia sympathizes with and supports secessionist and anti-Russian endeavors of Ingush and other North Caucasian groups (among these is the so called

[47] See: "today's story of how the South Ossetian authorities without explanation refuse to register the parties "Iron," "Justice" and the Social Democratic Party, also developed by the Russian scenario, and quite painfully reminiscent of pre-election campaigns of Russian opposition when appealing to the Justice Ministry. As a faithful disciple of Vladimir Putin, Eduard Kokoity himself is not going to go for a third term. But he will not let undesirable politicians who undermine that stable and appropriate situation, will not let close to the politics even. The law enforcements will assist their President. As in Russia, elections in South Ossetia are unlikely to have anything to do with real competition and the free will of the people. Until the election is left less than a year, but on both sides of the Caucasus there aren't official candidates for Presidency, neither election programs, no public debates. It is merely a power struggle against the backdrop of endless conflicting signals to society». Alexander Babuev, The Price Issue, Newspaper "Kommersant", №54 (4595), 03.30.2011 http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/1601116

[48] Immediately after the recognition of South Ossetia by Russia Kokoity announced: "Yes, we will be part of the Russian Federation… Now we are an independent state, but we look forward to uniting with North Ossetia and joining the Russian Federation.". Later he immediately repudiated saying "South Ossetia doesn't wish to join up with anyone". The de facto president then said he had been misunderstood,
and "we are not going to relinquish our independence …. South Ossetia is not going to become part of
Russia." But on the eve of the May 2009 parliamentary elections, he said integration into North Ossetia and Russia should continue, and his ruling party's slogans called for immediate unification" The International Crisis Group, Ibid., p.13.

[49] "South Ossetia also intends to demand return of Truso Gorge from Georgia which currently is part of the Georgian state", declared Kokoity, "This is ancient Ossetian land which, based on unclear reasons went under control of Georgian SSR during the Soviet time". Kokoity: "South Ossetia Intends to Demand part of Georgia, Caucasian Knot, July 31rst, 2009, (in Russian: Кокойты: Южная Осетия намерена потребовать часть Грузии. Кавказский Узел, 31июля 2009 г.), http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/157331. See also: South Ossetia will Demand from Georgia to Return Truso Gorge, RIA News, 07.31.2009. http://www.rian.ru/politics/20090731/179273091.html

Circassian genocide, unilateral announcement of visa free entrance for North Caucasians, etc.) thus threatening the security of South and North Ossetias; Georgia tries to sabotage important projects for Russia (for example, the 2014 winter olympics in Sochi, attempts to monopolize the transit of Caspian energy resources to the West, or Russia entering WTO). It seeks NATO and EU membership, hence weakening the influence and security of Russia across its south periphery, and with that the security of South Ossetia; Georgia threatens the security of South Ossetia (it initiated the war in South Ossetia), it initiates and enters different anti-Ossetian and anti-Russian groups (for example GUAM); implements a consistent anti-Ossetian campaign in the international media and international fora; Georgian scientists and authorities are falsifying history by discussing the late settlement of Ossetians in South Ossetia, or even refusing to admit that this state entity existed in the past, and also claiming annexation of Georgia by Tsarist Russia in XIX century, and similarly annexation by Soviet Russia in 1921 (while in fact in both cases only a voluntary union took place, which saved Georgia from treacherous neighbors); and finally, Ossetian authorities blame all their troubles on Mikheil Saakashvili personally, and refuse to deal with him…

Key Social Problems and Possibilities for Return

The above description of the situation leaves little place for optimism in regard to the return of IDPs from South Ossetia, especially in the near future. It is evident that unless fundamental changes take place in the internal politics amongst all three participants of the conflict, the question about the return of IDPs in South Ossetia will not be included in the agenda beyond the Akhalgori district. The issue of repatriating or compensating Ossetians who were forced to leave the inner parts of Georgia seems to appear more realistic, though even this issue will barely go forward until the beginning of the next political cycle in Georgia, i.e. until 2013.

If we take into consideration the total number of refugees and IDPs since the beginning of the 1990s (both ethnic Georgians and Ossetians) the majority of these have not ever seen their full rights restored. South Ossetia, in less than twenty years, lost more than two thirds of its population. Many tens of thousands of people have their essential rights violated, as they are exiled from their birthplaces, deprived of the possibility to pursue their habitual activities, and lost a stable income, sense of security and any confidence in future. All of these are sources of mutual blame, feeding bitterness and mistrust, and blocking reconciliation of the Georgian and Ossetian people.

The current authorities of Tbilisi and Tskhinvali try to maximize their political capital while unwilling to take any responsibility for the past, presenting their respective communities as innocent victims of aggression (Russian in one case and Georgian in another). Tskhinvali, together with Moscow, attempts to perpetuate the results of ethnic cleansing of the Georgian population of South Ossetia, and to fix the distorted post-war demography by appealing to "new realities." Preserving the current situation would imply: maintainance of the level of confrontation related to the conflict, more mass disillusionment with the possiblity of peaceful resolution of problems through negotiations, and accordingly, a corresponding rise of militaristic, revanchist moods.

Existing problems represent the immediate result of policies implemented not only by authorities of the Russian Federation and the South Ossetian leadership, but by Georgia as well. The first two maintain the course of the final break-off of South Ossetia from Georgia proper. In their turn, the official strategy of the Georgian authorities "Engagement through cooperation," in reality does not support realization of the declared objectives, due to certain clauses in official documents defining the state policy concerning the conflict territories.[50] At present, the policies and actions of official authorities of all parties to the conflict perpetuate the existing confrontation and prevent confidence

[50] http://www.smr.gov.ge/

building between the sides. The ongoing process of forced mutual isolation and alienation of the two – Ossetian and Georgian – societies hinders the prospect of transforming the conflict and the opportunity for its subsequent resolution.

There are many unresolved humanitarian problems related to IDPs who lost their residence, property, and livelihood. Among these problems are the government's limited resources (or will) to fundamentally improve their conditions together with difficulty or impossibility of returning to their permanent residence. No less in need are the individuals who returned to their homes or who regularly/seasonally migrate as many Akhalgori residents do. Accordingly, it is very important to find ways to reduce the burden on these individuals, independently from the final political decisions regarding the status of the mentioned territories. However, this issue is less related to Ossetian-Georgian relations and more a representation of the moral liability of the Georgian authorities. Even partially resolving the conflict will affect the lives of these people, though that is a distant possibility.

The social and political processes in South Ossetia affect the future of the region. Soon, in November 2011, the presidential term of Eduard Kokoity will end and it is very clear that, with weak political opposition, the decision will be made in Moscow.[51] However, in any political arrangement one should not expect a change in the chances for the return of forced migrants; still, it is expected that the statements of new authorities will be not as irresponsible as those of the current ones.[52]

After the war in 2008 and the recognition of the independence of South Ossetia, the duties to protect its borders were taken over by Russian border guards. The process of strengthening the division line proceeded, and South Ossetian and Russian authorities named it - "the state border." The result was that the movement of individuals from South Ossetia to Georgia and in opposite directions was reduced to its lowest level since the end of the "hot phase" of the conflict in 1992. Connections between the relatives, neighbors, colleagues, and civil society representatives on the both sides of the conflicted parties were cut off (and are worsening). Accordingly, opportunities for joint ventures in business and the public sector are diminished. The barriers to geting medical assistance, education, etc. became higher. Multiple cases of detaining individuals for "illegally crossing the border" were acknowledged.[53]

It has become clear that the Russian Government is not fully satisfied with the existing situation, though in the near future neither the withdrawal of Russian troops from South Ossetia nor the recall

[51] « In search of a future president of South Ossetia The Kremlin turned his sights on the current ambassador to Russia Dmitry Medoev - a candidate yet. Eduard Kokoity did not mind seeing the future president of South Ossetia's prosecutor general Teimuraz Hugaev…. the choice of the South Ossetian leader fails: First, he Kokoity, "recently completely lost the electoral potential, and so discredited itself", that negative attitudes will be automatically transferred to the residents of South Ossetia on his henchman, and secondly, Khugaev regularly gets involved in major scandals which in the tiny republic are small in number known**»,** Iuri Simonyan, The Kremlin Is Looking For Replacement to Kokoity,Hezavisimaia Gazeta, 02.16.2011, (in Russian, Юрий Симонян. Кремль ищет замену Кокойты: В Южной Осетии в преддверии президентских выборов возможна дестабилизация. Независимая Газета, 16.02.2011), http://www.ng.ru/cis/2011-02-16/1_kokoyti.html

[52]«After the liberation of Tskhinvali and Ossetian villages the fighting continued in the Georgian enclaves. What is it now? - Nothing. We almost leveled everything there, set the border of South Ossetia. — That is, the Georgian enclaves are actually destroyed? —What? Should it be allowed to have fired from there? Shot us in the back and humiliate our people again? – Can Georgian civilians go back home? - We are not going to let anyone to go back. More than 18 thousand of Ossetian refugees from Georgia are now in North Ossetia. We need them to return to South Ossetia», Eduard Kokoity: We Flattened Practically Everything There, in Newspaper Kommersant, No. 144, (3,961), 08.15.2008 (in Russian - Эдуард Кокойты: мы там практически выровняли все. Газета "Коммерсантъ", №144 (3961), 15.08.2008), http://www.kommersant.ru/Doc/1011783

[53] http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/europe/caucasus/georgia/205%20South%20Ossetia%20%20the%20Burden%20of%20Recognition%20RUSSIAN.ashx

of the officially declared recognition of its independence is expected. Moreover, South Ossetia gradually is becoming a periphery of attention for Russian politics in the "Near Abroad" and sometimes is considered as a financial black hole requiring more expenses to support it than any expected return. Besides the fact that the Russian elite is pleased that their tanks and rockets are deployed in such close proximity to the capital of Georgia,[54] the actual strategic significance of this reality is not as large if we consider the weakness of the Georgian military forces on one hand and the expected international reaction if these bases will be used to attack Georgia, on the other.

Moreover, it is evident that at least in the short-term perspective (until the 2012 presidential elections in Russia and probably the olympics of 2014) fundamental changes in South Ossetia should not be expected. Other possibilities remain quite unpredictable and will be shaped not only based on the price of oil, but also by multiple other factors (also barely predictable) in the internal and foreign policy of Russia, the United States and EU, the world economy, and also by political developments in Georgia. It is also apparent that Georgian society is not ready to agree to the independence of South Ossetia in the foreseeable future.

A major threat for South Ossetia currently is, on the one hand, the irreversible depopulation, and, on the other, the lost sense of existence. Indeed, as there do not exist any realistic prospect for independent development of the territory, under the circumstances of the actual blockage from the south, the population in the region will eventually transform into a community of individuals living just to serve the Russian military bases. This would lead to fully discrediting and devaluing national ideals. However, some compromise models can be created which on one hand will allow the formation of guarantees to preserve key goals of the Ossetian society (i.e. security, control over the territory and resources, and preserving ethnic identity) and at the same time offer some additional stimuli to both sides. It is possible that some symbolic and temporary decisions can be made, allowing at least part of the IDPs to return. At present, however, all this seems highly improbable and barely acceptable to any party.

A few foreign factors can lead to more favorable conditions for resolving the conflict. The first of such factors is Russia, in case it is interested to find a compromise, which, however, is unlikely to be possible with the current government there. Still, not only a change of authorities but also the very dangerous processes in the North Caucasus and in other regions of Russia could force the Russian elite to review their plans and priorities. Another very important factor is the possibility of close cooperation between the EU and the United States, willing to find at least a temporary solution of the problem, and supporting stability until the final resolution of conflict is found. The last factor is the affairs at the southern borders of the Caucasus – in Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Iran. They can also influence the course of events in the Caucasus, in Georgia and respectively, in South Ossetia.

Since the search for stable models of co-existence is inevitable, appropriate discussions are needed around respective options. Such discussions can expand the range of constructive ideas and options for decision-makers, and therefore influence the process.

In fact, there exists enough space for compromise on some issues that currently seem impossible to settle. For example, Russia and South Ossetia under its influence, refuses to allow international observers to enter if the word "Georgia" sounds in their name. Georgia can not agree to rename them, as it will imply possible sovereignty of its own territory. However, it is apparent that with minimal motivation of all sides and a little imagination it is not as hard to find a compromise that

[54] Russia is Extending Rockets in South Ossetia: to the System "Smerch" Was Added "Tochka-Y", 01.23.2011 (in Russian, - Россия стягивает ракеты в Южную Осетию: к системе "Смерч" прибавилась "Точка-У". 23.01.11). http://newsru.com/world/24jan2011/tochkau.html

would satisfy all the formal demands (for example, to expand geography and name it the South Caucasus mission).[55]

The Georgian government (also South Ossetian and Abkhazian) officially rejected the use of force for resolving the conflicts.[56] Nothing prevents officially strengthening the statement by adobting a legislative action that would lead to a step in restoring confidence between the sides. At the same time, Russia does not currently agree to take responsibility for non-use of force in bilateral relations with Georgia, implying that it does not represent a party to the conflict. While it is not worth starting here a fruitless discussion of this doubtful argument, it is still worth acknowledging the importance of the above mentioned symbolic actions on one hand, and the lack of serious obstacles to finding a mutually acceptable formula for everyone on the non-use of force.

Similar compromises are possible in regard to many other issues, among which might be the revision of the strategic Georgian documents on the "Occupied Territories", along with other related legislative acts leading to the isolation of South Ossetia. It would be useful, if the Georgian side would take constructive steps to improve relations with South Ossetia, among them firstly the restitution of property of displaced Ossetians, even more so as the legislative base for such an action already exists.

Recently, some experts discussed the option of recognition *de facto* of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. However, although any constructive point of view deserves to be debated, we do not think that in the near future such decisions seem realistic, and also that such a decision would be useful (referring again to possible interpretations of what national interests are). At the same time, while speaking about South Ossetia as the legal entity, one should not miss the point that the legal entity is created not by the territory but by the population of any particular region, i.e. the rights of IDPs and refugees should necessarily be taken into consideration. At present, and in the closest future, the potential to agree on the key issues such as legal status of the territory and the return of refugees/IDPs does not seem optimistic. Recognition of South Ossetia de facto will by no means change this situation.

The Georgian government has an opportunity to lead the policy to restore confidence between the sides. A significant step could be the creation of an economic area on both sides of the separation line and the use of positive elements of the Ergneti Market, though cleansing it from negative components, i.e. disallowing smuggling and shady transactions.

It is essential to care for the cultural identity and at the same time the social integration of ethnic Ossetians living in Georgia proper, outside South Ossetia. Most important is to be concerned with education. It has to be clearly understood that the policy of optimization of schools should be carried out while taking into account key cultural and social functions of rural schools for the corresponding communities, among them ethnic Ossetian communities. A policy supporting Ossetian language and culture is especially important on the ground of the erosion of Ossetian cultural identity and Ossetian language in both North and South Ossetia. One should not exclude considering the possibility that the Ossetian language could be accepted as the official language guaranteed by the Constitution, similar to Abkhazian, with such a step justified by the prospect of restoring of the corresponding autonomy.

[55] Ivlian Khaindrava, Perspectives of International Participation in the Process of Normalisation Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict. The International Alarm, Tbilisi, 2010, http://drupal.alertinternational.co.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Georgian-Abkhaz.pdf

[56] 'New Context' for Geneva Talks after Non-Use of Force Pledges. Interview of the co-Chairs of Geneva International Discussions. Civil Georgia - 15.12.2010. http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/Interview_Civil_Georgia-FINAL.pdf

At the same time, it must be admitted that from the political perspective Georgia has very limited and weak levers to influence Russia and South Ossetia, and hence to resolve the conflict. Accordingly, it has very limited options to maneuver and compromise. Such levers, in fact, come down to preventing Russia from gaining membership in the WTO, or organizing symbolic protests and making rhetorical statements; or, critically, expecting the third party (the United States, EU) will influence them. Russia has not only multiple sources of leverage, but also its actions often are essentially dangerous and threaten Georgian security. First of all, it is increasing militarization of South Ossetia (and Abkhazia).[57] Therefore, official discussion about reducing the tensions between the sides under such conditions seems somewhat premature.

Under these circumstances, unofficial contacts and informal exchanges, dialogue between youth, experts and civil society representatives acquire special significance. At present, the only format is personal contacts and also, participation in various seminars and conferences. It is evident that the time has come to look for the new formats of civil engagement and also institutionalize the most effective existing formats. It is necessary to make efforts and the society should learn the new ideas and suggestions by the time the leaderships of both countries will be ready for the constructive dialogue and compromise. Under these circumstances, the channels used to disseminate information, lucidity of statements, and authority of the communicators play the most important role in the creation of public opinion, interpretation of the events, developing the agenda, and making important decisions.

Studying the different aspects of these problems will help clarify the formal obstacles to their resolution. Potential steps forward may be determined that, while not harming any party's national interests, not only makes life easier for individuals living on both sides of the separation lines, but also gives relief to all people of good will who wish to contribute to addressing the consequences of the armed conflict.

In as much as the Georgian-Ossetian public dialogue is the core of this project, it is expected that the first task is to jointly find the ways to activate and intensify this ongoing dialogue. This requires finding common interests and fields where collaboration is possible and welcomed. The result of efforts may be not only finding the common areas of intersecting interests, but also defining the groups of population or representatives of civil society interested in this collaboration. No less important is the identification of the factors capable of influencing the realization and effectiveness of dialogue, including participation of foreign mediators.

It seems that at the moment there exists an inclination towards dialogue in both societies. On the one hand it is a losing battle to ignore the other when there are so many common interests intertwined, in the context of a prolonged ongoing political stand off. On the other hand, more opportunities to carry out dialogue (including access to finance) arose. Under these circumstances, discussion of possible models of dialogue can immediately precede the implementation of the discussed models, if such discussions are open and if their results will be accessible to all relevant groups of the population.

[57] Interestingly paradoxical and very open statement was made March 4th by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation Grigorii Karasin that - "Russian division of operational tactical rockets "Tochka –Y" temporarily, for training purposes, will be deployed in South Ossetia" http://www.militaryparitet.com/teletype/data/ic_teletype/9902

CIVIL SOCIETY AND PEACE BUILDING PROCESS

Ivlian Haindrava

A highly developed and influential civil society is on one hand an integral part of the democratic state, and on the other hand it is itself also a venue for public discussion on the most important processes and decisions facing a country. Civil society devoted to its true calling often stands in the forefront of peace building approaches and often initiates and actively participates in unofficial "civil" or "public" diplomacy in the conflict resolution process. Georgian and Ossetian civil societies, specifically, are called to demonstrate good will to execute peace building projects, exchange information and ideas, and stimulate appropriate political elite to begin peace negotiations. These two civil societies clearly have the potential to directly and efficiently affect the process of reconciliation of the two communities and transform the Georgian-Ossetian conflict.

The essential problem is the fact that the civil society institutions are either weakly developed (unevenly underdeveloped) or for various reasons and conditions are not properly focused on appropriate problems. However, even civil society actors who are firmly rooted in the constructive position that it is necessary to support and develop dialogue between the communities, do not have sufficient resources, opportunities, or influence. Consequently, our research intends to analyze the peace building potential of appropriate civil societies (primarily, Georgian civil society), examine the approaches capable to assist on the one hand, the peace building potential of civil society towards transformation of Georgian-Ossetian conflict, and, on the other – identify existing problems, methods to overcome them and also, the optimal formats of civil activism.

In as much as Georgian-Ossetian public dialogue represents the core of the project within the frames of which we are writing this current piece, it is expected that the first task of our joint effort is to find ways to activate and intensify this dialogue. This, on the other hand requires identifying spheres of common interest and the immediate areas where cooperation is favored and possible. The result of this research is not only finding fields of common interest, but is also defining particular groups of the population and/or civil societies who might be interested in such cooperation. No less important is the identification of the factors which could positively influence implementation and effectiveness of dialogue, amongst them – participation of foreign mediators and sponsors of the process, together with objective or subjective factors preventing the restoration of and/or establishment of contacts and community dialogue between the civil societies.

Our ancestors said: Time is the best physician! Though many politicians in Moscow, Tskhinvali and Tbilisi support a high level of mutual accusations and confrontation, and although the government controlled mass media embraces that same spirit, the sharpness of perceptions of the events of summer and fall of 2008 has decreased amongst the general population. Both sides of the dividing line seem to understand the need for dialogue and joint efforts. The people have to subsist today and tomorrow, not waiting for a time when politicians will begin looking for solutions. Regrettably, inclinations to change the current state of affairs on the political level are not visible. At the same time, with direct assistance from Western mediators and donors, the conditions to begin dialogue between the two communities are emerging. Discussions regarding the models of contact, dialogue, and cooperation among the civil societies will create fertile soil for producing and implementing specific, feasible, targeted, and coordinated projects and programs. It's important, as George Tarkhan-Mouravi writes in the conclusion of his research, that the efforts and discussions of the results of research in this direction not be kept hidden, but rather be open to NGOs, relevant groups of the population, and society in general[58].

[58] See: George Tarkhan-Mouravi. Conflict in South Ossetia: Current Problems and Perspectives of IDPs Return

The Starting Point

Taking into consideration the irreconcilable positions of Tbilisi's ruling elite and those of Tskhinvali with Moscow, in regard to the political-legal status of South Ossetia and deployment there of Russian military bases and border guards, in the near future, the relations between the officials of the both sides is not expected to improve. Currently, the only ongoing process of direct political contacts between the two sides is the format of the Geneva consultations, which failed to bring any tangible results so far. At the same time, multiple non-political unresolved problems, in the absence of ongoing dialogue leads to increased mutual mistrust, preserves the enemy image, and reinforces estrangement of the communities. Under such circumstances, unofficial contacts, exchange, and dialogue between the communities take on a particular importance. Until now, the limited formats of communication are individual contacts on both sides of the dividing line, in addition to participation in different seminars and conferences in the third countries. It is evident that the time to look for new formats of civil interaction and the means to institutionalize the most effective of them has arrived.

It must be noted that, based on the their narrow political interests and carrying the burden of their mistakes and missed opportunities to normalize the relations between Georgians and Ossetians in closest past, the Governments of Tbilisi, Tskhinvali and Moscow do not even try to set up and advance relations between the people left on both sides of the dividing line between South Ossetia and the rest of Georgia. Such an attitude negatively affects the activities of the civil society institutions on the both sides. "Unfortunately, both the immediate parties to the conflict last year - the governments in Tbilisi and Tskhinvali - have taken a rather passive role in the establishment of confidence-building measures and de-escalate tensions in the region, expecting that the largest players in the region - Russia, the United States, and European Union - will solve their problems for them. Meanwhile, no one knows the situation on the ground, as the people who directly live in Georgia and South Ossetia, and therefore the main peacekeeping capacity is located precisely at the local level. Entirely relying on foreign donors, both sides are at risk as a result of the fact that their concerns will be solved not quite as they would like" – writes Valery Dzutsev[59].

However, the State Strategy on Occupied Territories "Engagement through Cooperation" adopted by the Georgian Government in the beginning of 2010[60] declares the tasks and endeavors we could consider as initiatives aimed to reconcile and draw near the Georgian and Ossetian communities. "The Strategic Intent" section suggests:

- Promoting freedom of movement—as well as people-to-people interaction and contacts across the dividing lines—through identifying areas of common interest and supporting joint inter-community projects and activities in all spheres of mutual interest;
- Promoting the free flow of information across the dividing lines, with the purpose of strengthening understanding and cooperation.

The "Basic Principles" section underlines that «Georgia opposes the isolation of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia and recognizes the negative repercussions of isolating the populations living there." "The Goals" section includes "People-to-People Interaction," where it is noted: "Create platforms for interaction between interest groups divided by occupation lines, inter alia former combatants, neighbors, mixed families, youth, co-workers, scholars." In the same section, an entire part is dedicated to the free flow of information.

[59] Валерий Дзуцев. Национальное примирение в Южной Осетии, 06.07, 2009, http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/156240/

[60] http://www.smr.gov.ge/uploads/file/strategy.pdf

The Action Plan for the Strategy of Engagement through Cooperation[61] includes a separate discussion of "Intercommunity Relations" which states the necessity of assisting re-establishment of the connections as an important role in the reconciliation process. In this process, the role of informal dialogue between civil society organizations is underlined. The action plan, among others, supports the following initiatives:

- Allow for visits for family events, including births, weddings, funerals and gravesite visitations and religious rites.
- Enable mixed families to gather and visit across the division lines.
- Allow for meetings of elders councils.
- Allow for religious pilgrimages and access to cultural and historical sites.
- Provide for exchanges between journalists.
- Provide for exchanges between professionals (not limited to exiled communities).
- Promote cultural and athletic exchanges (not limited to exiled communities).
- Establish a commission for reburials, prisoner exchanges and missing-in-action matters.

However, the above-mentioned statements of goodwill encounter obstacles created by the very same Georgian legislation. In October, 2008 the Parliament of Georgia approved the Law on Occupied Territories (and in 2010 this law was ammended several times). The law limits several freedoms and activities in the corresponding territories. For example – article #4 limits free movement in the occupied territories (i.e. in South Ossetia and Abkhazia) to the citizens of foreign countries and individuals without citizenship of any state. This means that to enter the territories through any way other than Gori municipality and, accordingly, without control and permission of Georgian Government is prohibited.

The main source of problem, though, became the so called - Modalities[62], approved by the Georgian Government in September, 2010 regulating all types of commercial and non-commercial activities in the occupied territories [63]. The Modalities document is heavily criticized by Georgian NGOs. Georgian NGOs assessed the document as "attempt to control the non-governmental sector"[64]. This criticism has solid ground, as no significant project in South Ossetia (and Abkhazia) initiated by international organizations and their local partners (Georgian and South Ossetian at the moment) can be implemented without an agreement with the Georgian Government (the Ministry for Reintegration). In addition – it is required that a bi-annual report regarding past performance should be delivered to the same Ministry. As former Minster of Reintegration Temur Iakobashvili stated, "the Modalities created the opportunities for discretion by the executive power and the latter ever since is able to decide what particular activities will support restoring confidence and transforming the conflict."[65]

The Minister mentioned the word "discretion." However, discretion in this case carries a danger of discrimination. For example, Article 7, point 3, of the Modalities states, "If a project entails taking people residing in the occupied territories outside the borders of Georgia, travel for these people should be exercised either by a foreign passport of Georgia or by a Neutral Travel Document." This point will come into force only after above-mentioned "Neutral Travel Document" is issued, but it leads to confusion. The residents of South Ossetia generally use Russian passports to travel abroad. When and if the mentioned article comes into force, travel abroad from South Ossetia (except to the Russian Federation) using Russian passports will become illegal and international organizations will face two choices: either ignore the Georgian legislation, or never invite to a third country

[61] http://www.smr.gov.ge/uploads/action_plan_en.pdf
[62] http://www.smr.gov.ge/uploads/file/041010/statement.pdf
[63] Before activities on the occupied territories were regulated based on the Resolution of the Government of Georgia from December 12, 2008. http://www.government.gov.ge/
[64] http://www.ekhokavkaza.com/content/none/2235145.html
[65] http://netgazeti.ge/GE/32/Life/3003/

anyone from South Ossetia who will refuse to get the Georgian passport or the "Neutral Travel Document," although the latter are in fact the great majority today. Thus, implementation of not only joint projects with international organizations but, formally, even continuation of the Geneva talks, becomes questionable. The Georgian Government itself will face an unpleasant choice: either turn a blind eye as international organizations ignore Georgian legislation, or openly confront these organizations. Neither of these can be part of official Tbilisi's plan.

NGOs and civil activists from Georgia who are working on conflict transformation appear in the most awkward situation. They became hostages of the legislation as the officials in Georgia through the Ministry of Reintegration are able not only to control their activities but also veto participation by unfavorable project participants on the pretext of non-compatibility of these projects to the "state interests of Georgia, peaceful resolution of the conflicts, de-occupation, or humanitarian goals." Simultaneously, the Ministry of Reintegration guaranteed an open field for activities (pseudo activities) by its "own" people (i.e. favored and agreeable) who are not hard to recruit from the members of "Governmental NGOs" (GONGO), whose numbers have multiplied in recent years.

In December 2010, the influential NGO Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA) and the Georgian youth group who participated in Georgian-Ossetian (and Georgian – Abkhazian) dialogue submitted their perspective on the legislation to the Ministry of Reintegration. They suggested specific amendments in the documents to reflect the real needs of the population separated by the dividing line, and they also requested termination of artificially created impediments to the activities of civil advocates participating in mentioned projects. However, no appropriate reaction followed that initiative. It is not expected that such an approach from the Ministry of Reintegration would be met with understanding from international organizations and donors. Their priorities do not always in every way correspond with the priorities of the Georgian Government.

Sabine Fisher of the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) looked ahead and warned that, in this way, the Georgian Government will try not to allow projects by civil activists who have moderate positions towards South Ossetia (and Abkhazia) and are very experienced and knowledgeable in public diplomacy (Track Two Diplomacy). She also believes that space should be preserved for the international NGOs to work in South Ossetia (and Abkhazia).[66] In unison with the position of Fisher is the recommendation of very experienced International Crisis Group (ICG) in regard to EU, OSCE, European Commission and other international actors: "Continue or renew contacts with authorities and civil society groups in South Ossetia; support dialogue between Georgian and South Ossetian authorities, as well as Georgian and South Ossetian civil society groups."[67]

Simultaneously, Georgia unilaterally made a step that is evaluated in various ways when viewed through a political lens, but which clearly brings some relief to ordinary people living on both sides of the Caucasus Mountains.[68] This refers to the October 13, 2010 enactment of a visa free regime for residents of the North Caucasus Republics in the Russian Federation seeking to enter Georgia. At first glance, this act does not seem to have anything in common with direct Georgian-Ossetian relations, but things are not as they first seem. North Ossetia (whose residents, among others, are granted visa free entrance) is an important factor in transformation of the conflict: it can become either an obstacle or a resource. The participation of the North Ossetian-Alanian NGO sector in this

[66] Sabine Fisher. Abkhazia and Georgian – Abkhazian Conflict, Fall 2009, December, 2009. http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Abkhazia_and_the_Georgian-Abkhaz_conflict.pdf
[67] ICG, Report №205 Europe, South Ossetia: the Burden of Recognition, 06.07.2010. http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/europe/caucasus/georgia/205-south-ossetia-the-burden-of-recognition.aspx
[68] See: Oliver Bullough.. A New Georgian Gamble in the Caucasus, December 23, 2010 http://www.foreignaffairs.com/features/letters-from/letter-from-tbilisi-0?page=show

process not only is favored but inevitable. And, the fewer obstacles to direct contacts between Georgians and Ossetians, the better.

In this context, the transformation of the dividing line between South Ossetia and the rest of Georgia into inaccessible "fortified rayons" similar to the borders between the Eastern and Western camps during the "Cold War," the militarization of South Ossetia executed by the Russian militaries, and the Russian border guards deployed there, all fail to inspire optimism. Taking into consideration that more than 75% of the perimeter of South Ossetia is surrounded by Georgia, it is evident that the cited developments are not promising. Valery Dzutsev believes that "both parts of Ossetia can prosper at a minimum necessary condition if they will bind and not divide the North and the South of the Caucasus"[69]. If South Ossetia will be in a transportation deadlock, connected to the outer world only through the Roki tunnel (which can't even be called a Transcaucasia highway in this case), and if the entire perimeter of South Ossetia will become a closed border, then it is unclear how it will develop? Subsidies from Moscow are not permanent, particularly when across the mountains there are many pretenders for these subsidies.

In addition, as Sabine Fisher mentions in her report on results of an international seminar (December, 2010) dedicated to informing the policy of the EU "Non-recognition and Engagement Policy," the de-facto Government of South Ossetia refuses constructive engagement with international actors (except Russia), having more clearly expressed this after the August, 2008 war.[70]

In the already mentioned report of the International Crisis Group,[71] the unbearable conditions of residents on both sides of the dividing line are described. The section "recommendations to the South Ossetian authorities" suggests:
- Refrain from arbitrary detention of Georgian citizens and violation of their freedom of movement;
- Allow the EUMM and other international officials and organizations full access to South Ossetia.
To all sides of conflict (Georgia, South Ossetia and Russian Federation) the recommendations call for an agreement "on basic cooperation mechanisms and implementation modalities to ensure:
a) movement across the administrative boundary line (ABL) for local inhabitants and humanitarian and developmental organizations"

Valuable information regarding to the daily hardship of the residents living on the Georgian side of the dividing line is presented in an October 2010 report by the organization Saferworld[72].

Recent Public Initiatives

We are not going into the details of previous Georgian-Ossetian projects, but discuss two cases only as evidence of the position and intellectual potential of Georgian civil society representatives.

In 2004 a group of Georgian experts supported by the "Open Society-Georgia Foundation" decided to collect and organize available material regarding the Georgian-Ossetian conflict and necessary measures to restore confidence between the sides. The task incorporated also preparing and proposing an approach to the status of South Ossetia and economic options for conflict resolution. The result of the group's work was a solid report – "On the Reasons, Dynamics, Ways, and Possible

[69] Валерий Дзуцев. Северный Кавказ: от клубка противоречий на периферии - к овладению собственной судьбой, 19.11.2010, http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/177235/
[70] http://www.iss.europa.eu/fileadmin/fichiers/pdf/seminars/2010/NREP_report.pdf
[71] ICG, Report №205
[72] Malte Viefhues and David Wood. "Life on the boundary line: The future of security in Shida Kartli" http://www.saferworld.org.uk/downloads/pubdocs/Life%20on%20the%20boundary%20line%20REV.pdf

Directions of a Solution to the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict." This work was widely and thoroughly discussed by several focus groups. Well respected Georgian experts analyzed and wrote their feedback on it. Most significantly, Ossetian experts also expressed their opinion evaluating the work prepared by their Georgian colleagues. The first two phrases of the Ossetian experts' conclusion read as follows: "The experts' conclusion rarely begins with an expression of gratitude, but this time we have many reasons to be grateful to the authors of the research: Paata Zakareishvili, Revaz Jorbenadze, Tinatin Khidasheli, Konstantine Kublashvili, Ivlian Haindrava, George Gogia, Tengiz Shergelashvili, Mikheil Mirziashvili, Lia Toklikishvili, Khatuna Maisashvili, and David Darchiashvili. In the year 2005, thanks to them, for the first time of the entire period of the conflict we received the text of acceptable and objectionable suggestions on how to resolve Georgian-Ossetian controversies."

In 2006 the club "Civil Society" in Vladikavkaz published the Georgian experts' report, the results of focus group discussions, and comments on the document and experts' conclusions from "Adamon Nehas" and "the Law Above the Authority" (an NGO in North Ossetia-Alania).[73] At the moment, the most important is not what issues do Georgians and Ossetians agree or disagree on, but the fact of their cooperation itself.

In April 2005 the Georgian civil society representatives sent an appeal to the President of Georgia[74] in connection with Georgian Government initiatives on the conflict in South Ossetia.[75] The text includes a very important announcement and for this reason we cite it fully below.

Appeal to the President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili

We welcome the "Initiative of the Government of Georgia with Respect to Peaceful Resolution of the Conflict in South Ossetia." Certainly, it would be better if the document had been completed earlier, as it might have prevented the escalation of conflict in Summer 2004.

However, the above mentioned document can no doubt become the milestone for peaceful resolution of South Ossetian conflict if possible suggestions by the other side would be considered.
We believe that implementation of the document should begin after certain steps will be taken leading to at least partially restoring confidence between Georgians and Ossetians. Among them we believe are particular measures before implementation of the Georgian government's initiatives. This will make the process of thawing of mistrust among the Ossetian people irreversible.

The steps that should be considered are the following:

a) The Georgian authorities should give a political evaluation of the armed conflict in 1990-92, moreover, that you made important statements in regard to it. Only after this official assessment, the peace process can begin. In addition, the sporadic clashes between Georgian troops and Ossetian militias that occurred in summer 2004 should be clearly explained;

b) It is extremely important that the Georgian side adopt a Law on Property Restitution for each family that suffered during the 1990-1992 armed conflict, and that this law should be adopted before signing a peace agreement. These steps will support and enhance the Ossetian population's trust that the Government of Georgia in fact begins executing its obligations;

[73] http://www.google.ge/url?sa=t&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CBQQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fuasdan.com%2Fengine%2Fdownload.php%3Fid%3D4&ei=-zG3TaKONsOVOqHoqYAP&usg=AFQjCNGyMUZXvBQkN89Sbf-SeT-7woha6g

[74] See the Statement in Civil Georgia 06.04.2005 http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=9533

[75] March 24, 2005 the document was displayed on the website of the President of Georgia. Its key statements were pronounced at the meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of European Commission, January 16.

c) The investigation of the tragedy in Kekhvi (May 1992) should be completed in a timely manner and its results should be presented to the public;

d) Despite the statute of limitations, a legislative mechanism should be created to restore the dignity and rights of those Ossetians who were oppressed and insulted because of their ethnicity;

e) The Georgian government's -"Initiative of the Government of Georgia with Respect to the Peaceful Resolution of the South Ossetian Conflict" - should be delivered to the South Ossetian de facto authorities within the frames of the Joint Control Commission or other bilateral context.

We are sure that the considerations mentioned above will support the implementation of the Georgian government's peace initiatives.

If you wish, we could participate in implementing the suggested initiatives.

The appeal was signed by many respected NGOs and Georgian public activists (including the author of the article). It must be underlined that during last six years not one of the mentioned suggestions stated in the appeal lost its importance; these suggestions still await the time (and the political will) when they will be realized. Of course, since then new realities have emerged that call for adequate steps in response (and not only from the Georgian side).

Public Initiatives since August 2008

Here we may mention the initiative of Valery Dzutsev[76], intending to find common interests between Ossetians residing in South Ossetia and their compatriots living in the Georgia proper. It is important to notice that despite the considerable emigration of ethnic Ossetians from Georgia for the last twenty years the population in South Ossetia is no bigger (and maybe is even less) than the population of ethnic Ossetians residing in Georgia proper. Dzutsev points out the necessity to begin dialogue between these two communities. Under this statement Dzutsev means Ossetians loyal to the Government of Georgia and Ossetians loyal to Tskhinvali authorities should exchange ideas on the most essential problems to form a competitive political space. "Establishing the Commission for National Reconciliation in South Ossetia could assist the stabilization of the situation inside and outside of the Republic and would lead to long term peaceful resolution of the conflict in the region" – Valery Dzutsev states. Discussing the idea the author suggests several steps to realize the idea in practice, offers to avoid a meaningless zero-sum game, and offers to create the conditions where all sides will be the winners.

Under current conditions the mentioned idea seems unrealistic, though to reject it singlehandily does not look expedient based on several arguments. The Ossetian community in Georgia proper is a significant resource for Ossetians in general and for the Georgian state as well. If in the inter-community dialogue of Ossetians living on the South slopes of the Caucasus Mountains, will be joined to some degree by Georgians as well as Ossetians living in the North Caucasus, the result will be an unprecedented format for exchange of opinion and for confidence building within the different levels of the society. The Georgian community in North Ossetia should be also considered as they have lived long-term among Ossetians. The format may eventually be expanded to include Russian experts and public representatives who are also looking for solutions to problems not only in regard to South Ossetia but the North Caucasus as whole. This is a time when community

[76] Валерий Дзуцев. Национальное примирение в Южной Осетии, 06.07.2009 http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/156240/

initiatives must come before political ones, as the development and discussion of ideas within society creates the condition for political decisions.

As early as November 2008 Susan Allen Nan, George Khutsishvili and Lira Kozaeva-Tskhovrebova wrote that in order to support the official – Geneva talks (Track One Diplomacy) the informal, public dialogue had to begin. Understanding that the final word is on the politicians the authors underline the importance to restore the bridges between the communities and support the multi-level negotiation process.[77]

In July 2010 in Leiden (the Netherlands) the Georgian-Ossetian public forum held its meeting where an appeal to the participants of Geneva consultations was adopted.[78] The full text of the Appeal we cite below. The appeal was prepared after eleven rounds of Geneva consultation yielded no tangible results.

Appeal to the parties to the Geneva Talks

Leiden, the Netherlands
July 16, 2010
Dear Sirs, Madams,

The war that broke out in August 2008 took away the lives of people, led to significant damage and destroyed many traditional ties. After a few months, political consultations started in Geneva, where representatives of the parties involved started to work on two fronts: on security and on humanitarian issues.

Now, almost two years after the war, the Geneva talks remain the only platform for meetings between the authorities of all parties. With great regret we note that after eleven rounds of consultations no positive results have been reached by any of the working groups. The Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism, created to address the current problems on the ground and so far the only existing discussion platform in the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, is not actually functioning. It is evident that ordinary people and their daily problems are kept hostage to political interests.
We, participants in the Georgian-Ossetian Civil Forum, believe that nothing should block the solution of humanitarian problems.
All parties should try to address the needs of the local population.
In the first place they should solve the problems resulting from the restricted freedom of movement:
- Visits to relatives, religious shrines and cemeteries. War should not lead to the rupture of family ties;
- Access to health care for all inhabitants of the region. If necessary, it should be possible to deliver patients to the nearest hospital;
- Access to fields and pastures for the residents of Ossetian and Georgian villages, which has been restricted after the war. Local residents traditionally engaged in agriculture were left without means of subsistence. The representatives of local communities should be involved to address these issues;
- Water and gas supplies. We believe that the problems of gas and water need to be addressed independently, without making the people hostage to these negotiations;
- Lack of economic and trade ties, which have a very negative impact on the livelihood of the inhabitants of the region. We urge the parties to ensure freedom of economic activity, and all participants in the discussions to promote it;

[77] 11.25.2008 http://www.commongroundnews.org/article.php?id=24429&lan=en&sid=1&sp=0
[78] 07.21.2010 (in Russian, http://www.apsny.ge/order/1279759270.php).
The Appeal was signed by: Akhsar Tskhubarti,Marina Meshvildishvili, Alan Gassiev, Maria Plieva, Varvara Pakhomenko, Megi Bibiluri, George Stefnadze, Nana Chqareuli, Dali Doijashvili, Nodar Sarjveladze, Zema Tedeeva, Rudolf Gubiev, Zurab Bendianishvili, Sarmat Parastaev, Zurab Zubashvili, Cinta Depondt, Zurab Tavasiev, Sonja Van Reide, Irakli Chikhladze, Tamerlan Tadgaev, Mari Khmiadashvili, Temur Tskhovrebov.

- Humanitarian access to the whole of South Ossetia. The local population is in dire need of assistance to address humanitarian problems: shelter construction, post-conflict psychological rehabilitation, support to business initiatives. We call upon the authorities of all parties to ensure freedom of access for humanitarian organizations to the region, whereby the organization itself must be able to determine from which side it is most convenient to enter.
To solve these problems, we urge all sides to establish, promulgate and implement general rules for movement of persons, in the first place for the local population. At the moment, local inhabitants move back and forth without such rules, with their absence leading to multiple abuses and human rights violations by all parties. The detention of people is one of the most acute problems. We urge all parties to refrain from arbitrary detention, the practice of hostage taking and the restriction of the freedom of movement of people. We call for investigation of the cases of missing and illegally detained people, as well as investigation of human rights violations committed during military operations.
We also urge the authorities on all sides to promote a gradual solution of the problems of refugees and internally displaced persons who fled their homes as a result of the conflict since the early 1990s.
All parties shall further the development of contacts at the civil society level, support civic initiatives without limiting the freedom of association and assembly.
We urge all participants to the Geneva talks to facilitate the resumption of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism without pre-conditions on status or political preconditions, and work towards a prompt agreement on basic mechanisms of cooperation in humanitarian issues.

Comparing this appeal to the previous one (the Open Letter of the Georgian NGO representatives to the President of Georgia in 2005), it is evident that the problems have been identified adequately in both cases (this time by the civil society activists from the both sides) and the appeals underline the most essential demands of the people. However, even as time passes, officials on both sides are expressing neither unilateral nor bilateral readiness and/or competence to solve these problems. The priority of political interests and ambitions over the needs and necessities of the war affected population and the fundamental rights and freedoms of the people still persist.

In August 2010 a basic document of the project Supporting Georgian Civil Society in Peace Building was published.[79] The project was financed by the EU and implemented by the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights (BIM, Vienna), and International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN, Tbilisi). Together with foreign experts, more than twenty Georgian NGO representatives participated.

The document below is of particular importance in the context we mentioned above. It can be presented as a basic (basic as it is not an exhaustive listing of probable actions) document for preparing a strategy for how Georgian and Ossetian civil societies can cooperate in the near future. Below we present only the structure of the document which clearly gives an idea of its importance:

1. The Relevance of Civil Society in the Peace – Building Process;
2. Civil Society Contribution to Peace Process and Peace Consolidation; below are seven functions civil society can fulfill in the process of peace-building:
   - Protection of citizens against violence from all parties;
   - Monitoring of human rights violations and of the implementation of peace;
   - Advocacy for peace and human rights;
   - Facilitation of dialogue on the local and national level between various actors;
   - Service delivery to create entry points for peace-building;
   - Socialization to values of peace and democracy as well as to development of in-group identity of marginalized groups;
   - Social cohesion by bringing people from adversarial groups together;

[79] http://tuta.neru9.com/iccn.org.ge/text/eng/projects/2010/Recommendations-Document-ENG.pdf

3. Georgian Civil Society in Peace-Building and Crisis Prevention (including challenges it faced);
4. Priority Areas: Problem Analysis and Recommendations (to the civil society, the Government of Georgia, the international donors). They are:
   - Increasing people to people contacts;
   - Engaging youth and education for peace-building;
   - Strengthening IDP participation;
   - Increasing human security in conflict affected areas;
   - Adjustment of legislation, strategies and policies;
   - Assessment and analysis of war crimes and human rights violations;
   - Widening the spectrum of negotiations, dialogue and discussions among the conflicting parties.

Report #5 - "Peace Security and Stability in Shida Kartli, A Community Informed Strategy," contains significant information for anyone who supports the dialogue among the civil society representatives, participates in it, facilitates the dialogue or sponsors it. The report was prepared by the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (CIPDD), Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) and Saferworld in February 2011. The project was funded by the European Union.[80]

Thus, the above mentioned public initiatives implemented during the most recent period illustrate if not fully at least adequately the range of what might, must and should immediately be done by the Georgian and Ossetian civil society organizations. Civil society organizations should be assisted in these efforts by international donors.

Once More on Obstacles

One of the main obstacles preventing the success of dialogue between the Georgian and Ossetian civil societies is the fact that the Georgian Government since acquiring power after the Rose Revolution, intentionally monopolized national broadcasts, forced out the political opposition, and brought under its control some already existing NGOs or created new GONGOs (as we mentioned above). The result of these measures was a significant interruption in the socio-political debates in Georgia. The political discourse as interpreted by the officials can be summed up in a simple dichotomy – Are you for Misha (i.e. President Saakashvili) or against him? At present, the TV broadcast remains the major source of information for the great majority of the population where the official point of view, as the only truth, stated by the Government or its adepts (Georgians and foreigners) dominates. The official attitude is, in fact, not always and not in every aspect actually true, and, in regard to conflicts, it is consistently far from it. The situation in this regard, among the experts in particular, was clearly acknowledged by Archil Gegeshidze: "The polarization of the political life in Georgia based on loyalty to the Government's policy is reflected on the experts' community. They are also divided on a matter - how to interpret the political events? The loyal to the official course the experts, generally, are sympathetic to the authorities and support any decision of the Government in internal and foreign policy issues, and in … conflicts as well. Accordingly, this group of the experts, despite its small number, has access to the National Mass Media and propagates the view favorable to the officials."[81] The same opinion can be extended to NGO activists as well.

[80] http://www.cipdd.org/files/40_535_840928_Communityinformedstrategy-ShidaKartlieng-reduced.pdf
[81] A. Gegeshidze and I. Haindrava. Transformation of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict: rethinking the paradigm http://www.c-r.org/our-work/caucasus/documents/2011/CR%20Ge-Ab%20ENG%20web_Georg_perspective.pdf

Under these circumstances, beginning dialogue takes on a significant importance. Paata Zakareishvili calls this dialogue "Georgian-Georgian." Under conditions in which the Government, without even trying to understand the context, immediately rejects any opinion, expert analysis, initiative, previously not introduced to them and supported by them, the actions of the civil society representatives and experts cannot be efficient. Many times we witnessed the situation when the evaluations, conclusions, recommendations of the Georgian experts reached the Georgian officials by way of Brussels or Washington, and that is a good scenario. The worse case scenario is when the Government ignores the messages from the West and responds to them very slowly and /or inadequately. George Khutsishvili correctly remarks: "Yet public diplomacy can be successful only if it is supported by the political process. An example of this is the dialogues of 1990's when the Georgian-Ossetian and the Georgian-Abkhaz informal dialogues was active initially but winded down with time…The best results are achieved when and where there is cooperation between the governmental and the non-governmental efforts."[82] Revaz Gachechiladze is even more categorical, stating that "Any public diplomacy effort is destined to fail if the state (the states) is not interested in its success or hinders it."[83]

How to cooperate if between the public and the authority the latter built a tall and soundproof wall? Maybe not fully, but there is an answer in Chapter 3 - Difficulties of engagement and dialogue between Georgians, and Abkhaz and South Ossetians in Report #6, "Peace, Security and Stability in Georgia: A Community Informed Strategy" prepared by the CIPDD, GYLA and Saferworld. In the report the reasons and core of the obstacles are analyzed and the recommendations are offered to all the sides who are able to influence the situation in a positive direction.[84]

It is evident however that the above-mentioned state of affairs is not just an internal problem of Georgia. The situation in South Ossetia is even worse. Almost a week after the "Leiden Appeal", Temur Tskhovrebov, the editor of a South Ossetian newspaper, civil activist, Chair of the Union of Ex-Combatants of South Ossetia, and also a participant in the August 2008 hostilities in Tskhinvali, who signed the mentioned "appeal," was mercilessly beaten in the street of Tskhinvali by ten people. Among the offenders, three members of the South Ossetian Parliament were recognized. The incident was preceded by a public statement of the Official Representative of the President of South Ossetia in Post-Conflict Regulation – Boris Chochiev.[85] In his interview to the information agency "RES" dated July 22, Chochiev announced that "Participation of South Ossetian citizens in the "Georgian-Ossetian Public Forum" which recently was held in the city of Leiden, in Holland, harmed the state interests of the South Ossetian Republic and positions of the South Ossetian Delegation participating in the Geneva Discussions for Security in the Caucasus". The title of the interview was "'Georgian-Ossetian Forum': A Slap in the Face to Every Ossetian." The content of the interview was also appropriate to the title.[86]

Occasionally, civil society is asked questions of the following type (and the authorities encourage such assaults). For example: For almost fifteen years there have been public dialogues at the NGO level, but what are the tangible results? Truly, unfortunately, the NGO sector neither could resolve the conflict nor even prevent excesses of different types (from the steeling of the cattle to the August 2008 war). However, if we consider what the old and new Governments of Georgia (and Tskhinvali and Moscow) were able to "achieve" for the last twenty years – we get an incomparably gloomier picture than we get from the work of civil society.

[82] http://icar.gmu.edu/south-caucasus-project/10458
[83] See: Revaz Gachechiladze. "Human Factor in the Process of Restoring Trust between the People: Study of Point of View of Ossetians Living in Georgia"
[84] http://www.saferworld.org.uk/Peace%20security%20and%20Stability%20in%20Georgia_Russian.pdf
[85] http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/172076/
[86] http://cominf.org/node/1166483914

The Favorable Factors

Among the favorable factors is the attitude of the society (in Georgian society at least) and also the role of the international community.

Overview of Attitudes in the Georgian Society

We believe it is our duty to state that we do not intend to present a perfect and certain picture, expressed in numbers, of the prevailing attitude among Georgians. It is not possible, among other factors, for the reason that we could not find reliable information based on the opinion poll research which was focused specifically on Georgian-Ossetian relations (there is no relevant information at all on the other side of the dividing line, in South Ossetia). Accordingly, we use the fragments of different research and information which to some degree elucidate the issue. Valery Dzutsev mentions: "Before the August war of 2008, I faced a very unusual situation in South Ossetia. If we glance at the majority of other conflicts in the Caucasus we clearly notice the harsh hostility to the opposite side. In this particular conflict – between Georgians and Ossetians – this attitude I met very rarely. On the casual, everyday level Georgians and Ossetians didn't have serious arguments with each other. Accordingly, in this particular conflict it can be stated confidently that the stand off is created with significant influence by politicians.[87]

The war in August 2008 certainly tragically affected Georgian-Ossetian relations. If before then it was predominantly Ossetians who considered themselves the victims of violence (in 1920, end of 1980s - beginning of 1990s, in 2004), after the August war Georgians also consider themselves in the same category, as the fact of the ethnic cleansing of Georgians is stated in international documents. However, the emergence of an enemy image focused on Ossetians was mostly prevented, because it was Russia that fought against Georgia. Accordingly, after the catastrophic results of the attempt to restore the territorial integrity of Georgia by using force, a large majority of Georgians do not hold an aggressive attitude towards Ossetians.

The International Republican Institute (IRI, the United States) regularly holds opinion poll research regarding important issues in political and social life.[88] The table below indicates responses to the question, "How do you observe the solution of problems in Abkhazia and South Ossetia?" The date (month and year) is shown in the first row, the second row indicates the percentage of positive answers to "negotiations and peacefully", the third row- "using force when necessary", in the fourth row - "uncertain".

10.04	06.05	10.05	04.06	02.07	09.07	02.08	09.08	01.09	10.09	03.10	10.10
88	86	89	90	92	91	93	95	92	94	96	96
9	10	9	8	6	7	5	4	4	3	2	2
3	4	3	2	2	2	2	1	4	3	2	2

Based on the data even in 2004 the number of respondents favoring a military approach was small and in six years that number also considerably diminished to its lowest.

The absolute figures of another opinion poll implemented by the Tbilisi Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) in December 2007 and November 2008 differ significantly.[89] The purpose of the research was the comparison of public opinion before and after the August 2008 war. Still, in the research the

[87] Валерий Дзуцев. Северный Кавказ: от клубка противоречий на периферии - к овладению собственной судьбой 19.11. 2009 http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/177235/
[88] http://www.iri.org.ge/ka/news/latest-news/149-iri-releases-survey-of-georgian-public-opinion.html
[89] Nana Sumbadze. "Georgia Before and After the August War; Report on the Survey of Population: Barometer 2007 and 2008", Institute for Policy Studies, Tbilisi, 2009

number of individuals allowing for the use of force declined considerably from 27.6% in the end of 2007 to 16.3% in November 2008. These results indicate a similar tendency to IRI poll research. It should also be noted that regardless of the fact that only 16.5% of respondents think that IDPs from the South Ossetia will be able to return home in the following three years, even so 67.3% believe that they can live alongside the South Ossetians. This response is proof that Ossetians, in general, are not considered enemies.

Among the biggest failures of the Georgian Government, based on the same IRI opinion poll research, are: Inability to restore the territorial integrity of the country (25% - indicated it on the first place, 34% of total respondents indicated among others) and war with Russia in August 2008 (22% - the first place, total – 26%). On the third place came the unemployment but it was named by much lesser number of respondents - 12% placed it the first and 21% of respondents name it among others. These numbers can be differently interpreted but one common conclusion can already be made – the public condemned the military venture.

The responses on the question – "Will the Georgian Government solve the problems with Abkhazia and South Ossetia?" – are arranged in the table below (the numbers are expressed in percentages).

	10.04	06.05	10.05	04.06	02.07	09.07	02.08	09.08	02.09	06.09	10.09	03.10	10.10
Probably	29	24	19	18	18	12	17	14	6	5	8	7	13
More Likely	52	53	48	43	53	46	44	38	29	29	32	32	38
Less Likely	10	13	17	23	20	27	25	30	36	34	29	29	26
Not Likely	3	3	6	8	4	8	7	10	20	24	20	18	13
Uncertain/ Don't Know	6	7	10	8	5	7	6	8	9	8	11	14	11

These numbers prove that the number of people holding illusions regarding the quick regulation of the conflict (or conflicts) decreased considerably. Accordingly, switch gears towards transforming the conflict should be understood by many of them. In the case of targeted action by civil society representatives, explaining to the population the rationale for these actions, then the aim can be reached.

The National Democratic Institute (NDI, the United States) published data [90] showing that 61% of respondents supported the opening of Upper Larsi check point on the border of Georgia-Russia (9% were against, 30% were uncertain or refused to answer), 70% of respondents supported the Geneva Consultation process (3% were against, 27% uncertain or refused to answer). This means that the steps aimed to normalize relations among the conflicting parties were supported by the public even if they didn't bring positive results yet (for example, the Geneva talks).

Even before the August 2008 events (after the summer 2004 excesses) NGO "Iber-Iron" supported by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation performed opinion poll research among the political parties in Georgia. Based on the research results, a round table session was organized and the collected materials were published.[91] The five party representatives who participated in the project uniformly expressed their support for peaceful regulation of conflict (representative of the ruling party just quoted President Saakashvili's speech to the PACE on January 26, 2005). The opinion of the participants was divided in regard to the status of South Ossetia within Georgia. In this regard, Archil Gegeshidze's opinion is important. He states, "Opposition political parties with a rare exception (specifically the Republican Party) failed to elaborate a program or concept in regard to conflict resolution. Generally, they limited themselves to making immature statements or were simply busy criticizing the current Government policy without offering any alternative. After the

[90] Polls held on June 24 – July 5, 2010 http://www.ndi.org/files/Public_Attitudes_Georgia_July_2010.pdf
[91] «Разрешение грузино-осетинского конфликта: видения политических партий», Тбилиси, 2005

August events, practically all opposition parties, despite agreeing on the key role of Russia in the conflict, blamed the authorities for inciting the war and pointed out at the same time that the war was preventable."[92] The above-mentioned facts show that a peaceful attitude prevails in Georgian political circles.

In general, these observations are supported by the research of Revaz Gachechiladze (published in this research project). He studied the point of view of the part of the Georgian population who lives on this side of the dividing line and who could not be neutral to the Georgian-Ossetian conflict and its consequences. Additional material regarding the attitudes in certain segments of the Georgian society can be found in Report #5 – "Community Perceptions of The Causes and
Effects of the August 2008 Conflict in Kvemo Kartli, Samegrelo, Samtskhe-Javakheti and Shida Kartli" made jointly by CIPDD, GYLA and Saferworld[93].

Role of the International Community

The EU has become a key international actor/mediator/sponsor in conflict resolution in South Caucasus. Its intentions and prospects are relatively fully and consistently declared in the above-mentioned report on the results of the December (2010) seminar in Brussels.[94] The European logic of "Non-Recognition and Engagement Policy" is focused on two major tasks: de-isolation (of South Ossetia and Abkhazia) and transformation (of conflicts). In respect to de-isolation, contacts with/between civil societies (and people in general) are particularly significant because they can play an essential role in restoring confidence between the conflicting parties. At the same time, European politicians and experts caution that politicization of such contacts must be prevented in order to clear the way from obstacles to conflict transformation. One of the goals of this approach is, on the one hand, to strengthen contacts with the de-facto authorities in Tskhinvali, who do not support the development of favorable conditions for NGO activities. On the other hand, this approach argues for the Georgian Government shifting its attitude to the conflict from isolation to engagement.

The statement regarding the need to de-isolate South Ossetia (and Abkhazia) in the international community underlines that this process should be accompanied by efforts to transform the conflict, including, among others, "opening" South Ossetia (and Abkhazia) to Georgia. This means expansion of relations not only between the civil societies of the conflicting parties, but also between the general public and the economic spheres. Civil society organizations should cooperate with each other to provide help to the population in areas such as human rights, information exchange, education, and health care. These steps will help to strengthen confidence between the people, will create the space for reconciliation and, as a result, the possibilities to regulate the conflict will shape.

In May 2010, the EU allocated funding for the COBERM program. (COBERM stands for Confidence Building Early Response Mechanism). The project is administered by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and is targeted to strengthen and support civil society initiatives on the both sides of the dividing line of the conflict zone. At the end of 2011, COBERM funding is scheduled to end, but if it is judged positively it may be extended. In December 2010, the EU delegation in Georgia published a report regarding EU assistance to the conflict affected

[92] Archil Gegeshidze and Ivlian Haindrava.Op.Cit.
http://www.c-r.org/our-work/caucasus/documents/2011/CR%20Ge-Ab%20ENG%20web_Georg_perspective.pdf
[93]http://cipdd.org/files/40_508_452902_community_eng_full.pdf - June, 2010, in English
http://cipdd.org/files/40_508_205441_community_rus_full.pdf Июнь 2010 г. – in Russian.
[94] http://www.iss.europa.eu/fileadmin/fichiers/pdf/seminars/2010/NREP_report.pdf

population, including, among other forms of assistance, efforts to restore confidence through dialogue.[95]

Very soon after the end of the August 2008 war, the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ICAR) at the George Mason University (Arlington, Virginia, the United States) initiated the "Point of View" project (December 2008). In the Point of View format, representatives of civil society organizations from Georgia and South Ossetia regularly meet and discuss essential problems. One of the Georgian participants believes that "the more often we have similar meetings and dialogues, the closer we will get to the rebuilding of trust between the two people." Her colleague from South Ossetia mentions: "Hopefully, with time, the conflicting sides that are today expressing and defending their own opinions and 'point of view' can come to the peaceful resolution of the conflict, after having understood each other's point of view."[96]

Going through the obstacles and the problems (which have been partially mentioned above) with the support and participation of international governmental and non-governmental organizations, the Western donors, the format of the Georgian-Ossetian dialogue between the civil society organizations continues and gains power. The meetings continue between the NGOs, independent experts and youth. New publications are seeing the light, briefings and presentations are organized, and joint projects are realized. In this context, the Russian Federation does not fit. Paata Zakareishvili (from the Institute for the Study of Nationalism and Conflict) delicately described Russia's position: "Russia doesn't give money for the development of democracy and civil society. In Russia there isn't … democracy and civil society in the sense as it is understood in the European Union. This is the reason that Russia will not spend the money for it. Russia will spend money on the military base, military infrastructure, roads, and houses but not on freedom."[97]

Conclusion

When working on the present research it became clear that the various research project formats supported recently by the EU on issues of Georgian-Ossetian conflict complement each other well by depicting different aspects of the conflict. Together, they describe very objectively the true state of matters in the Georgian - Ossetian conflict and the possibilities to further develop Georgian-Ossetian civil society dialogue. We must mention that the research in the framework of this project and also the joint projects of CIPDD, GYLA and Saferworld, and the projects of BIM and ICCN, each of which we mentioned above, are essential projects in this field. These projects, taken together with various initiatives suggested by representatives of civil society organizations at different times, alongside the feasible ideas and initiatives laid out in the "Engagement through Cooperation" Strategy and its Action plan, identify the spheres of corresponding interests of Georgian and Ossetian civil societies (and the people living on the both sides of the dividing line). They also help to identify the obstacles on the way to expanding the dialogue, the roles of international institutions to support interaction, and parameters of the process that finally will assist transformation of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict.

In this sense, it is possible to define three major directions along which the two communities are able to interact with each other, while supported by international donors. The first direction is in reducing the burden of the everyday life and improving social conditions of the population most affected by the conflict (the refugees and the IDPs). It is important to respect their rights and freedom, security, health care, education, etc. The second direction is to set up contacts and discussions on the wide range of problems among the different social groups of Georgians and

[95] http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/documents/projects/overview_post_conflict_ec_assistance_dec2010_en.pdf
[96] http://icar.gmu.edu/south-caucasus-project/10458
[97] http://www.ekhokavkaza.com/content/article/2129129.html

Ossetians (NGO activities, journalists, professionals in different fields, youth, etc). The third direction should follow the strategic goals of destroying the image of the enemy in both societies, removing the mythical veil from the past and the present, and prevent the rise of new and defeat already rooted stereotypes,[98] and restore the confidence and reconcile the conflicting sides. These three directions together complement each other and together they will grow into the process of conflict transformation.

It is expected that wider the spectrum of the civil society representatives involved in the process, the larger the opportunity for different clusters of the public to come into direct contact with each other and, accordingly, the more successful result is expected in terms of greater understanding of each other, which is a necessary condition for reconciliation. It is, however, important that common endeavors be well planned and coordinated so that each participant who performs work has extensive experience and knowledge. The results should be made accessible to the general public, and should be evaluated publicly and fairly.

[98] See: George Tarkhan-Mouravi. Op.Cit.

THE HUMAN FACTOR IN THE PROCESS OF RESTORING CONFIDENCE BETWEEN PEOPLES: A STUDY OF OPINIONS OF OSSETIANS LIVING IN GEORGIA[99]

Revaz Gachechiladze

Description of the Problem

The problem of alienation between Georgians and Ossetians did not begin in 2008. Its origins should be sought during the end of the 1980s, when the USSR still existed and when the failure of *Perestroika* created the conditions for increased separatism and nationalism, which were quite often built on the basis of illusions. More specifically, among Ossetians living in the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast within the Georgian SSR there arose in 1990 an illusion (not without strong impulses from outside!) that they could establish a small separate Soviet Republic. The reaction of official Tbilisi to the actions of the then leadership in Tskhinvali was immediate. At the same time there arose an illusion among a substantial number of Georgians that they could build a mono-ethnic state, similar to that which was being built in neighboring Armenia. The realities appeared to be much harsher for both ethnic groups. A civil war erupted when not only the rules of war were ignored but also simple moral values were disregarded. The first leaders of the Republic of Georgia employed a shortsighted nationalist policy that forced a portion (in certain cases quite a considerable portion) of ethnic minorities to leave the country. This process concerned Ossetians, among others.

After the 2008 war, contacts between Georgians and Ossetians sharply decreased. (Here and below the Ossetians, living in South Ossetia are meant, unless stated otherwise). A sense of mutual mistrust started to prevail.

Meanwhile, even if it is practically impossible to reach a political solution in the short-term, there exists, at least on the Georgian side (I reckon, that it may exist on the Ossetian side as well), an opinion that alienation is dangerous for both peoples. It is necessary to maintain contacts on the societal level. The "human factor" can play a significant positive role in the process of restoring confidence between Georgians and Ossetians.

The problem lies in studying the real state of both the *necessity* and the *possibility* to restore this confidence.

Structure of Research

The present research attempts to define the potential of the "human factor" – public diplomacy -- in the process of restoring confidence between the Georgian and Ossetian peoples.

In the *first*, rather short, chapter several terms (the human factor, people's diplomacy) are discussed and several examples (cases) from other countries and regions are presented. In the *second* chapter demographic issues (primarily the number and settlement patterns) of the Ossetian population (including mixed -- Ossetian-Georgian -- families) residing in "Georgia proper"[100] are discussed. I assume that these Ossetians are the very group of people who could serve people's diplomacy with

[99]It is the Author's pleasure to thank Ivliane Khaindrava for providing materials on the topic of the present research theme and the students of the Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University -- Gvantsa Darispanashvili, Ketevan Khimshiashvili, Elina Jioeva, Lika Zhvania, Miranda Pagava, Valerian Dvalidze, Beka Khinchagashvili and David Sidamonidze for their participation in the sociological survey.

[100] This conditional term is used to define the territory of Georgia outside of the area occupied by Russian troops since 2008.

the purpose of restoring confidence between Georgian and Ossetian peoples. In the *third* chapter, the results of a small sociological study are analyzed. The *summary* expresses a cautious optimism concerning the possibilities for achieving the common goal –restoring confidence between Georgians and Ossetians. 13 figures (charts) and 6 tables are attached.

Relevance of the Research Problem

The Russian-Georgian war of 2008, which took place primarily in South Ossetia and its adjacent territories inevitably left unhealed wounds in the Ossetian as well as in the Georgian societies. Although the fact of death of any soldier or a civilian and, moreover, the ousting of people from the places where they and their forefathers had lived for centuries, is a tragedy for each family and any nation as a whole, it is even worse that the war created an atmosphere of protracted alienation and deep mistrust between the peoples.

Although the still numerous Ossetian population in "Georgia proper" was not affected directly (economically or physically) during and after the 2008 war, nevertheless, it also suffered a strong moral trauma. These people as well as the ethnic Georgians should understand that tragic wounds are sooner or later to be healed. Georgians and Ossetians have a tradition of coexistence for many centuries, they are interconnected with multiple kinship ties and their great majorities are unlikely to wish any further deterioration of relations including those on personal level.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the research is to analyze the current state of the Ossetian population (including mixed families) in "Georgia proper," and in particular to study its attitudes towards the possibilities and ways of restoring trust between the peoples.

Hypothesis

It can be assumed hypothetically that among the Ossetian population (including mixed families) living in the territory of "Georgia proper" the feeling of regret should prevail because of the actual breaking-off of relationships between the peoples (the severing of ties between the ethnic Ossetians of South Ossetia and those of "Georgia proper" are meant as well) and there should exist a desire to find the ways for reconciliation. Among the internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the areas affected by ethnic conflict, which are mainly ethnic Georgians and partially ethnic Ossetians (members of mixed families), the feeling of distress on the grounds of injustice manifested towards them should gradually make way to a willingness to find some common ground of understanding and cooperation with the Ossetians together with whom they used to live for many generations. It would have been naive to expect that both these groups of population have any precise plan for reconciliation. They, by all means, should understand that they became the victims of big geopolitical players, first of all of those in the Kremlin which these groups are unable to influence, but their readiness for peaceful resolution of conflict may be a certain sign to decision-makers.

Methodology of Research

The methodology of research was created in consideration of the above mentioned scientific hypothesis. A sociological survey was used to study opinion of Ossetians living in "Georgia proper." The questions in the survey questionnaire were formulated to obtain answers from the Ossetian population living in the villages and cities of "Georgia proper," thus allowing confirmation or refutation of the above-mentioned hypothesis. For reasons of comparison, Georgians were polled as well using the same questionnaire: such respondents were IDPs from the conflict zone and

Georgians living next to Ossetians in the villages and cities. In addition, we collected and analyzed official statistical data and data from previous research.

The Human Factor? People's Diplomacy? Ideal and Reality (Theoretical Overview and Cases from Different Countries and Regions)

When the "Human Factor" is discussed, a notion of engineering comes to mind. We have a notion of subjective factors when using complicated technology. (It is well-known that after a plane crash the experts first of all investigate the possibility of a "human factor.") But the "human factor" is also important in psychological analysis, such as in social interaction between small and large groups. In general, as Porter notes the "*human factor is a physical or (cognitive) property of an individual or social behavior which is specific to humans and influences the functioning of technological systems as well as human-environment equilibriums.*"[101]

The "human factor" involves the study of all aspects of the way humans relate to the world around them. Continuing this notion we may state that the "human factor" is important for post-conflict situations when we are looking for common ground amongst groups who were not long ago in a conflict, with the aim to overcome or reduce enmity. Individuals and moreover groups of the population can do if not everything at least something to correct the mistakes made by the decision-makers, the politicians!

People's (public) diplomacy is not a new term. It has been used for almost a hundred years (mainly after the First World War) in many countries and regions, though with various meanings.

Peoples diplomacy is employed almost everywhere when formal diplomacy is powerless, although success is not guaranteed. Ideally, people's diplomacy should reconcile former enemies - the countries and peoples. In fact, the result is considerably modest.

In order to understand the weak and strong sides of people's diplomacy some examples from different countries are discussed below.

Calls to use people's diplomacy are often heard in regions which recently underwent interethnic or military conflicts. In several cases people's diplomacy has acquired a certain significance in improving relations between peoples which participated in conflicts, for example in Timor-Leste, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Philippines, etc.[102]

In the United States the term "public diplomacy" is more often used and comprises the connections among international public, cultural programs, and academic grants, educational exchanges, invitations of foreign professors, experts and strengthening effort of United States' government to prevent ideological support of terrorism[103]. This definition, which is used by the US State Department, underlines the methods which should be used by public diplomacy but some scholars consider, that the purpose and possible results are mostly ignored. This policy implies participation of the state as governing body of public diplomacy.

In fact any type of people's (public) diplomacy is destined to fail if the state or states are not interested in it and even more, if they hinder it.

[101]http://www.scribd.com/doc/37402839/Human-Factors-Ergonomics

[102] John Paluszek. Viewpoints: The New "People's Diplomacy". FPA Features. January 8, 2008; *Diplomacy Training programmes.* Human Rights and Peoples Diplomacy: 15th Annual Training for Human Rights Defenders from the Asia-Pacific Region and Indigenous Australia, University of New South Wales.1989; Ikeda, Daisaku**.** 'People's Diplomacy': A Power to Resist the Currents of History. *The Japan Times*, May 11, 2006; 20th Annual Human Rights and Peoples' Diplomacy Training Program. 26 July-13 August 2010. Dili, Timor Leste

[103] Snow, Nancy and Philip M. Taylor (eds.). *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*. New York and London: Routledge Publishers, 2009

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece Georgios Papandreou in 2000 declared that he sees the role of public diplomacy in settling the conflict in Cyprus[104]. He stated the necessity of contacts between communities, more specifically between youth, women, and non-governmental organizations. The people living in divided Cyprus since 1974 after 30 years of isolation practically were ready for these contacts and this readiness resulted in 2008 in the opening of check points on the division line. Without exaggerating the real results it should be admitted that in recent years Turkish and Greek Cypriots are making some small but still noticeable progress in establishing contacts with each other. Moreover, the Turkish population of Cyprus during the 2004 referendum was ready to support unification of the island. A reporter from a Turkish newspaper "Today's Zaman," Ergun Babahan, in his column on April 9, 2011, wrote that "native Turkish Cypriots are against Turkey and even want a union with Greek Cypriots."

The optimism of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece in 2000 arose from examples of the recent past. People's diplomacy worked well in improving previously strained relations between Greece and Turkey, especially after two earthquakes - the first in Istanbul, on August 17, 1999 and then in Athens, on September 7 of the same year. Unexpectedly stricken by human tragedy, both peoples realized how meaningless the nationalistic slogans and permanent confrontation are. The solidarity and assistance made by both sides' rescue crews affected changing moods, reduced the atmosphere of enmity, and was a strong message to the leadership of both countries that the peoples both want peace and are ready to cooperate.

It is regarded that even in cases when alienation between the peoples and states have reached a huge scale people's diplomacy can still give some results. Alexander Rusetsky admits that probably in case of Nagorno-Karabakh (which, together with the adjacent territories of "Azerbaijan proper", occupied by Armenian forces, is completely cleansed of the ethnic Azeri population) people's diplomacy will have some effect not in case of rare visits of Azeri intellectuals to Armenia (visits vice versa practically never occurred) but only when these meetings will take place between representatives of the two communities of Nagorno-Karabakh, that is, between "secessionists" and "unionists." They ought to participate in deciding their fate for themselves and their region.[105]

However people's diplomacy in this particular case will hardly bring any positive results, unless the entire Armenian and Azeri societies will feel that the time has come to throw away the perception of the "enemy image " in the neighbor. But, this is only possible if the politicians will reach some sort of compromise which means concessions (mostly, territorial) from both sides, which, in their turn, the politicians are not able to afford without changing the psychological state of Armenian and Azeri societies. And the vicious circle is closed.

In contrast to the above mentioned case, the potential of people's diplomacy in restoring confidence between Georgian and Ossetian peoples may be considered to be not yet fully realized. The Georgian-Ossetian conflict is very different from all the other Caucasian conflicts and it would be a mistake to fit it into the frames of strictly defined ethnic or even an ethno-territorial conflicts. It is a political conflict as well where external force played a very important role in its origin and in stirring it up. Ossetians and Georgians had and still have much in common from the cultural point of view, personal contacts are not forgotten as yet, and the nations are open to each other at least on the level of everyday life. Among Georgians and Ossetians there are many individuals of mixed origins: similar phenomena were very rare in the case of Armenians and Azeris in Nagorno-Karabakh or in the case of Greeks and Turks in Cyprus.

[104] Cyprus issue can benefit from 'people's diplomacy', Papandreou says. *Athens News Agency*. 15 January, 2000

[105] Rusetsky, Alexander (director of the Tbilisi-based South Caucasus Regional Security Institute). Ethicized people's diplomacy in Karabakh to have no effect – analyst. *News.Az interviews*. 19 January, 2010

Hatred, if expressed, is on a personal and not on interethnic level. I confess that in making such a statement I can answer only for the Georgians. But the Ossetians whom I meet almost daily, most of them my students at Tbilisi State University, did not express hatred towards Georgians and, living themselves in Georgia, they never experienced, in their own words, discrimination on the basis of their ethnic identity.

North Ossetian political scientist Valeri Dzutsev could calmly propose the creation of a "Commission for National Reconciliation in South Ossetia" which could have become an important mechanism for reducing tension and finding a long-term political solution in the region[106].

Although under current circumstances the idea to create the above mentioned commission (or something similar) seems to belong in the sphere of fantasy, it is still important that an ethnic Ossetian doesn't exclude the prospect of reconciliation with Georgians. I am convinced that an attempt to do something real in this direction will meet a positive response by Georgians as well.

Efforts by the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at the George Mason University (USA) to organize series of meetings under the title "Point of View"[107] with the purpose of restoring confidence and mutual understanding between the Georgian and Ossetian sides do not go in vain. They can bring a positive result.

Demographic State of the Ossetian Population in Georgia

When discussing the opportunities of people's diplomacy it is important to take into consideration the existing demographic structure of the society.

The coexistence of Georgians and Ossetians within the historical Georgian Kingdom (in the 18th century, the East Georgian Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti) has a history of at least several hundred years, while residing as neighbors in the Caucasus region has a history of none less than two millennia. Historical annals confirm multiple instances of positive interaction and mutual assistance amongst these peoples. It is obvious that historical facts can't directly influence current political affairs. But, they can influence the state of the mentality of ethnic communities. Therefore, it is important to remind the peoples of the positive historical examples of interethnic cooperation even if such reminding looks like "old-fashioned propaganda."

During the Soviet era, Ossetians were one of the largest ethnic minorities in Georgia. For example, they almost twice outnumbered the ethnic Abkhaz residing in the same Soviet Republic.

According to the First Census of Population in independent Georgia (2002) there were 38,028 Ossetians in Georgia[108]. This figure includes the number of Ossetians living in the "Georgia proper" as well as those in Akhalgori district and in the Georgian villages of the Didi and Patara Liakhvi river valleys where, naturally, Ossetians also resided (the latter territories were under control of Tbilisi prior to August 2008). It doesn't seem relevant to compare these data with those of the last Soviet Population Census of 1989 when on the entire territory of Georgia more than 164,000 Ossetians were enumerated, among them outside of the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast up to 100,000: the data collected in 1989 and 2002 encompass differently sized territories (and two

[106] Валерий Дзуцев. Национальное примирение в Южной Осетии. *июль 06 2009* http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/156240/
[107] http://icar.gmu.edu
[108] Major Findings of the First General National Population Census of Georgia in 2002. Demography. Scientific Journal, 2 (7) 2004. Tbilisi

different epochs!). Nevertheless, in any case it is evident that there was a sharp reduction of the Ossetian population as it migrated mostly towards North Ossetia during the inter-census period.

The number of Ossetians enumerated in urban areas of "Georgia proper" in 2002 amounted to 17,990, among them 10,268 in Tbilisi (where they lived mainly in the urban districts of Gldani-Nadzaladevi where 4,647 resided and Isani-Samgori where 2,535 resided). 20,038 Ossetians resided in rural areas, among them the largest number being 13,383 people in the region of Shida Kartli (Inner Kartli). 6,405 lived in the territory adjacent to South Ossetia, in Gori District, 3,479 in Kaspi District, 2,755 in Kareli District, 6,109 in the region of Kakheti, and 3,977 in the region of Mtskheta-Mtianeti.

The numerical decline of the Ossetian population in Georgia by the beginning of the 21st century as compared to the data of 1989 can be explained, among the other factors, by the unwise policy of the first leadership of the Republic of Georgia which came to power in 1990, and also by the general atmosphere of chaos in the USSR during the last yeas of its existence. Together, these forces prepared fertile soil for ethnic conflicts to rise in many places of this huge, multinational country. This was a reason many migrated.

It must be underlined that the number of Ossetians currently living in "Georgia proper" is larger than the number of the Slavic and Greek populations whose portion in the total population decreased more significantly due to emigration. The reason that quite considerable Ossetian communities are preserved in "Georgia proper" can be explained by their strong social, cultural, economic, and political integration within Georgian society. A sizeable part of Ossetians living in Georgia as a whole are the members of mixed families. Various research indicates that Georgians formed and are still forming common families with Ossetians more often and readily than with any other ethnic group. .

Before the next population census in Georgia, planned for 2012, will be conducted we have to rely upon estimates of the current number and structure of population. Based on the thorough research headed by Giorgi Sordia and carried out under the auspices of the European Centre for Minority Issues (–referred to below as "ECMI research") between November, 2008 and June, 2009, i.e. after the 2008 war, there resided c. 26,000 Ossetians in "Georgia proper" (i.e. excluding the territory which found itself on the other side of the dividing line after the Russian occupation) distributed in 132 villages, and 17 cities, towns and townships[109]. This figure is hard to confirm prior to the new census. But it is also hard to dispute the figure. I am also inclined to consider that the number of the Ossetians in "Georgia proper" after the 2002 census should have reduced but not at such a high rate. (It is less plausible that their number could have decreased by one third of the total). It must be noted that the entire population of Georgia was also declining during the same period.

Based on the data of the ECMI research, the majority of Ossetians residing in "Georgia proper" since the19th and in some regions since the 18th century is deeply integrated with Georgian society, almost all of them speak Georgian, and for many Georgian has become the mother tongue. However they don't loose their ethnic identity and contacts with their kin in South Ossetia and outside of Georgia: this was confirmed in the above quoted ECMI research as well.

It is interesting to notice that the number of the Ossetians in "Georgia proper" based on the estimates of ECMI research of 2009 is almost identical to the number of the Ossetians in South Ossetia as estimated by a neutral Russian expert Varvara Pakhomenko.

[109] Sordia, Giorgi. Ossetians in Georgia in the wake of the 2008 War. ECMI Working Paper N 45, September 2009

According to her estimate the number of local population in South Ossetia, the absolute majority of whom after August 2008 are ethnic Ossetians, did not exceed 26,000-32,000 in 2009. She wrote: ”It can be asserted based on the data provided by the officials, that the number of population of all South Ossetia could barely exceed 30,000-32,000. But if we proceed from the number of students in the high schools in South Ossetia, which most probably does not exceed 4,000, we can assume that the approximate population of South Ossetia might be up to 26,000-27,000. These two estimates don’t contradict each other. However, they strikingly differ from the official figures by two to three times. ”[110]

It is hard to confirm or reject these quantitative figures just as in the case of the estimate of ECMI cited above. Most probably the calculations of Pakhomenko are correct. Even if her maximum estimate is closer to reality and the number of the Ossetians in South Ossetia is not 26-27,000, but 30-32,000, still, this figure is half when compared with that of the Soviet period (66,000). The number of the Ossetians in South Ossetia by no means could have a growth dynamic; on the contrary they were destined to decrease in number under conditions of permanent political tensions, economic hardship and emigration.

If the demographic future of South Ossetia is under a real threat, this ought to be attributed first of all to the armed conflicts, but not to a lesser extent to the absence of natural economic and other type of contacts with the rest of Georgia.

Restoring peaceful relations with the Georgian population could serve as a positive factor for preserving Ossetian ethnos in the territories to the north and south of the current dividing line.

As for the migration attitudes [mood] among the Ossetians in “Georgia proper” ECMI report reveals that before 2008 war such attitudes almost always were predetermined by economic factors and had a tendency to slow down. After the war the dynamics of emigration seemed not to change, i.e. emigration did not increase considerably. But the tendency of emigration exists.

The ECMI field work looked for possible cases of discrimination towards Ossetians in “Georgia proper,” but the proof of such cases was not found[111]. Furthermore, the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) could not discover the facts of discrimination on the ethnic basis. By the way, the same was noted by our interviewers when polling the Ossetian population in the framework of the current study in February 2011.

At the same time, as based on the conclusions of ECMI research, although in the territory of “Georgia proper” “on an everyday level Georgian-Ossetian relations after the [2008] war continue to be close and friendly, the influence of war can clearly be felt in the atmosphere of cautiousness and fear that has settled on Ossetian communities. The majority of interviewees expressed uncertainty regarding the future.” [112]. The negative experience during the beginning of the 1990s forces a substantial segment of the Ossetian population to look towards the future with trepidation. They will not feel secure if the armed conflict is renewed.

Obstacles facing theoretically possible people’s diplomacy are created by the fact that participation of Ossetians in the process of formation of civil society in “Georgia proper” is barely visible. There are not many (or, maybe they are unnoticed?) Ossetian non-governmental organizations which would strive to preserve the Ossetian language, cultural heritage, and ethnic identity. In the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast within the Georgian SSR, more efforts were made in these directions,

[110] Pakhomenko, Varvara (Center “Demos” Populated island, (in Russian - ***Пахоменко, Варвара*** (***Центр "Демос)***. *Обитаемый остров)*. http://www.polit.ru/analytics/2009/09/22/demo.html
[111] Sordia, op.cit.
[112] Ibid., p. 15

by the state organizations, by the way. It is sufficient to say that the Ossetian language had much stronger position in Soviet Georgia as a whole including South Ossetia than in the North Ossetian Autonomous SSR, which was a part of the RSFSR. The conditions for preserving the Ossetian ethnos in fact were more favorable on the southern side of the Caucasus Mountains.

Results of the Sociological Survey

A considerable part of the current research was the carrying out of a sociological survey and analyzing its results. Limited resources precluded executing a full-scale survey, i.e. interviewing 1,000 and more individuals which would have allowed the statistical error to be considerably reduced. A smaller sample of 213 respondents made this error around 5-6 percent. However, even data obtained in this way give valuable results, sufficient to create a generalized picture.

In order to have information about what members of Ossetian families living in "Georgia proper" think about the possibility of restoring trust between the Georgian and Ossetian peoples, 106 persons of Ossetian nationality were polled in 17 localities. The target population were persons whose parents both (or, in some cases, one parent) were Ossetians. Interviewers followed the rule of not carrying out a face-to face interview with more than one individual in a household.

For comparative reasons, a similar number (107) of ethnic Georgians residing in the same locality or having contacts with the Ossetian population for a long period of time were interviewed. The majority of those polled were IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) from the territory of South Ossetia. Scientific hypothesis suggested that these people could be more knowledgeable (or at least interested) in the problems of restoring trust with the people together with whom they used to live for generations; it was assumed that they could offer certain ways to restore such a trust.

Because the majority of Ossetian population in "Georgia proper" resides in rural areas, 70 percent of the respondents were sampled in villages. (Bakuriani, formally a township, in this particular case was added on to the rural area as actually it is a large village). In the capital city of Tbilisi, the respondents were sampled in Gldani-Nadzaladevi and Isani-Samgori districts, where the majority of Ossetian families are concentrated. The respondents were almost evenly divided by gender – 52 per cent male and 48 percent -- female. The age structure of the respondents was more or less evenly distributed: 25 percent were between the ages of 18-30, 14 percent were between 31-40, 26 percent were between 41-50, 18 percent were between 51-60, and 17 percent were older than 60.

Sampling the specific respondents for interviewing required intense efforts. The students of the Faculty of Social and Political Studies of the Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University had successfully dealt with this problem. Part of our interviewers were ethnic Ossetians or from a mixed, Georgian-Ossetian, families. Such a choice was deliberate in order to exclude any doubt of one-sidedness in the approach of the interviewers and to facilitate their work with a specific sample of the respondents.

Major findings of the opinion poll

1. It turned out that the great majority of the Ossetian population in "Georgia proper" considers the Georgian tongue as native or they are fluent in this language. The fact that integration of the Ossetians within the Georgian society is high is revealed in responses of more than half of the Ossetian respondents who admitted that among their friends the majority are Georgians.
   Nevertheless the Ossetians don't loose their ethnic identity: this is proved indirectly by the fact that at least half of them have Ossetian friends (see fig. 1 and 2). For comparison –

among the Georgian respondents less than 30 percent have Ossetian friends (including those among "the persons of different nationalities"). However, if we consider the same results from the other point of view, we see almost a third of Georgians have Ossetian friends!

2. As was expected, based on the specific character of the sample, among those who suffered from the 2008 war there were more Georgians than Ossetians in the territory of "Georgia proper" (see fig. 3). 81 percent of Georgians replied affirmatively to the question: "***Did your family or close relatives suffer in the war of August, 2008?".*** Among Ossetians affirmative answer to the same question was given by half as many respondents – 42 percent, the majority of whom were members of mixed families of IDPs with a prevalence of Ossetian women whose husbands and relatives are Georgian.

3. Obviously, 40 percent of respondents consider the relations between Georgians and Ossetians as deteriorated in comparison with those of the pre-war period: an almost similar portion of Georgians (39.3 percent) and Ossetians (40.6 percent) answered so. Approximately the same portion of the overall sample (42 percent) considers these relations as having stayed unchanged (fig. 4 and 5), however, such a "relatively optimistic" evaluation was supported by more among the Ossetian respondents (48 percent) than among the Georgian ones (36 percent), which is a noticeable difference. There are more Georgian respondents who were uncertain on this question (22 percent) than Ossetians (9 percent). The opinion of 2 percent of respondents who think that after the war "relations improved" could be ignored!

4. Opinions of Georgians and Ossetians essentially coincided on the following (open) question "***In whose interests is conservation of the current state of relations between Georgians and Ossetians?"***. Concrete answers given by 72 percent of respondents were coded and they fitted six groups according to their meaning (Fig. 6 and 7 and table 1):

- Almost similar number of Georgians and Ossetians (43 percent and 45 percent accordingly) pointed to Russia (or it's government);
- 9 percent of all respondents (8 percent among Georgians and 10 percent among Ossetians) pointed to the common interests of Russia and South Ossetia (or their Governments);
- Georgia (or its Government) is considered to be interested in conservation of present level of relations by 8 percent of respondents (6 percent among Georgians and 10 percent among Ossetians);
- 7 percent of all respondents consider that the conservation of current situation is in the interests of the "other" countries or individuals or of "everybody, participating in the conflict" (i.e. they didn't name any concrete country or a person);
- A negligible 2 percent of respondents pointed to South Ossetia alone as the party interested in preservation of status quo;
- Even more negligible 1 percent thinks that nobody is interested in it.

The percentage of respondents who didn't answer, or considered it hard to give any answer to the above-mentioned question appeared to be quite high: 32 percent among Georgians, 24 percent among Ossetians; 23 percent among males, 32 percent among females; uncertainty was lower at 22-23 percent among the older generation, above 51 of age, than among the younger generations, among whom 34-35 percent avoided answering.

Thus, almost half of the respondents (Ossetians and Georgians alike) think that Russia is the primary party interested in preserving the current situation and, consequently, the alienation of Georgians and Ossetians.

In general, such an answer was predictable: the 2008 war largely took place between Georgia and Russia and people residing in "Georgia proper" despite their nationality are inclined to blame the other side, i.e. Russia.

5. The next two questions differed by only one word but responses had given very different results. The respondents had to answer to the questions:" ***Does there exist the <u>necessity</u> to restore confidence between Georgians and Ossetians**?"* and "***Does there exist the possibility of restoring confidence between Georgians and Ossetians***?"

On the charts (see fig. 8 and 9) these two responses are compared (there are given in parallel the responses to the next question as well – *"**Did you*** [the respondent] ***contribute personally to the restoration of confidence between Georgians and Ossetians**?"* I will turn to this question later). Based on the charts we clearly observe that 92 percent of Georgians and 90 percent of Ossetians see the *necessity* to restore confidence. (A negligible 2 percent of respondents cannot see such *necessity*).

But against the background of such almost absolute consensus about the *necessity* only 62 percent of respondents see the *possibility* of restoring confidence between Georgians and Ossetians. And, differences in responses according to nationalities, age and gender are remarkable and, at the same time, logical.

Among Ossetians, 70 percent believe in such *possibility,* while among the Georgians just 55 percent. Among the males of both nationalities, 70 percent believe in the possibility, while only 55 percent among the females believe. The least convinced are respondents between the ages of 31-40 (45 percent), while in the age groups of 41-50 and 51-60 there are 72-73 percent who believe restoring confidence is possible.

It turns out that among Georgians, women and younger generations skepticism is revealed more than among Ossetians, males and older generation of both peoples who are willing to believe in this opportunity. The older generation, of course, remembers the good old days of coexistence and common feasts!

Uncertainty in responses (30 percent didn't answer or it was "hard to say" for them) may explain something. Among Georgians such answers (or their absence) constituted 38 percent (among Ossetians – 22 percent); among female respondents 33 percent (this explains their "comparative skepticism"). The highest non-responding was within the age group of 31-40 (42 percent).

6. The following question stems from the previous two: *"**Did you*** [the respondent] contribute personally ***to the restoration of confidence between Georgians and Ossetians***?" (see table 4). If the answer was "yes" an open question was posed – "***What did you do personally to restore confidence between Georgians and Ossetians?"***

It was found out that according to their own answers only 19 percent of respondents contributed personally to this endeavor (28 percent of Ossetians and 9 percent of Georgians, 22 percent of all men and 16 percent of all women; among age groups the highest participation was revealed in age group of 31-40 where 24 percent reported personally contributing).

But when it came to concretize their efforts in this direction the received responses could be grouped just into two small clusters: about 10 percent of all respondents "*tries to keep relations with individuals of both peoples*" and up to 5 percent "*tries to support dialogue between the two peoples*".

Not too much! But, in current circumstances it would be hard to expect that ordinary people, the majority of whom suffered economically and morally during and after the war, would have been able to do something essential.

7. Below are presented the answers to the major questions of the research "***What can be done in order to restore confidence between Georgians and Ossetians***?" and "***What is the major obstacle for restoration of confidence between Georgians and Ossetians***?'.

Both questions were open-ended ones and interviewers collected many versions of answers which were coded and grouped (in the attached tables 5 and 6 the distribution of answers, including cross tabulations, is given).

8. Responses to the question - *"What* ***can be done in order to restore c****onfidence between Georgians and Ossetians?"* arranged by decreasing frequency gave such results (see also figures 10 and 11):

- Don't know, hard to say (40 percent of all respondents; 49 percent among Georgians and 32 percent among Ossetians;
- Restoring of economic ties, personal contacts, using resources of people's diplomacy (38 percent of all respondents; 25 percent among Georgians and 50 percent among Ossetians);
- Withdrawing Russian troops from South Ossetia, invalidating the recognition of its independence (9 percent of all respondents; 16 percent among Georgians and 2 percent among Ossetians);
- Normalizing relations between Georgia and Russia (5 percent of all respondents; 16 percent among Georgians and 6 percent among Ossetians);
- Changing the state policy of Georgia towards South Ossetia (4 percent of all respondents; 2 percent among Georgians and 6 percent among Ossetians);
- Other – such answers were given by a negligible 2 percent of respondents.

Differences of opinion of Georgians and Ossetians as revealed in the responses to the above questions is striking. 50 percent of Ossetians see the prospect to restore confidence between the peoples using people's diplomacy, by re-establishing economic ties, personal contacts, and through dialogue. Meanwhile just 25 percent of Georgians would rely on the same measures. Almost half of the Georgian respondents (49 percent) do not know what could be done.

This state of mind indicates serious disappointment, frustration, and spiritual bankruptcy among Georgian respondents. 16 percent of them see the only solution through a radical way, the withdrawal of Russian troops from South Ossetia, etc. Only 2 percent of Ossetian respondents shared the same point of view. Just an insignificant number of respondents of both nationalities marked in their responses the approaches of normalizing relations between Georgia and Russia or changing the policy of Georgia towards South Ossetia. Perhaps they assume that the time for such steps is yet to come?

9. The responses to the question – "*What is the major obstacle to* ***restoration of confidence*** *between Georgians and Ossetians*?" were arranged by decreasing frequency in the following order (see also figures 12 and 13):

- Policy of Russian government, presence of its military bases in South Ossetia (36 percent of all respondents; 47 percent among Georgians and 26 percent among Ossetians);
- Don't know, hard to say (17 percent of all respondents; 26 percent among Georgians and 9 percent among Ossetians);
- Policy of Georgian government (11 percent of all respondents; 6 percent among Georgians and 17 percent among Ossetians);

- Lack of conversation, economic contacts between Georgians and Ossetians (9 percent of all respondents; 3 percent among Georgians and 15 percent among Ossetians);
- Lack of good will among all the participants of the conflict (9 percent of all respondents; 6 percent among Georgians and 12 percent among Ossetians);
- Old conflicts ("too much blood was shed"), propaganda creating the enemy image 7 percent of all respondents; 5 percent among Georgians and 9 percent among Ossetians);
- Policy of South Ossetian de-facto government, separatism (6 percent of all respondents; 7 percent among Georgians and 5 percent among Ossetians);
- Mutual enmity of Georgian and Russian leadership, absence of diplomatic relations (5 percent of all respondents; 2 percent among Georgians and 8 percent among Ossetians).

The largest share of Ossetian respondents -- 26 percent -- considers the policy of Russia and presence of its occupying troops in South Ossetia as the major obstacle to restoration of confidence between the peoples. But this portion is almost half that of Georgians sharing the same opinion – 47 percent. On the contrary, the policy of Georgia as the main obstacle is pointed by three times more Ossetians than Georgians (17 and 6 percent accordingly) though it should be underlined that the share of Ossetians thinking so is significantly less than the share of those who consider Russia's policy the main obstacle. And, this difference is sound.

While analyzing the responses to the previous questions it was deduced that among the Georgians doubt prevails that there exists a possibility to change something in the direction of restoring confidence between peoples. The same seems to be correct in the case of the current question as well: 15 percent of Ossetians consider that the major barrier in confidence building is lack of conversation, economic contacts, etc. But only 3 percent of Georgians share the same opinion. Even if the relatively small sample size makes confidence levels for observed frequency of responses too wide for the small numbers (i.e. 3 percent of responses in this sample doesn't count as an entirely reliable value) still, the difference between 3 and 15 percent is rather large.

Summary

There is a certain consensus in the opinions of Ossetians and Georgians on the issue of in whose interests it is to preserve the current state of affairs between these two peoples. Almost equal portions of respondents from both sides (43-45 percent) point towards the Russian government.

A similar consensus (90-92 percent) exists about the *necessity* of restoring confidence between Georgians and Ossetians. But 70 percent of Ossetians and only 55 percent of Georgians believes in the *possibility* of it.

The hypothesis that Georgians from IDP groups are able to offer realistic ways of restoring confidence with Ossetian people was proved only partially. Interviewed Georgians (the majority of whom are IDPs, who lost their property and in some cases their family members or relatives) are experiencing frustration, spiritual bankruptcy, and mistrust towards everyone. The majority of them don't know what to do to rectify the current situation.

The observed difference between the opinions of Georgians and Ossetians was an expected one: Ossetians in "Georgia proper", who haven't been affected directly by the 2008 war, are more inclined to to use elements of people's diplomacy in order to rebuild the bridges between the peoples. Half of them consider it necessary to restore economic ties and personal contacts. (Among Georgians, the same opinion is shared just by a fourth of them.)

In general, the hypothesis that Ossetians in "Georgia proper" are ready enough for people's diplomacy has been confirmed. These Ossetians could serve this endeavor.

It is obvious that this will require political will from all parties of the conflict.

In case restoring confidence will become a common will and turn into a common project of civil societies on both sides of the dividing line, even the occupying state, which is the least interested in ending the conflict, will be obliged at a certain stage to heed to such a call.

A very cautious optimism in this question may exist.

The first chapter of this research mentioned the somewhat positive results of people's diplomacy during the rescue operations after earthquakes in Turkey and Greece.

Is it necessary to follow the example of peoples who "became wise" only after suffering from a natural disaster?

I think that we, Georgians and Ossetians, could reach even more and in a shorter period without the "help" of natural disasters and certain "friends" from close countries.

A P P E N D I X

Table 1

In whose interests is conservation of the current state of relations between Georgians and Ossetians?

	Total 213	Nationality		Age groups					Gender	
		Georg	Osset	18-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	60+	M	F
Total %	213 100	107 50.2	106 49.8	54 25.4	29 13.6	55 25.8	39 18.3	36 16.9	111 52.1	102 47.9
Nobody's	2 0.9 100	1 0.9 50.0	1 0.9 50.0	0 0.0 0.0	1 3.4 50.0	0 0.0 0.0	0 0.0 0.0	1 2.8 50.0	0 0.0 0.0	2 2.0 100
Russian government's	94 44.1 100	46 43.0 48.9	48 45.3 51.1	26 48.1 27.7	9 31.0 9.6	22 40.0 23.4	22 56.4 23.4	15 41.7 16.0	52 46.8 55.3	42 41.2 44.7
Geogian government's	18 8.5 100	7 6.5 38.9	11 10.4 61.1	3 5.6 60.0	4 13.8 22.2	6 10.9 33.3	1 2.6 5.6	4 11.1 22.2	11 9.9 61.1	7 6.9 38.9
South Ossetian *de facto* government's	5 2.3 100	2 1.9 40.0	3 2.8 60.0	3 5.6 60.0	1 3.4 20.0	1 1.8 20.0	0 0.0 0.0	0 0.0 0.0	3 2.7 60.0	2 2.0 40.0
In common interests of Russia and South Ossetia	20 9.4 100	9 8.4 45.0	11 10.4 55.0	8 14.8 40.0	2 6.9 10.0	2 3.6 10.0	3 7.7 15.0	5 13.9 25.0	8 7.2 40.0	12 11.8 60.0
In interests of other countries or individuals, of everybody	15 7.0 100	8 7.5 53.3	7 6.6 46.7	1 1.9 6.7	2 6.9 13.3	5 9.1 33.3	4 10.3 26.7	3 8.3 20.0	11 9.9 73.3	4 3.9 26.7
Don't know, hard to say	59 27.7 100	34 31.8 57.6	25 23.6 42.4	13 24.1 22.0	10 34.5 16.9	19 34.5 32.2	9 23.1 15.3	8 22.2 13.6	26 23.4 44.1	33 32.4 55.9

Table 2

Does there exist necessity to restore confidence between Georgians and Ossetians?

	Total 213	Nationality		Age groups					Gender	
		Georg	Osset	18-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	60+	M	F
Total %	213 100	107 50.2	106 49.8	54 25.4	29 13.6	55 25.8	39 18.3	36 16.9	111 52.1	102 47.9
Yes	194 91.1 100	99 92.5 51.0	95 89.6 49.0	53 98.1 27.3	23 79.3 11.9	51 92.7 26.3	37 94.9 19.1	30 83.3 15.5	106 95.5 54.6	88 86.3 45.4
No	5 2.3 100	1 0.9 20.0	4 3.8 80.0	0 0.0 0.0	2 6.9 40.0	1 1.8 20.0	1 2.6 20.0	1 2.8 20.0	0 0.0 0.0	5 4.9 100
Don't know, hard to say	14 6.6 100	7 6.5 50.0	7 6.6 50.0	1 1.9 7.1	4 13.8 28.6	3 5.5 21.4	1 2.6 7.1	5 13.9 35.7	5 4.5 35.7	9 8.8 64.3

Table 3

Does there exist possibility to restore confidence between Georgians and Ossetians?

	Total 213	Nationality		Age groups					Gender	
		Georg	Osset	18-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	60+	M	F
Total %	213 100	107 50.2	106 49.8	54 25.4	29 13.6	55 25.8	39 18.3	36 16.9	111 52.1	102 47.9
Yes	133 62.4 100	59 55.1 44.4	74 69.8 55.6	33 61.1 24.8	13 44.8 9.8	40 72.7 30.1	28 71.8 21.1	19 52.8 14.3	77 69.4 57.9	56 54.9 42.1
No	16 7.5 100	7 6.5 43.8	9 8.5 56.3	1 1.9 6.3	4 13.8 25.0	5 9.1 31.3	3 7.7 18.8	3 8.3 18.8	4 3.6 25.0	12 11.8 75.0
Don’t know, hard to say	64 30.0 100	41 38.3 64.1	23 31.7 35.9	20 37.0 31.3	12 41.4 18.8	10 18.2 15.6	8 20.5 12.5	14 38.9 21.9	30 27.0 46.9	34 33.3 53.1

Table 4

Did you contribute personally to the restoration of confidence between Georgians and Ossetians?

	Total 213	Nationality		Age groups					Gender	
		Geog	Osset	18-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	60+	M	F
Total %	213 100	107 50.2	106 49.8	54 25.4	29 13.6	55 25.8	39 18.3	36 16.9	111 52.1	102 47.9
Yes	40 18.8 100	10 9.3 25.0	30 28.3 75.0	10 18.5 25.0	7 24.1 17.5	11 20.0 27.5	8 20.5 20.0	4 11.1 10.0	24 21.6 60.0	16 15.7 40.0
No	157 73.7 100	88 82.2 56.1	69 65.1 43.9	41 75.9 26.1	20 69.0 12.7	41 74.5 26.1	27 69.2 17.2	28 77.8 17.8	77 69.4 49.0	80 78.4 51.0
Don’t know, hard to say	16 7.5 100	9 8.4 56.3	7 6.6 43.8	3 5.6 18.8	2 6.9 12.5	3 5.5 18.8	4 10.3 25.0	4 11.1 25.0	10 9.0 62.5	6 5.9 37.5

Table 5

What could be done in order to restore confidence between Georgians and Ossetians?

	Total 213	Nationality		Age groups					Gender	
		Geog	Osset	18-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	60+	M	F
Total %	213 100	107 50.2	106 49.8	54 25.4	29 13.6	55 25.8	39 18.3	36 16.9	111 52.1	102 47.9
Changing state policy of Georgia towards South Ossetia	8 3.8 100	2 1.9 25.0	6 5.7 75.0	1 1.9 12.5	1 3.4 12.5	5 9.1 62.5	0 0.0 0.0	1 2.8 12.5	6 5.4 75.0	2 2.0 25.0
Withdrawing Russian troops from S/O, invalidating recognition	19 8.9 100	17 15.9 89.5	2 1.9 10.5	6 11.1 31.6	1 3.4 5.3	3 5.5 15.8	6 15.4 31.6	3 8.3 15.8	10 9.0 52.6	9 8.8 47.4
Beginning negotiations with Russia and South Ossetia	4 1.9 100	1 0.9 25.0	3 2.8 75.0	0 0.0 0.0	1 3.4 25.0	1 1.8 25.0	1 2.6 25.0	1 2.8 25.0	4 3.6 100	0 0.0 0.0
Restoring economic ties, using people diplomacy	80 37.6 100	27 25.2 33.8	53 50.0 66.3	14 25.9 17.5	8 27.6 10.0	29 52.7 36.3	20 51.3 25.0	9 25.0 11.3	44 39.6 55.0	36 35.3 45.0
Normalizing Georgian-Russian relations	11 5.2 100	5 4.7 45.5	6 5.7 54.5	4 7.4 36.4	1 3.4 9.1	1 1.8 9.1	1 2.6 9.1	4 11.1 36.4	9 8.1 81.8	2 2.0 18.2
Other answer	5 2.3 100	3 2.8 60.0	2 1.9 40.0	3 5.6 60.0	0 0.0 0.0	1 1.8 20.0	1 2.6 20.0	0 0.0 0.0	3 2.7 60.0	2 2.0 40.0
Don’t know, hard to say	86 40.4 100	52 48.6 60.5	34 32.1 39.5	26 48.1 30.2	17 58.6 19.8	15 27.3 17.4	10 25.6 11.6	18 50.0 20.9	35 31.5 40.7	51 50.0 59.3

Table 6

What is the obstacle for restoration of confidence between Georgians and Ossetians?

	Total 213	Nationality		Age groups					Gender	
		Georg	Osset	18-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	60+	M	F
Total %	213 100	107 50.2	106 49.8	54 25.4	29 13.6	55 25.8	39 18.3	36 16.9	111 52.1	102 47.9
Russia's state policy, its military bases in S/Ossetia	77 36.2 100	50 46.7 64.9	27 25.5 35.1	23 42.6 29.9	6 20.7 7.8	21 38.2 27.3	13 33.3 16.9	14 38.9 18.2	41 36.9 53.2	36 35.3 46.8
Georgia's state policy	24 11.3 100	6 5.6 25.0	18 17.0 75.0	1 1.9 4.2	3 10.3 12.5	7 12.7 29.2	5 12.8 20.8	8 22.2 33.3	16 14.4 66.7	8 7.8 33.3
S/Ossetia's de facto govt policy, separatism	12 5.6 100	7 6.5 58.3	5 4.7 41.7	4 7.4 33.3	2 6.9 16.7	0 0.0 0.0	2 5.1 16.7	4 11.1 33.3	7 6.3 58.3	5 .9 41.7
Lack of good will from all participants	19 8.9 100	6 5.6 31.6	13 12.3 68.4	3 5.6 15.8	2 6.9 10.5	6 10.9 31.6	7 17.9 36.8	1 2.8 5.3	10 9.0 52.6	9 8.8 47.4
Lack of communication, economic ties	19 8.9 100	3 2.8 15.8	16 15.1 84.2	5 9.3 26.3	3 10.3 15.8	6 10.9 31.6	4 10.3 21.1	1 2.8 5.3	9 8.1 47.4	10 9.8 52.6
Mutual enmity of leaders, absence of Georgia-Russia dip.relations	10 4.7 100	2 1.9 20.0	8 7.5 80.0	4 7.4 40.0	2 3.6 20.0	2 3.6 20.0	1 2.6 10.0	1 2.8 10.0	7 6.3 70.0	3 2.9 30.0
Old conflicts, creation of enemy image	15 7.0 100	5 4.7 33.3	10 9.4 66.7	5 9.3 33.3	4 7.3 26.7	4 7.3 26.7	0 0.0 0.0	1 2.8 6.7	8 7.2 53.3	7 6.9 46.7
Don't know, hard to say	37 17.4 100	28 26.2 75.7	9 8.5 24.3	9 16.7 24.3	9 16.4 24.3	9 16.4 24.3	7 17.9 18.9	6 16.7 16.2	13 11.7 35.1	24 23.5 64.9

Among the closest friends the majority are…
(according to nationality)

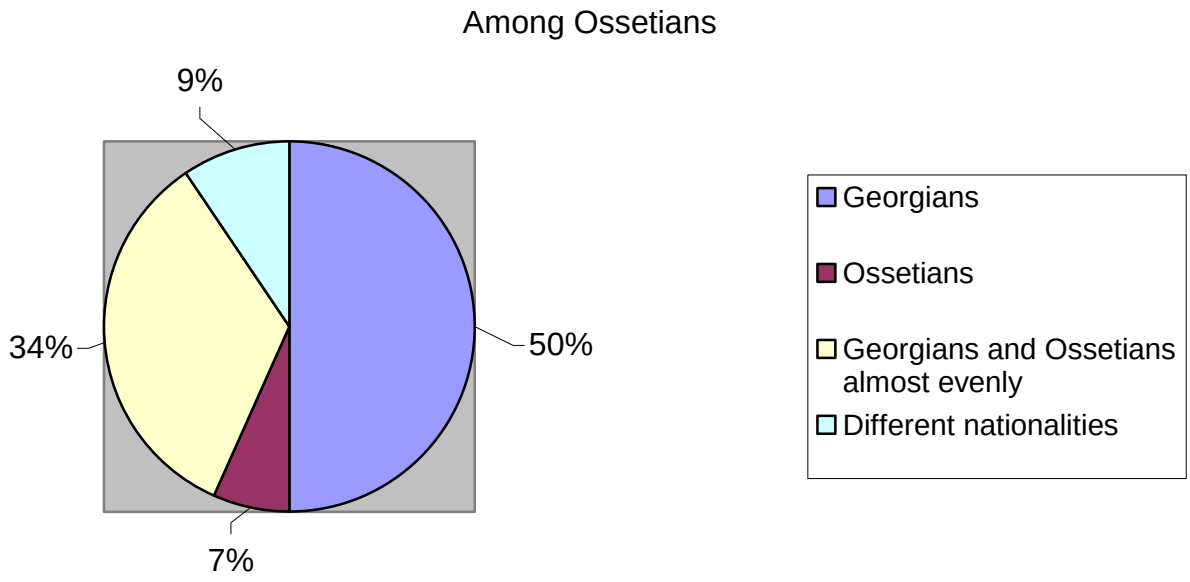

Fig. 1

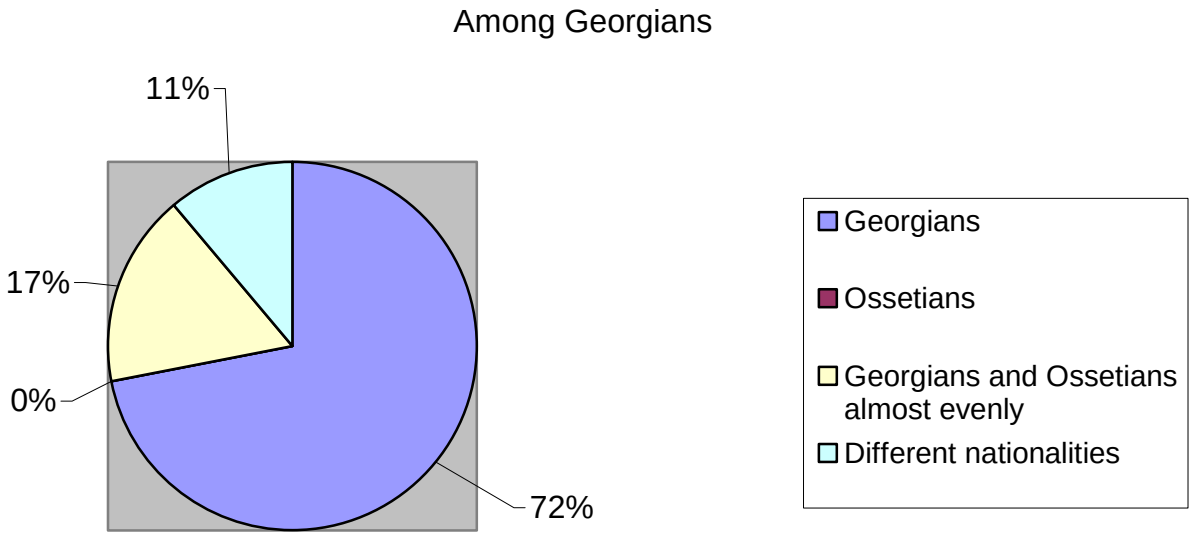

Fig. 2

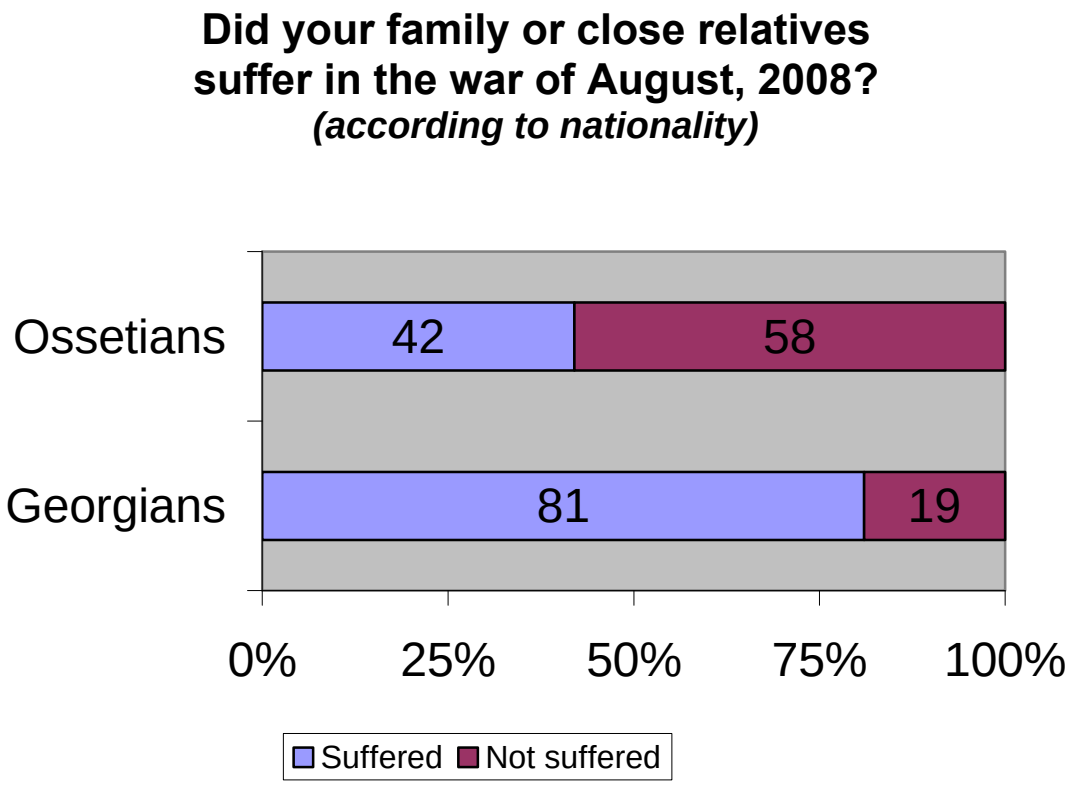
Did your family or close relatives suffer in the war of August, 2008?
(according to nationality)
Ossetians
42
58
Georgians
81
19
0%
25%
50%
75%
100%
Suffered
Not suffered

Fig. 3

How did the relationship between Georgians and Ossetians change during the two years after the war in comparison with the pre-war period?
(according to nationality)

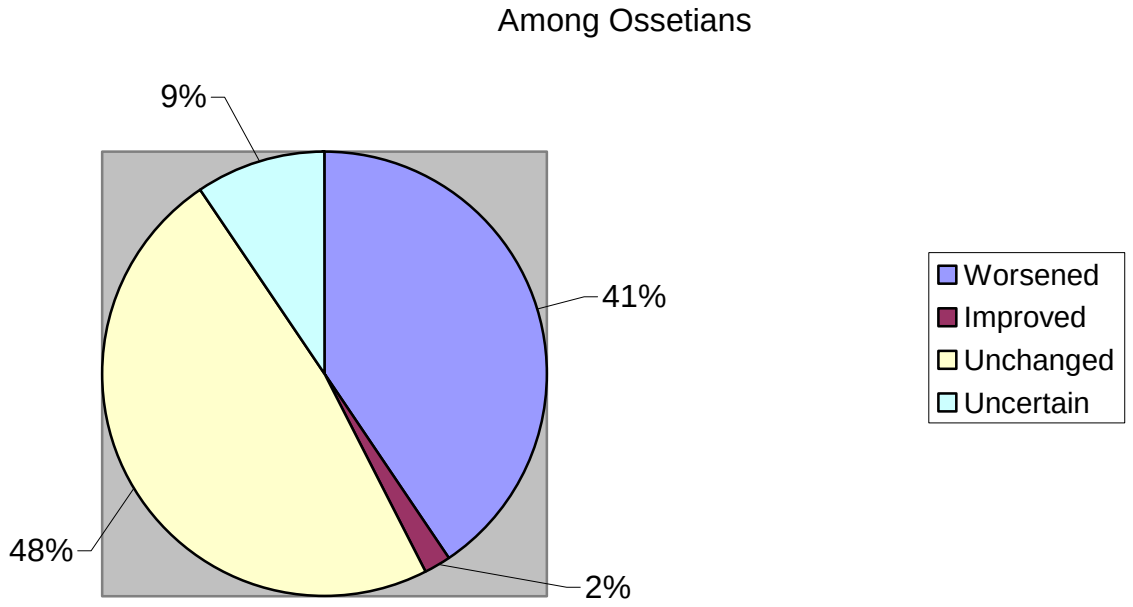

Fig. 4

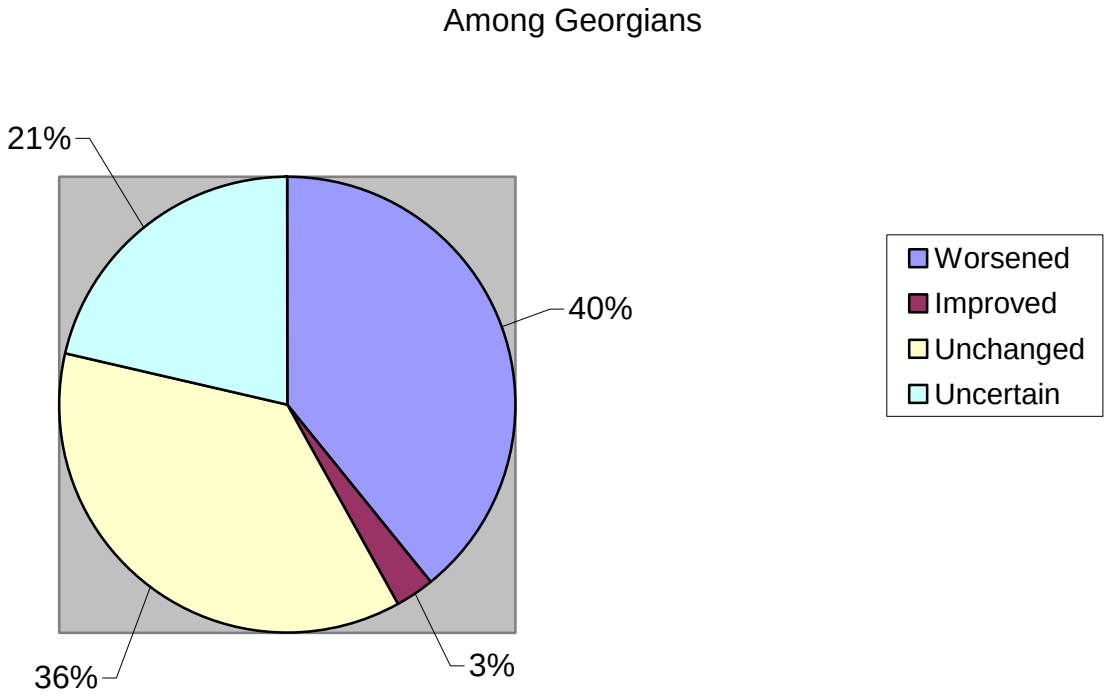

Fig. 5

In whose interests is conservation of the current state of relations between Georgians and Ossetians?
(according to nationality)

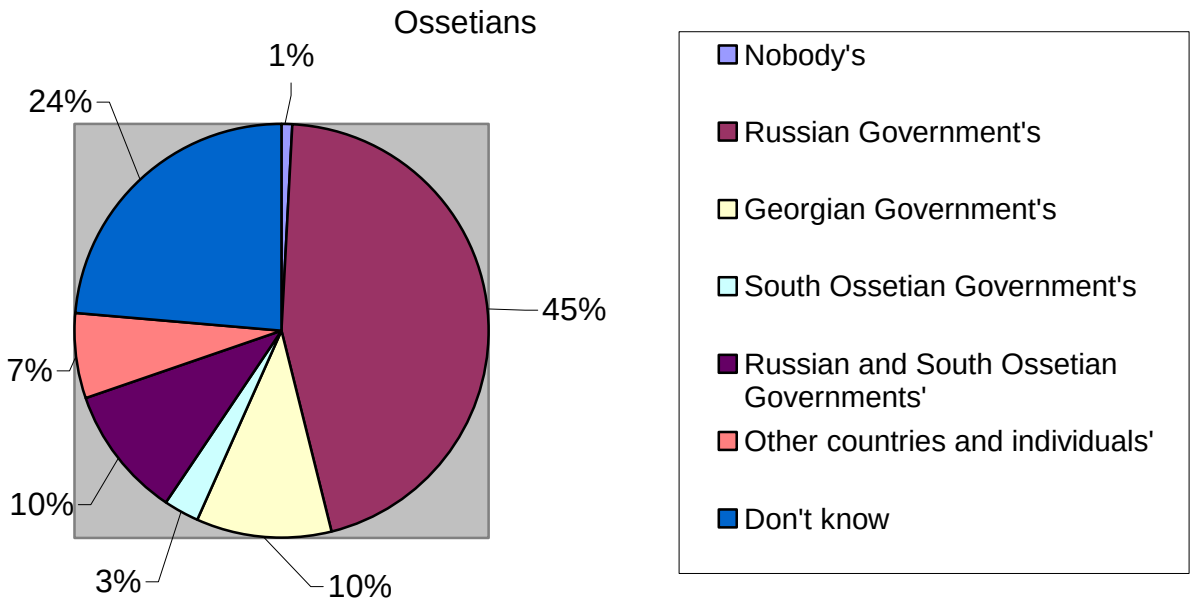

Fig. 6

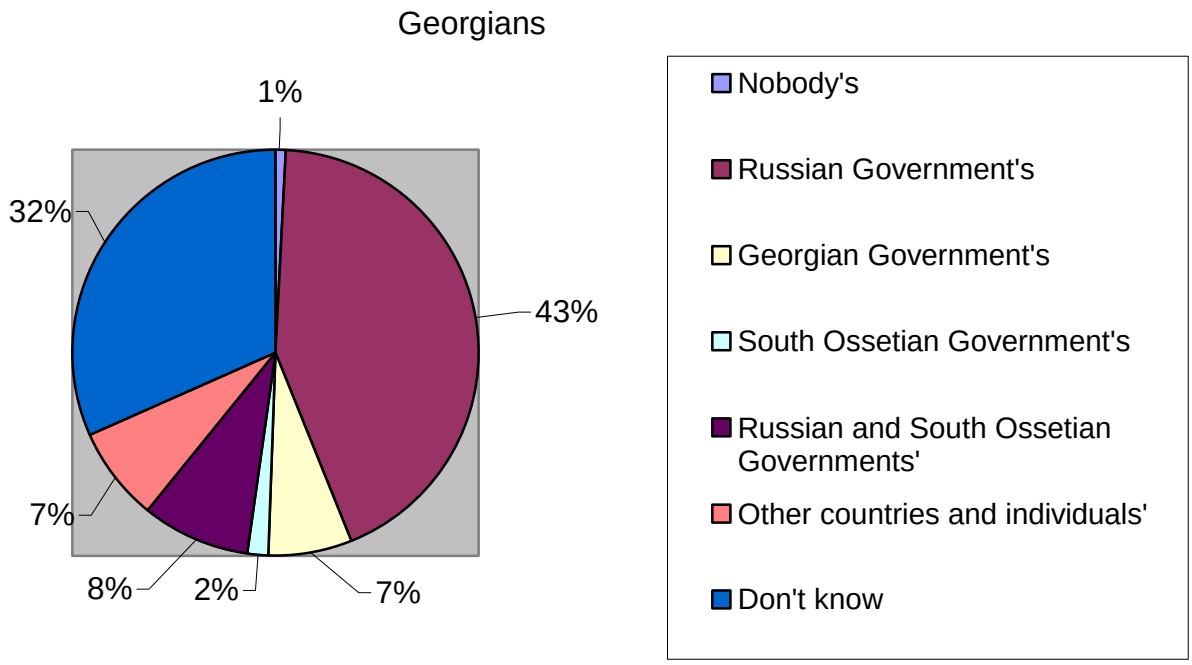

Fig. 7

Does there exist
a) *necessity*; b) *possibility* and
c) *did the respondent contribute personally*
to the restoration of confidence between Georgians and Ossetians?
(according to nationality)

Ossetians

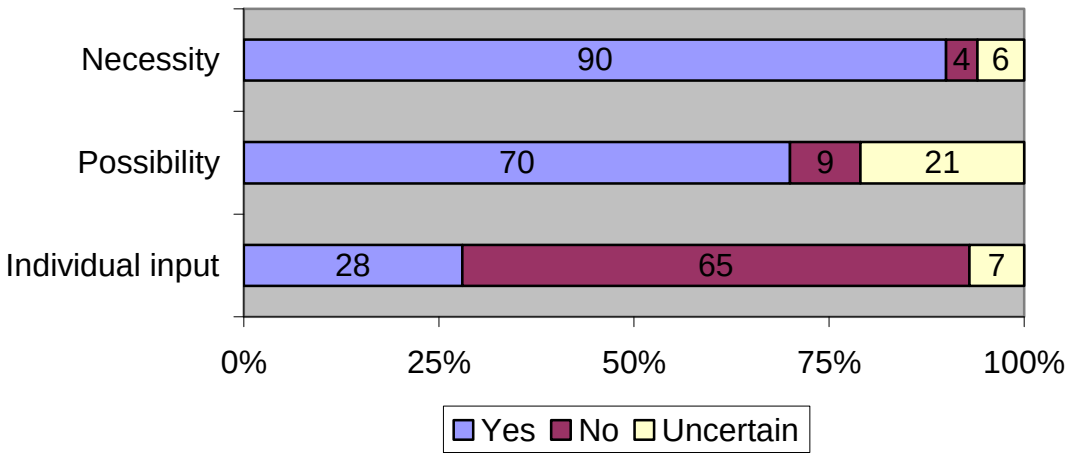

Fig. 8

Georgians

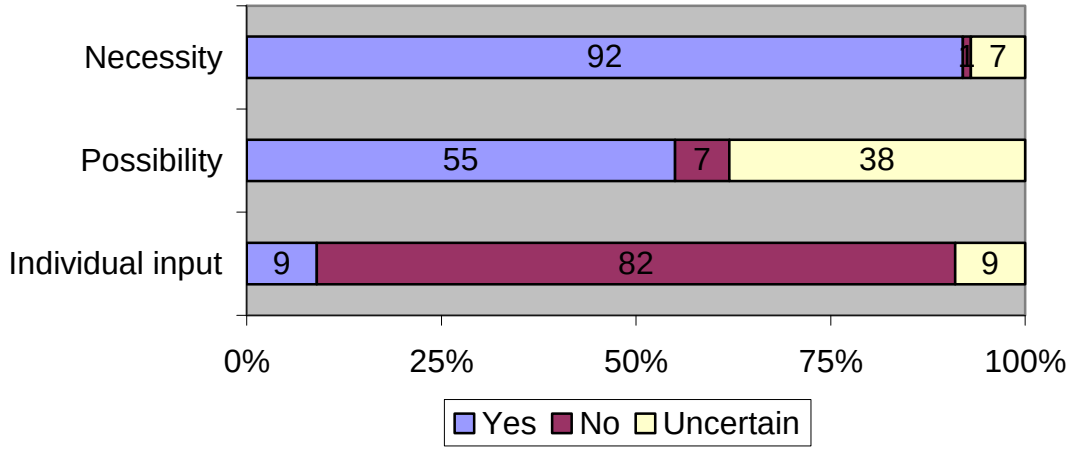

Fig. 9

What can be done in order to restore the confidence between Georgians and Ossetians?
(according to nationality)

- To witdraw Russian troops from South Ossetia, to invalidate its recognition as an independent state
- Georgia should begin negotiations with Russia and South Ossetia
- To restore economic ties, personal contacts, to use people diplomacy
- To normalize relations between Georgia and Russia
- To change Georgia's policy towards South Ossetia
- Other answers
- Don't know, hard to say

Ossetians

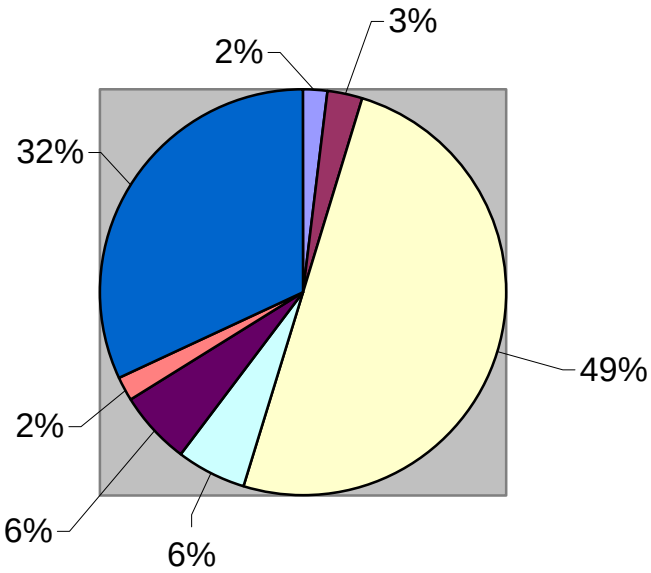

Fig. 10

Georgians

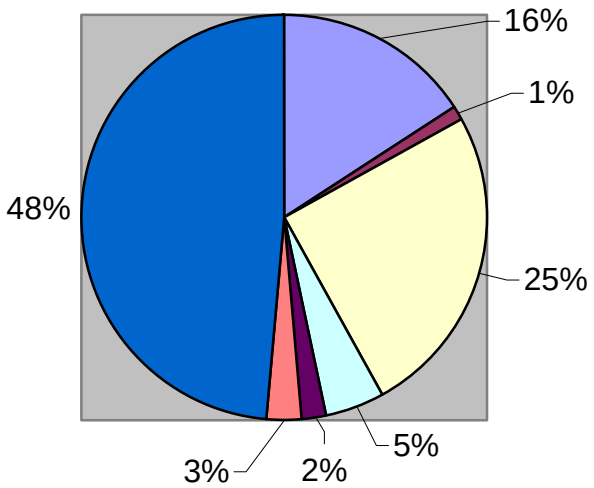

Fig. 11

What is the obstacle for restoration of confidence between Georgians and Ossetians?
(according to nationality)

- Policy of Russian Government
- Policy of Georgian Government
- Policy of South Ossetian Government
- Lack of good will among the all participants of the conflict
- Lack of conversation, econom. contacts between Georgians and Ossetians
- Enmity of Georgian and Russian leaderships, absence of diplom. Relations
- Old conflicts, propaganda: creating the enemy image
- Don't know, hard to say

Ossetians

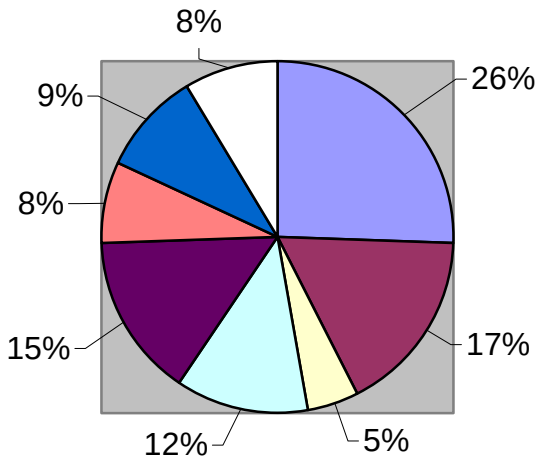

Fig. 12

Georgians

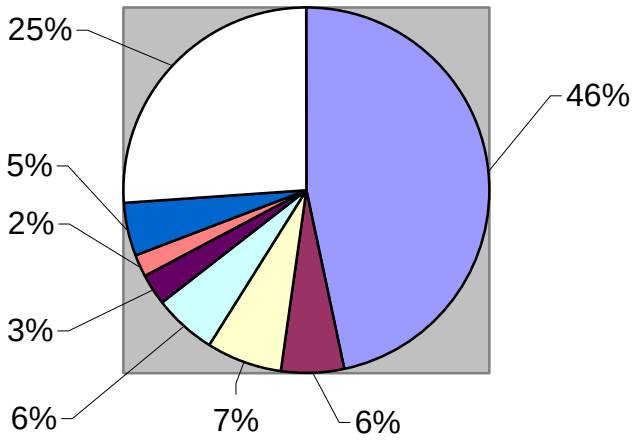

Fig. 13

GEORGIAN-SOUTH OSSETIAN CONFLICT: RESEARCHING PEACE

SOUTH OSSETIAN PAPERS

2011

Georgian-South Ossetian Conflict: Researching Peace

Collection of South Ossetian Papers

2011

The preparation and publication of this work was made possible thanks to support from a variety of organizations and funds, including the Peacebuilding fund at George Mason University. Assistance with translation was provided by: Phil Gamaghelyan, Manana Gnolidze-Swanson, Olga Guschina, Dina Konysheva, and Nina Selwan.

Project Coordinator: Kosta Dzugaev
Editor: Susan Allen Nan
Design: Artem Melik-Nubarov
Copies printed: 250

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INTRODUCTION

The two sets of papers presented here were once simply an idea that seemed perhaps crazy. Without an introduction, the reader may find this volume schizophrenic. Holding the book in one direction, the reader will find three articles by Georgian researchers. Holding the book in another direction, the reader will find three articles by South Ossetian researchers. To read the other perspective, the reader must change orientation. Different terminology is used in each chapter, and contradictory statements appear from one chapter to another.

All this makes sense in the context of the initial question raised as people with good intentions brainstormed potential confidence building steps: Would there be any chance of engaging scholars to bridge across the Georgian-South Ossetian divide with their writing, and offer some contribution to policy makers? Such confidence building measures once seemed almost impossible, when the first Point of View Civic Process discussion convened civil society peacebuilders in the immediate aftermath of the August 2008 war. But, I have been continuously impressed with the resilience, perseverance, and vision of people on both sides who want to create a stable peace in which Georgian and Ossetian children can grow up feeling at home in the world. After one Point of View discussion in Istanbul in October 2010, Kosta Dzugaev and Archil Gegeshidze decided to give this idea a try. The book you hold in your hands is proof they succeeded.

The two research groups worked independently, but coordinated with each other enough to end up with very different articles assembled together in this one book. After discussions together in Istanbul, the two teams of researchers identified different research priorities, which are reflected in the three articles from each group. Each group sought topics that would offer the most constructive contribution to policymakers on both sides, in the views of that group of authors. Each author worked independently to conduct his or her research. My editorial role was limited and did not engage at all with the content of the research. However, the authors did meet in Istanbul again as they completed drafts, and the articles are richer as a result of that discussion.

Readers will quickly notice that the authors agreed to disagree about terminology. What a Georgian author calls "Georgia proper" may be described as "Georgia" by an Ossetian author. What an Ossetian author refers to as "government" may be described as "leadership" by a Georgian author. Geographic names are also different, as are references to displaced people. The same people are referred to by Georgians as Internally Displaced People and by Ossetians as Forcefully Displaced People or Refugees. The word "border" takes on different significance, as the Ossetians describe an international border, and the Georgians see an administrative border.

This project did not attempt to force any standard terminology. Rather, the project goals are to highlight areas of potential confidence building, build a channel of communication amongst scholars bridging across the divide, and contribute policy relevant writing on areas that have been neglected by research in recent years.

All this would not have been possible without the dedication of Kosta Dzugaev and Archil Gegeshidze, each author, the translators, and a project support staff that kept the two separate projects coordinated with each other enough that they have ended up under one cover.

I hope each reader will find something of value in each chapter—even those chapters with which a reader will want to argue. Understanding the arguments across the current divide requires first knowing what they are. May these two sets of articles be a small step in that direction.

Prof. Susan Allen Nan
School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution,
George Mason University

FOREWORD TO THE SOUTH OSSETIAN COLLECTION

This collection of works represents the first publication of its type since the Georgian-Ossetian armed conflict in August 2008. The collection is intended for various interested organizations and individuals.

Generally, war destroys humanitarian contacts between conflicting parties. Under these circumstances, it is delightful to underline the constructive mediating role of the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at the George Mason University (in the United States) in renewing meaningful dialogue between Georgian and Ossetian scientific communities.

Professor Susan Allen Nan offered a highly flexible working format, including flexibility in the choice of themes for expert analysis. The participating parties informed each other regarding to the article topics, discussing these themes in a meeting in Istanbul.

The South Ossetian researchers chose three topics from the discussed issues. These themes are analyzed by experts and presented in the following collection. What were the reasons to choose these particular topics?

There is a clear interest to the problems of the Leningorski Rayon (referred to in Georgian documents as Akhalgori). It would be reasonable that this analysis would be conducted by an expert who had visited the region multiple times as a professional and not just as a relative or for his personal affairs. We asked Maria Kotaeva, a professional journalist to be the author. She already was aware of the problems in the region in general, so her task was to collect precise data and verify it. It was important that Maria had a wide range of contacts amongst the population of the region, and is knowledgeable not only about the specifics of the Administration there, but also knows about the general attitudes and conditions of the local Georgian and Ossetian population.

Merab Chigoev agreed to study the complicated and complex problem of refuges and Internally Displaced Persons. He currently is the Deputy Representative of the President in Post- Conflict Regulation. In this case, his official position (and his working experience) was a considerable factor assisting him as an expert and enabling him to perform the research.

Finally, the main problems of the economic rehabilitation of South Ossetia were analyzed by Batradz Kharebov. Kharebov had the opportunity to access the relevant material for his analysis as he also serves as the Head of the Informational-Analytical Service of the Parliament of South Ossetia.

I anticipate that this collection will allow the sides to get more information regarding each other and, most importantly, will become a precedent for constructive future relations between the civil societies and also for dialogue serving the vital interests of people who have had interrelations for many centuries.

Kosta Dzugaev
Project Coordinator
Director of the Center for Information Technology
"Intellectual Resources"
Tskhinval, June, 2011

ECONOMIC REHABILITATION OF SOUTH OSSETIA: CURRENT PROBLEMS AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Batradz Kharebov

The collapse of the Soviet Union led to the deteriorating condition of its political, economic, social, and cultural components. While the former Soviet republics began to look for ways out of the crisis (with varying degrees of success) and to craft their statehoods on the basis of new realities upon declaring their sovereignty, administrative-territorial entities such as autonomous republics, autonomous regions, and national regions experienced many more difficulties. Most of these entities were still a part of former Soviet republics, now independent states. Some managed to improve their political status – a process which met no particular resistance from leaders of the new states.

The situation was more complicated in the cases of the Abkhaz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, the South Ossetian Autonomous Region (both were a part of Georgia) and the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region (a part of Azerbaijan). These entities, having no support from the once powerful center, found themselves in very difficult situations. Following the actions of the Georgian authorities, on September 20, 1990, as a result of the voting by public representatives of all levels, South Ossetia initiated a legislative process to raise its status from an autonomous region to a republic; it became known as the South Ossetian Soviet Democratic Republic and later on as the Republic of South Ossetia. The unwillingness of South Ossetia to be a part of Georgia, where nationalist elements came to power and declared policies aimed at repression and the assimilation of national minorities, led to the adoption of the Declaration of National Independence. In response, the Supreme Council of Georgia abolished the South Ossetian autonomous status, and, shortly after, armed aggression against the civilian population of South Ossetia followed.[1]

During the Soviet period, South Ossetia was an administrative entity with double subordination ties. The Republic of Georgia exerted immediate control in the larger context of the central Soviet power. This power structure created political and economic difficulties. These two power centers made key decisions regarding South Ossetia's infrastructure development. At the same time, factors such as local specifics, interests of the local population, and internal resources were often not taken into account. Such short-sighted policies led to flawed and one-sided economic development with slow rates and fruitless economic programs.[2]

As a result, South Ossetia became one of the most underdeveloped regions of Georgia at the end of the 1990s. In reality, the republic was reduced to an appendix, supplying raw materials. Given that the population of South Ossetia comprised only 2% of the Georgian population, only 1.2% of the gross national product was produced there and only 1.5% of the national income was allocated for it. The gross national income per capita in South Ossetia equaled only 60.4% of the Georgian average. The rate of the industrial development here was quite slow; South Ossetia was still an agrarian-industrial area. There was at least 42.7% less industrial output per capita in South Ossetia than on the average in Georgia. According to reports, the agricultural sector itself was in a deplorable state. The situation was complicated by the heavy financial burdens imposed on South Ossetia by Georgia. South Ossetia was to supply 1.5 to 2 times more meat, cheese, wool, potatoes, and other agricultural products than the neighboring Georgian regions. This led to the depletion of local resources and degradation of the economy, which, in turn, had a direct impact on the well-being of the South Ossetian population. The average monthly salary in the late 1980s in South

[1] The Conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Documents 1989-2006., M., 2008.
[2] The Soviet South Ossetia. Tksh., 1975.

Ossetia was the lowest in Georgia at 148 rubles, compared to 186 rubles in Georgia and 220 rubles in the Soviet Union.[3]

Despite such a disastrous situation, South Ossetian experts designed programs which took into account local specifics, the availability of natural and labor resources, as well as opportunities for regional cooperation. Full implementation of these programs was conducive to reducing the gap between South Ossetia's and the average Georgian indicators.

As noted earlier, the South Ossetian Autonomous Region was an entity with double subordination ties. Some of its industrial enterprises reported directly to the Union center, such as the "Kvaisinski" lead-zinc mine authority, "Elektrovibromashina", and "Emalprovod" plants, while others reported to the republic's center, such as "Gruztalk", sewing, knitting, bus-repair, aircraft factories, and other enterprises. In addition, there were some local industrial projects. South Ossetia supplied construction materials, timber, and mineral water. The Transcaucasian Highway connected South Ossetia directly with the North Caucasus and Russia. Gas and electricity were provided by Georgia. State authorities managed the agricultural sector (Soviet agricultural enterprises supplanted collective farms).

It is quite possible that an efficient management of internal resources in combination with central support could revive the economy of South Ossetia: make it profitable, growing, and promising. But the collapse of the Soviet Union brought all planned projects to a full stop. South Ossetia was completely unprepared for the free market to replace the planned economy system. This process had a profound negative impact on all post-Soviet states with consequences that are felt even today, but the heaviest blow was inflicted upon small, economically disadvantaged administrative entities. The South Ossetian industrial sector was on the verge of collapse. Industrial ties were disrupted. The problem of sales and supply were daunting. Due to the lack of funding, factories and plants began to lose their workers, especially skilled ones, in massive rates.

During the Soviet era, many economic projects were unprofitable for various reasons. In order to somehow maintain the production and not to deprive the population of work, they were subsidized by the state. Under new circumstances, such practices were abandoned. In addition, in free market settings, South Ossetian products proved to be uncompetitive.

However, the military aggression in 1991-1992 inflicted the main blow to the economy of South Ossetia. Difficulties began in 1989 when the Soviet republics, high on the ideology of separatism, started to evolve into nationalistic states, which had political, socio-economic, ethnic, and cultural repercussions. Information warfare, propaganda activities, anti-South Ossetian government decisions, and legislative acts discriminating against national minorities began. Over time, this escalated into violence, kidnappings, burning of houses, theft of livestock and property, and road blocks. Needless to say, the impoverished industrial and agricultural sectors were not conducive to economic development.

The damage in South Ossetia during the 1990s aggression was enormous: 117 Ossetian villages were completely looted and burned, 15% of Tskhinval's housing suffered, roads and bridges were destroyed, cattle were stolen, private and public property, such as machinery, equipment, goods, vehicles, construction materials (in short, everything that had at least some value, including metal scrap, rails, power lines, and timber) were exported outside the region. The total damage amounted to 1.4 billion rubles in 1992 prices[4].

But the greatest damages were to the population of South Ossetia -- its labor resources. From1989 to 1992 up to 1,000 people were killed, the majority of whom were children, women, and elderly. More than 2,000 people were wounded or maimed. Dozens remain missing. More than 100,000

[3] Kharebov B.K. Population problems in South Ossetia. Tskh., 1990.
[4] Kochetkov A., Martynov A., Piskorski M. South Ossetia. Armed aggression and peacekeeping war. M., 2009.

Ossetians living outside of the Republic of South Ossetia in Georgia were forced to flee to the neighboring North Caucasus and other regions of Russia. The vast majority of them never returned.[5]

After the establishment of the peacekeeping force in South Ossetia in July 1992, in addition to the security concerns, South Ossetian republican authorities became also concerned about the restoration of the national economy. Under the new circumstances, many economic issues that had accumulated over time seemed to be intractable. Some industrial enterprises (such as a textile factory, electrical equipment repair, aircraft, and chemical plants) were so damaged that their restoration was out of question, while others (such as "Elektrovibromashina", "Emalprovod", and a mechanical plant) had to be converted. Even though the woodworking plant and the dairy factory continued to produce some of the same goods, the production of many other goods had to be terminated. Still on the agenda are the restoration and conversion of the sewing factory, bus-repair, canning, iron-concrete materials production, and the meat processing plants.

A separate issue is the resumption of the work of "Kvaysinski": the lead-zinc mining enterprise. In order to restore its full capacity, it is necessary to pump the water out of mines, ensure an uninterrupted power supply, purchase up-to-date machinery, equipment, and vehicles, repair driveways, restart the processing factory, invite experts, and train the local staff. More importantly, it is vital to find investors, to reestablish entrepreneurial ties, and to access markets.[6]

Another problematic area is the agricultural sector. As a result of the military actions by the Georgian Special Forces and different gangs, their attacks on the defenseless South Ossetian population, and the road blocks (which resulted in the interruption of food and other vital lines of supply to some South Ossetian villages), residents of many South Ossetian villages were forced to leave. Their livestock was stolen, fields became abandoned, farms destroyed, houses burned, and gardens cut down. Motivating this population to return is highly problematic. In order to motivate them, much has to be done: security has to be provided, income guaranteed, housing improved, roads must be paved; power lines, TV broadcasting, and communication should be restored; schools, clinics, and cultural facilities must be rebuilt, and funds have to be allocated for the purchase of livestock, seeds, fertilizers, and farm machinery. Many of these measures are not yet available as part of the support programs for farmers.

Without external support, recovery was impossible. During the '90s, Russia was torn apart by its own internal problems: there was a struggle for power, its natural resources were divided among private owners, its assets were stolen, and some production lines were shut down. Russia was rapidly losing its hard-won international prestige. Under such circumstances, instead of offering help, Russia was desperate to get help itself.

Around that same time in South Ossetia there were all kinds of visiting businessmen and entrepreneurs. Some of them provided humanitarian assistance, while others invested in publishing and various cultural programs. There were also those who expressed interest in various economic projects, ready to invest in them. Although some businessmen made investments, they were ineffective. In most cases such efforts were useless altogether.

Meanwhile, investors demanded guarantees, tax breaks, and the proper legislation and regulation. At the time, those demands were hard to achieve, which certainly did not contribute to the country's economic revival. In addition, there were security problems. Tskhinval was surrounded by the Georgian enclaves, which were responsible for shelling, as well as acts of sabotage, provocation, and intimidation. Roads were blocked; people and goods were seized on a regular basis. Gas, water, and electricity could be cut off at any moment. The republic's authorities had no choice but

[5] Kochetkov A., Martynov A., Piskorski M.Op.Cit.
[6] Tskhovrebov I. H. Kvaisa - the pride of South Ossetia. Tskh., 1990.

to use the outdated 30 km bypass road "Zarskiy," instead of the 10 km highway section of Kekhvi - Tskhinval.

With great difficulties, some plants, such as 'Emalprovod," "Elektrovibromashina," mechanical, wood-working, and the mineral water, were restarted. However, only the "Bagiata" plant brings a sustainable profit. By the end of the 1990s, the rest of the plants barely worked at 10 - 20% of their capacity. Some shops had to be temporarily shut down, while the enterprises themselves had to be converted. "Emalprovod," for example, began to produce plastic products (such as utensils and pipes), "Elektrovibromashina" - wood stoves, bins, and pots. Some factories opened carpentry shops. In some instances, they even made tombstones.

The situation with the agricultural sector was even worse. The cattle industry virtually disappeared, since all state farm cattle were either stolen or slaughtered; farms were burnt down and destroyed. As for private cattle, they also suffered significant damage. Crop fields were distinctly reduced. There were almost no agricultural machinery and fertilizers. Some funds were allocated for the purchase of seeds, although it had no tangible economic effect.

South Ossetia's roads required repairs; its bridges and irrigation facilities were in need of reconstruction. City phone lines were damaged so much, that, nearly 20 years later, many subscribers are still not able to use them. Public radio broadcasting was just recently restored.

But the people of South Ossetia learned to solve their problems independently, through networking. Historically, the Ossetians, who lived mostly in the mountains, and the Georgians - the inhabitants of the valley, enjoyed a mutually beneficial trade by exchanging products. The Ossetians sold meat, cheese, wool, potatoes, and wood products, while the Georgians offered vegetables, fruits, grain, and manufactured goods. Up until recently, the Georgian-Ossetian conflict barely affected the trade. Residents of the nearby Georgian villages around Tskhinval continued bringing vegetables and fruits to the city market, and selling dairy products and fruits door-to-door. In return, they purchased goods that could only be found in markets and stores: meat, cheese, butter, grain, sugar, and even bread.

In a way, the market on the border of South Ossetia and Georgia became a symbol of joint trade in the conflict zone. The Ossetians called it "TEC" market,[7] while the Georgians called it Ergneti market. It occupied several hectares of land, stretching for kilometers along the Tskhinval - Gori highway. Shortly, warehouses, shops, open market places, communication and health centers, pharmacies, gas and gasoline stations, and more appeared. In addition to perishable goods, people traded many other types of commodities, including auto parts and construction materials. Some products, such as flour, sugar, cement, etc., were bought at wholesale prices. The Ossetians brought goods from the markets of the North Caucasus to Ergneti, while the Georgians brought popular Turkish consumer goods and home-grown products. Often, deals were made here and problems were solved. International observers noted several times that the Ergneti market is a bright example of peoples' diplomacy, and that, by conducting trade and establishing contacts, people managed to achieve much more than official talks, round tables, or joint reconciliation programs.

Experiences of trade at the Ergneti market set an example for neighboring border areas of Leningorski and Znaurski regions, as it was positive and, most importantly, profitable for both sides. Starting first with the trade of food items, the trade volume expanded to an extent that it became possible to even buy a a foreign car there.

Thus, successful development of the Ergneti market promoted the so called "peoples' diplomacy," contributing to the restoration of a trusting relationship between Georgian and Ossetian people.

[7] During the Soviet times, at the southern entrance to Tskhinval there was a "technical exploitation complex" (TEC), but with when the trading activities started, this acronym has acquired a new meaning - "trade and economic complex " (TEC).

Meanwhile, in Georgia the "Rose Revolution" took place, bringing to power Saakashvili's team. The new Georgian leader viewed the Ergneti market and the reconciliation attempts between the two nations as an immediate threat to Georgian statehood and to his own political future. It was decided to shut the market down and to establish strict border control. It was explained to the population that the state needed these measures to fight smuggling, narcotics, and crime in general. Despite the traders' protests, the market was shut down, although that action failed to resolve the problems of drugs and crime in Georgia. These coercive actions mostly affected Georgian farmers, particularly those from the Karelian and Gori districts. In other regions of Georgia there was no demand for their fruits and vegetables. Additionally, after Russia's decision to stop purchasing Georgian wines (which were never popular in other countries), Georgian farmers began to sell grapes at much lower prices. The Ossetian population experienced difficulties as well. Although at different prices, fruits and grapes from Georgia continued to be supplied to South Ossetia, bypassing the Ergneti market. Residents of Georgian villages continued to bring milk and dairy products to Tskhinval.

This situation lasted up until August 2008. The next armed invasion into South Ossetia fully stopped the established trade system between the populations of the two republics. After Russia's and other countries' recognition of South Ossetia, the Georgian - South Ossetian administrative border immediately became a state border.

Special attention is warranted here for the role of international organizations in South Ossetian economic reconstruction. Immediately after the ceasefire in July 1992, many international and European institutions expressed the desire to mediate conflict resolution activities. In addition to solving the purely political issues, mediators took the responsibility for restoring the South Ossetian economy that had been damaged during the course of military actions, and for resolving the issue of the refugees' return to the country.

Up until August 2008, these organizations had the opportunity to achieve these objectives; some of them carried out quite efficient activities. Thus, in 1993 the OSCE (which was then called the CSCE) established its office in Tskhinval. Monitoring was the OSCE mission's main objective, therefore, there were civilian and military observers in South Ossetia on a regular basis. While dealing with the economic recovery of the republic, the OSCE offered its mediation assistance. Since the OSCE did not directly engage in economic recovery, the European Union started using its framework to carry out economic projects. Estimated at 11 million euros, this two-year economic program turned out to be one of the most expensive ones. These funds were used to build houses for refugees, repair roads and water channels, restore bridges, fund various humanitarian activities, and perform other types of works.[8]

Unlike in Abkhazia, the UN did not have an office in South Ossetia, and thus the UN was not engaged in peace building activities there; although, the UN did assist with the resettlement of refugees through its Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The main goal of the UNHCR was to build houses in rural areas where they planned to resettle the refugees. Although this project did not bring significant social improvements, the program was entirely implemented.

The Norwegian Refugee Council diversified its functions. It began its activities with the delivery of humanitarian aid, the distribution of food, clothing, household items, and other vital goods. Then, the Council turned to micro-project implementation. It could provide equipment for those willing to start their own production. Thus, sewing machines and fabrics were purchased for skilled workers who could take orders and work from home. The Norwegian Council also provided assistance to farmers and helped with the restoration of the public services.

[8] The OSCE Mission to Georgia. Tbilisi. 1994.

For a short period of time, the Austrian Humanitarian Committee conducted its work in South Ossetia as well, demonstrating a tangible result by building, furnishing, and equipping the school and the orphanage in the Dzau village.

Other international organizations, such as IRC and ADRA were also engaged in implementation of various micro-economic projects in South Ossetia. Moreover, ADRA provided humanitarian aid, delivered firewood to those who needed it, distributed medical aid, and trained nurses to work in the republic's medical institutions. It should be noted that ADRA continued to carry its mission even after its office in Tskhinval was closed, and decided to finish its program through local representatives.

The international organization "Doctors without Borders" also had its office in Tskhinval. Although this organization was not involved in economic recovery projects directly, within its short period of its stay it achieved a lot in terms of humanitarian assistance. Medical institutions (mostly TB hospitals) received medical, food, firewood, and other supplies. Later on, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) began to operate in a similar way.

It should be noted that international organizations contributed to sustaining the quality of life of the population of South Ossetia in yet another way: as a rule, in order to implement their programs, international organizations engaged local residents - translators, construction workers, drivers, social workers, and other specialists - and paid them much higher salaries than those of the rest of the population of the republic. Additionally, they rented residential spaces and vehicles from the locals, and they also paid their taxes properly.

At the same time, international organizations facilitated the establishment of contacts between Georgian and South Ossetian non-governmental organizations, arranged their meetings on neutral territories, and organized various seminars, conferences, and roundtables. Those meetings could also be used as an opportunity to establish professional contacts: teachers were able to meet with teachers, doctors with doctors, journalists with journalists, etc. From 1995 to 2000, several meetings took place between the leaders of the two republics; three meetings were between the Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze and the South Ossetian President Ludwig Chibirov. Among the main issues discussed at these meetings were: concerns about the future of the two countries, political possibilities for conflict resolution, security guarantees, and return of the refugees. Generally, problems that received special attention were those of economic recovery, trade near the border, and issues of gas, electricity, and water supply. International organizations also offered for both parties to participate in various joint fully-funded projects. Since Georgia could only be satisfied with its leadership role, these attempts had only partial success; equal participation roles were viewed as an indirect recognition of South Ossetia. Under these circumstances, intermediaries and sponsors were forced to look for temporary solutions, such as dividing a specific project's funding between both parties. More often such practices put South Ossetia in a less favorable position.

With the beginning of the new millennium, almost a decade after the cessation of hostilities in South Ossetia, the conflicting parties were able to achieve significant progress in their talks. However, a final resolution was not reached, as the main question of the political status of South Ossetia remained unanswered.

The victory of Georgia's "Rose Revolution" and Saakashvili's rise to power rolled back all the hard-won achievements: border control was tightened, market places were eliminated, and contacts between non-governmental, art, scientific, and cultural organizations were terminated. All government level contacts were frozen; meetings of the heads of the republics became impossible. All that had a negative impact on the economic situation, especially for Georgia, which suffered from the loss of the Russian market. Due to the fact that 95% of South Ossetian needs depended on Russia, the new official position of Tbilisi did no particular damage.

Instead of promoting ideas of reconciliation and networking with South Ossetia, Georgia decided to choose a direct confrontation, which led to military attacks on peaceful civilians. The military aggression of Georgia in August 2008 turned out to be the most cruel and bloody in the history of the entire Georgian-Ossetian conflict. As a result of shelling in Tskhinval, 26 municipal buildings were burned and destroyed; another 226 were partially destroyed. In the private sector, 231 homes were destroyed, 442 homes were severely damaged and made unusable, and another 674 homes received moderate damages.[9] Initially, the total damage caused by these losses was estimated at 10 billion rubles.

"Elektrovibromashina", "Emalprovod," and a mechanical plant were significantly damaged. The Parliament, the Foreign Ministry, the main state university, and the city department store buildings were burned. The Interior Ministry and the State Broadcasting Station were partially destroyed. Three out of nine city schools were completely destroyed. Kindergartens and nursery schools were left in poor condition. The state hospital, city health clinics, the national and local libraries were severely damaged. As a result of shelling, the city infrastructure, communications, electricity, water, and gas supply virtually ceased functioning. Most trade and private business facilities were burned. Cultural objects, two Orthodox churches and a synagogue were destroyed. The memorial cemetery in Tskhinval's School Number 5 yard suffered from a tank attack.

Many villages of the republic suffered great losses, especially those in the vicinity of the Tskhinval region, such as Pris, Tbet, Khetagurovo Dmenis, Satikar, and Sarabuk. Most of the houses there were destroyed. Crops were ruined, and over 80% of the cattle was stolen or destroyed as well.

Nonetheless, the data above does not accurately reflect all the damage. These figures only partially reflect the real damage. These numbers are intended to demonstrate the destruction of the South Ossetian national economy, including both its public and private sectors. These modest figures vividly show how many reconstruction projects need to be undertaken. Even now, two and a half years after the events of August 2008, the recovery process is far from complete.

As a result of the Georgian leadership's military gamble, both the Ossetian and Georgian populations suffered major losses. Caught in retaliatory fire, several Georgian enclaves practically disappeared: Kekhvi - Tamarashensky, Avnevi – Nulsky, and Yeredvi – Vanatsky.[10]

The anti-South Ossetian war struck the economy of the republic. First, attention was given to the issues of humanitarian assistance to the population, the provision of medical and psychological support, together with housing and communications. Industrial and agricultural development became of secondary importance.[11]

Immediately after the end of hostilities, South Ossetia started receiving humanitarian aid. A large volume of diverse aid arrived. Many countries, international humanitarian organizations, and public funds sent shipments, but the majority came from the Russian Federation and CIS countries. Assistance was provided by government agencies, NGOs, humanitarian foundations, religious communities, and Ossetian diasporas. Large amounts of food, medical aid, clothing, essential goods, household items, construction materials, vehicles, machinery, and equipment were delivered to the Republic. Additionally, South Ossetia received substantial funding. These contributions were made by subjects of the Russian Federation, companies, organizations, foundations, and private donors. As a result, virtually all affected families were assisted and compensated.

[9]According to the State Committee for the Implementation of Reconstruction Projects of the RSO

[10] Massive casualties were avoided only due to the informing in advance the Georgian villages residents about the imminent attack. Most of the residents left, except for a few elderly people.

[11] Bzarov R. S. The independence of South Ossetia - a guarantee of security and stable future of the Ossetian people. Tskh., 2008.

The reconstruction process of South Ossetia took a new turn after Russia made an important political decision: on August 26, 2008 Russia recognized the sovereignty of the Republic of South Ossetia. Starting then, the RSO has become a subject of international law.[12] Within the period of two years, the two countries signed more than 50 international treaties and agreements. Most of them were about economic and social rehabilitation.

During the first two years of the South Ossetian reconstruction process, Russia contributed more than 11 billion rubles. These funds were used for the construction and repair of private and municipal housing, schools, kindergartens, hospitals, clinics, roads, and communications. Yhe construction of "Dzuarikau – Tskhinval" pipeline, unique in its complexity and technical characteristics, had a great impact.[13] Now Russia supplied gas directly to South Ossetia, which made it much cheaper. The pipeline's transit capacity is big enough in the future to make the republic a transit point of gas supply to other countries, which would undoubtedly improve the republic's economic climate.

At the Russian government's initiative, some Russian industrial giants signed agreements with South Ossetian enterprises, and began to mentor them. Thus, the "Ural" mining enterprise pledged to restore "Kvaysinski" Mine Group and to increase the capacity of "Elektrovibromashina" and "Emalprovod" plants.

The situation of international organizations' participation in the reconstruction of South Ossetia was different. Even the most basic humanitarian assistance was overly politicized. Foreign foundations agreed to supply shipments to South Ossetia only through Georgia, thus, confirming their position of viewing RSO not as a sovereign state, but as an integral part of Georgia. Such a position was unacceptable to Tskhinval. Additionally, there were justified fears that, along with shipments of humanitarian goods entering South Ossetia from Georgia, there could be drugs, smuggled goods, counterfeit banknotes, instigators, saboteurs, and secret agents.

After the events of August 2008, all European organizations offices supporting Georgia in Tskhinval were shut down. They no longer enjoyed trust and confidence of the public and leadership of South Ossetia. Even after detailed and comprehensive investigations of the war events conducted by various international independent commissions (such as the report and conclusion of "Tagliavini Commission"), the international humanitarian organizations blindly continued to insist on "territorial integrity of Georgia", "occupied lands", and "illegitimacy" of the international recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Taking into consideration such attitudes, these two counties had a right to make decisions in accordance with their own interests and to independently build relations with foreign governmental and public entities.

The OSCE's position during the August events deserves special criticism. Aware of preparations to attack, OSCE employees did not notify the South Ossetian leadership of the imminent danger. Moreover, the OSCE Tskhinval office refused to allow the local residents to use its basements as a shelter. In case of the Georgian troops' occupation, the very same office stored literature and leaflets especially for that occasion. Interestingly, among the materials released by Wikileaks, there was a document sent by the U.S. Ambassador to Georgia to the State Department. Referring to the OSCE observers, the document revealed who started the war and how many rounds were fired on Tskhinval during the first hour of aggression. Had there been the political will, the OSCE could have made this information public, or shared it with the independent commissions. The fact that this was not done indicates that the main European institution responsible for security on the continent acts selectively, lacks independence, and is biased. As a result, the OSCE and EU's

[12] Decree of the President of the Russian Federation recognizing the independence of South Ossetia. № 1261. August 26, 2008.
[13] Pipeline contruction had a separate funding and cost 15 billion rubles.

persistent attempts to place their observers in South Ossetia were useless. Under these circumstances, their presence would only complicate the situation.[14]

Immediately after the hostilities some international organizations began to express interest in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. They offered to engage these young states in various economic projects. Usually, two options were offered: either these young states were supposed to get involved in joint projects with Georgia, which supposedly would derive great benefits, or they should directly engage in economic integration with Europe. In both scenarios, Abkhazia and South Ossetia were viewed “as parts of Georgia” temporarily "occupied" by Russia. This position was viewed as an attempt to neutralize the Russian economic presence in these republics, and was thus unacceptable.

The International Committee of the Red Cross chose a different course of actions. Its Tskhinval office was established during the 1990s and still continues to operate today. During the events of August 2008, employees of the ICRC provided much needed assistance, which earned them gratitude and the respect of the South Ossetian population.

Initially, the Committee limited its activities to the distribution of humanitarian aid, but with time its work became more diverse. In 2009 and 2010 it began to distribute seeds and fertilizers to the South Ossetian population, ensuring the final product’s control, and reaching out to more than five thousand households and farms. Additionally, farm specialists inspected the fields.

Particular attention was given to the bordering areas, especially to farms in Leningorski and Tskhinval regions. More than 150 cattle, 150 beekeeping, and 200 small tractors equipment requests were made by the residents of Leningorski area alone. These supplies were free, given that this assistance was subject to the proper use. In addition to livestock and crop production, the organization offered programs aimed at trade development and other business activities.

Nevertheless, to shape its statehood and economic independence, South Ossetia should not count on the long-term assistance and economic support coming from abroad – whether it is from Russia, international organizations, or charity foundations. In reality, a shared economic space, as well as trade and customs unions, cannot provide guarantees of economic security. The example of the recent global economic crisis vividly demonstrated it.

Under the current circumstances, South Ossetian reconstruction and economic development, in addition to purely economic issues, also has important political, social, and demographic components. Given that the processes taking place in South Ossetia and around it are closely monitored by often biased observers, any miscalculations and mistakes made in the course of nation-building will be used to discredit the republic in the eyes not only of the international community, but also of the potential allies and economic partners. Naturally, should economic stagnation and decline occur in South Ossetia, Georgia will be portrayed as a more attractive economic alternative to independent South Ossetia and even Russia. Given that political processes have direct and serious impact on the global economy, one may argue with a certain degree of confidence that the rate of economic development of South Ossetia will impact the Russian and other allies of South Ossetian costs. Clearly, this relationship can be inversed. The future of the state will largely depend on the level of professionalism in designing the republic’s economic model, and on the quality of life of the South Ossetian population.

Regarding the economy itself, its recovery and further development should follow the implementation of clearly defined actions, precise time frames and personnel. Obviously, these measures should be translated into socio-economic programs, approved by the government and parliament, and detailed long-, medium-, and short-term objectives, linking these programs with the national budget, and specifying people responsible for their implementation.

[14] Report of the independent international fact-finding mission into the conflict in Georgia. № 2008/2001 - CFSP. December 2, 2008.

Needless to say that any program must begin with a thorough, comprehensive, and objective analysis, the goal of which is to determine the republic's economic capacity, its production factors, problematic issues, and the degree of relevance. Such analysis is only possible after the development of specific indicators and coefficients, characteristic of social and economic life. It appears that the main economic problems of the RSO are:

- chronic and severe economic crisis as a result of the Georgian aggression, together with the collapse of the national infrastructure, number of enterprises, housing, labor resources;
- many enterprises shut down or their work at only 5 - 10% of the early 1990's level, due to the break in economic ties after the fall of the Soviet Union, the long-term economic blockade of the republic which blocked the access to the Caucasus market for South Ossetian businesses, the establishment of the state border and strict crossing rules in Nizhny Zaramag by the Russian Federation in 1994, and absence of the competitive products. All this led to the chronic unprofitability of the republic's industrial enterprises, and absence of free market, its mechanisms, and laws. Unprofitability of enterprises led to an abnormal situation, when they virtually did not contribute to the state budget's formation;
- industrial basic production funds' deterioration, which have not been upgraded since the late 1980's; hence, the inability to produce competitive products. South Ossetian industrial enterprises are struggling to break the vicious circle: they are denied access to markets, their product sales do not break even, and the lack of profit does not allow them to reinvest in renovation of basic production funds;
- slow development of new, free market forms of management; absence of equity capital, inadequate reaction to the market transformations;
- public agriculture sector is unproductive and experiences serious difficulties with equipment and machinery supplies. Farming is in its incipient form and currently does not play a decisive role in shaping the national budget;
- small and medium businesses are limited to trade, services, and catering; there are virtually no private enterprises, especially those investing in innovation;
- natural aging and down qualification of labor resources, aggravated by the departure of the significant number of labor recourses during the 1990's, and the collapse of professional and specialized secondary education. The recently reopened State University with its departments (training engineers, specialists, and technicians) and multidisciplinary college (training bricklayers, welders, masons, plumbers, and electricians) is yet to demonstrate its capabilities. These factors create a difficult situation with training and professional certification of human resources;
- low standards of living, caused by the reasons listed above. A significant part of the population's income is below the poverty line;
- demographic challenges. Over the past 20 years the decline of the population is progressing, as the mortality rate exceeds the birth rate. In recent years, the migration balance was negative. The age structure of the South Ossetian population has been of particular concern. Due to the adverse flow of natural and mechanical demographic processes, the aging trend of the population is becoming clearer. To date, every fourth resident of the republic is at retirement age. This largely increases the pressure on the working population. The situation can be gradually improved by designing aggressive, sound, and scientifically justified demographic policies;

- an unattractive investment environment in South Ossetia is caused by the foreign relations risks, absence of peace treaty with Georgia, and security threats. There is a positive development in a form of the republic's legislation favoring investments;
- the negative trade balance of South Ossetia: import rates are much higher than export of industrial, perishable, daily, and hard goods. Clearly, this situation poses a real threat to the country's consumer security. Additionally, transportation costs significantly increase production costs, thus contributing to the substantial increase in the prices of basic foods and commodities. Most essential goods prices are 30% to 100% higher than the average in the North Caucasus region, which is an additional factor to the population's income reduction;
- absence of its own energy sources creates a situation in which South Ossetia is fully dependent on external energy sources, although the total potential of hydropower of South Ossetian rivers is at least 110 MW, while the power needed for industrial and other economic needs is only 35-50 MW. Moreover, there is a potential to use wind and solar energy in the republic;
- mentioned trends and processes lead to the limited circulation of cash in South Ossetia, due to the fact that energy payments and product prices bring the cash flow outside of South Ossetia. Apart from a constant shortage of cash and associated with it delays in payments, this factor is one of the main reasons for the lack of domestic investments and inability of the population to accumulate savings, whereby purchases of hard goods should account for 2/3 of household budgets. Food, utilities, and energy expenses account for more than 70% of the household budgets, although this figure increases during fall and winter;
- absence of the efficient banking system created conditions making the financial component of social production irrelevant. The financing of economic sectors is non-existent; financial support of small and medium businesses is purely symbolic;
- Given that citizens' health is an economic category, the low quality of healthcare in the country is a factor that reduces the effectiveness of social production; an unacceptably small amount of funds allocated by the state budget for these purposes does not allow to change this situation for the better.[15]

The South Ossetian economic problems mentioned above are quite serious. There was virtually no success in any of the segments of the republic's socio-economic life (which, given the amount of pressure the republic was subjected to over the last 20 years, could not take place anyway). There are objective and subjective explanations to this.

Therefore, the executive and legislative branches of the government face enormous challenges and difficulties. That being said, we can formulate some of the main directions of economic recovery and development. It appears that in the immediate or distant future no tangible results may be achieved without large-scale economic reforms, fundamental changes in the approach to the problem of transitioning toward a new economic mentality, and taking into account positive experiences of other countries and regions.

Moreover, one of the main objectives should be a gradual reduction of the gap between South Ossetian economic and social indicators, as well as GDP per capita and the same indicators in the subjects of the Russian Federation and other republics of the North Caucasus.

[15] Kokoev G. G. Economy of South Ossetia: alternative ways // South Ossetia. 25. 01. 2009

It appears that the issue cannot be solved simply by the implementation of short-term programs and individual projects. Socio-economic development of South Ossetia should have a holistic and comprehensive approach in its core; neglecting some areas or their inadequate development will inevitably lead to structural distortions and unresolved issues.

As was previously mentioned, any actions aimed at economic recovery and development must be preceded by a comprehensive analysis of all economic sectors' conditions, which assumes the identification of strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and risks, challenges and capabilities of the republic. Some of the main problems are low public productivity and local enterprises' unprofitability. One of the factors contributing to this situation is the depletion of fixed assets and equipment; hence, the low returns on assets.

The current economic condition is the result of the absence of free market mechanisms, and state property management control over state-owned enterprises. In order to accommodate South Ossetian enterprises, potential markets and their capacities have to be identified. In order to achieve this goal, marketing research must be conducted for individual businesses and the entire national industry. Obviously, the recognition of South Ossetia's independence by Russia broke the economic blockade of South Ossetia. Even under the current circumstances, when access to the South Caucasus market is still blocked by Georgia, and there is no anticipation of positive developments, the Russian market has become a viable alternative for South Ossetian businesses.

Once the market potential is determined, the production capacity of South Ossetian enterprises should be improved according to market opportunities; their unused or outdated main production funds should be sold or utilized. Unprofitable enterprises have to be converted and their personnel trained. Since no more than five percent of the labor force of South Ossetia is involved in industrial sector production, its training will not take long or cost much. In addition, in order to solve the problem of a large number of public sector employees, some of them should be transferred to the material production sector, as this will allow reduced pressure on the state budget and help to raise the average national income. Contrary to the belief that the establishment of enterprises producing high demand goods is not viable in South Ossetia, there are reasonable grounds to argue that the establishment of small enterprises specializing in assembling world famous products is feasible. At the same time, the priority should be given to high-tech production. The plants "Elektrovibromashina" and "Emalprovod" have already taken steps in this direction. Such steps are only rational when improving the level of workforce education; in addition, such production is normally characterized by a higher value added level. In order to mitigate the social imbalances, the establishment of industrial enterprises must meet the following requirements: social significance, economic efficiency, and even distribution across the republic. It would be logical to create enterprises of mixed type and closed joint-stock companies with the state owning the predominant part of the voting shares. Under new free market conditions, this would help to attract more investments for profitable enterprises.

South Ossetian agriculture sector may potentially become competitive on both domestic and external markets due to the high ecological production quality, and relatively low wages paid per unit cost. Production lines with high upfront costs should be avoided. It has been shown that it would be best to create farms with 100-150 heads of cattle across the country. Creation of approximately 100-150 farms during the initial period would satisfy the need to provide affordable, high-quality products to the South Ossetian population, and even beyond its borders. It would be appropriate to focus on the production of meat, dairy products, wine, fruit juices, and honey.

Due to its unique nature and climate, South Ossetia has quite high potential for the development of tourism. Restoration of the old facilities, such as camp sites, resorts, mineral water spring health centers, and construction of new ones, such as alpinist camps, skiing tracks, camping grounds and resorts, would create a solid foundation for attracting investments, and a positive image of the

young nation. There are recreational investment opportunities for large foreign companies, including their employees.

There is also potential for other economic sectors as, such as construction, production of construction materials, and transportation. South Ossetian natural resources are not fully explored, although there is evidence that some of them are quite large. Possibilities for the development of small scale mountain river power generators should be thoroughly explored. Several decades ago, small hydroelectric stations operated here successfully (such as Tskhinval HES). Total dependence on electricity "import" creates substantial economic and socio-political risks. These areas of concern should be the subject of an in-depth analysis and potential implementation in short-, medium-, and long-term planning. The main objective of such planning should be a self-sufficient South Ossetia, with a vibrant economy and independent shaping of its own state budget. All efforts of South Ossetian government and society should be aimed at the achievement of this objective.

In order to understand the direction and the rates of South Ossetian economic development in the near future, it would be appropriate to consult the national industry and agriculture investment programs designed by the Ministry of Economic Development of South Ossetia.

The main purpose of the industrial development programs is to improve the socio-economic efficiency of South Ossetian industrial enterprises through the formation of competitive industrial production. In order to achieve that, increases in the production potential of industrial enterprises are planned by building new plants, upgrading, reconstructing, converting active and inactive facilities, and increasing the quality and competitiveness of their products by improving the production capacity and introducing the resource-efficient technologies.

In order to carry out the national program, all available resources, great efforts, substantial financial and human resources have to be engaged. As it was previously noted, during the Soviet period, in South Ossetia there were a little over two dozen industrial enterprises, mostly medium and small. Their total annual production equaled only 120 million rubles.

As a result of August 2008 events, the damage to industrial enterprises of South Ossetia amounted to 1.5 billion rubles. Over 70 percent of production capacity today is either deteriorating or outdated. As a result, operations of some enterprises are partially or completely paralyzed. In reality only nine out of seventeen companies function: "Elektrovibromashina", "Emalprovod", mechanical, "Bagiatsky", woodworking, beer and fruit water plants, as well as the "Yugostalk," bakery plant, and printing association facilities. Among these, the bakery plant and "Bagiatsky" ventures are better off, but the overall industry still remains unprofitable. The factories that need to be restarted are the "Kvaysinski" Mine Group, sewing factory, oxygen station, canning, dairy, wine, meat-processing plants, and grain-receiving facility. The present number of employees in the entire industrial sector is equivalent to the number previously employed by the "Elektrovibromashina" enterprise alone. In 2010, wages of all industrial enterprises sector employees had a 1.5 times increase, and tripled for employees of the mechanical plant.

It is quite obvious that the present industrial production potential is not fully used. It is largely determined by a low technical production level and poor product quality. The shortage of financial resources slows down technical renovation and construction.

A close examination of the state of industrial enterprises shows that problems of industrial development and product competitiveness are directly linked to the republic's general problems of economic development, and have features specific for every industry. The main problems are:

- low technical level of equipment; outdated technology and fixed assets of enterprises;
- enterprises lack working capital and savings, which could be used for modernization and conversion;

• limited access to financial resources;

• lack of domestic industrial cooperation's development;

• lagging behind international methods and standards of production quality management;

• long-term strategic objective of industrial policy is a gradual reduction of South Ossetian dependence on the import of industrial products by conducting an active policy of import substitution and transition from labor-intensive and capital-intensive industries to resource-saving industries.

For example, in 2011 alone it is planned to purchase and put into operation an automatic bottling line of 2400 bottles per hour capacity for the beer and fruit water plant. At the "Emalprovod" plant it is planned to produce modern roofing and finishing construction materials and metal tiles - highly demanded products used in a large-scale construction. The purchased modern equipment is capable of producing 550 thousand square meters per year. The most profitable enterprise – "Bagiatsky" bottling plant is waiting for its reconstruction. A new hangar and a new bottling line are under construction. Substantial funds will be spent on upgrading and converting the facilities.

On the 2011 agenda there is also a modernization of the sewing factory, which will introduce progressive production technology for competitive high-demand products. In addition to this, a brick plant will be built out of local raw materials (during the Soviet period in Tskhinval there were two brick and one tile plants). Its products will be most popular during the implementation of a large-scale construction projects in South Ossetia.

These activities are designed to improve the industrial sector of South Ossetia, strengthen its positions on the market, create new jobs, and increase wages of workers.[16]

With respect to agricultural sector, in 2011 six hundred million rubles were allocated for the implementation of South Ossetian agricultural complex development program. If the program objectives are fulfilled, it is expected to:

• create a modern and efficient system of high-quality food production;

• increase the volume of agricultural production;

• increase the standards and quality of life in rural areas;

• develop private entrepreneurship in agricultural production sector;

• establish nationwide fodder supply system for farmers;

• create a system of state support for farmers by placing government orders to the processing enterprises.

South Ossetia has sufficient resources for agricultural development. Its unique landscape and climate allow for a diversified and highly productive agricultural production on relatively small areas.

Naturally, it is impossible to fully utilize the unique natural potential of South Ossetia without introducing adequate modern technology and equipment to the agricultural complex.

Due to the implementation of housing, civil engineering, and social infrastructure rehabilitation programs, the population has significantly increased; with the improvement of standards of living,

[16] State Investment program of "Industrial Development of the Republic of South Ossetia" for 2011 (Ministry of Economic Development of South Ossetia).

the number of new permanent residents to South Ossetia will increase again in the future. The need for high-quality food will increase accordingly. Those arriving for permanent residence will have to be provided with jobs in return.

This complex issue has to be mitigated by measures aimed at the development of the processing sector. In addition, a modern processing complex, specializing in refining local goods, will become a foundation for long-term support for farmers, providing them with guaranteed sales of produced goods.

The development of competitive agricultural industrial production involves the following:

1. livestock development;
2. crop development;
3. upgrade of agricultural technical equipment;
4. construction of new and technologically upgraded food and processing enterprises.

The program implementation assumes construction of livestock complexes, among which there will be five 100-head dairy farms, 10 feeding platforms, a dairy complex, and a meat processing plant.

In order to improve the genetic potential of animals, the program proposes to purchase 500 head of breeding cattle and 1000 head of beef cattle, to optimize the size and structure of the herd, to preserve and improve the gene pool of breeding cattle, to improve the animal fodder system and veterinary protection of animals in 2011.

Based on the adopted European technological standard, there is a plan to construct a 15-ton per day capacity dairy complex with a closed cycle of milk production.

Beef cattle develop mainly in mountain, foothill, and steppe farms in South Ossetia. For the development of this industry, Kalmyk, Simmental, and Hereford animal breeds will be imported and engaged in the breeding process.

A 10-ton per day capacity meat-processing plant is being created in Tskhinval in order to complete the meat production and processing cycle.

One of the priorities of livestock development is the efficient use of mountain pastures. Presently, 60,000 hectares of natural fodder resources in mountainous areas are not being used efficiently. In the future, increasing numbers of livestock in farms of all types of ownership will rely more heavily on natural fodder mountain pastures. The use of mountain pastures will significantly reduce seasonal maintenance and feeding livestock costs and increase its productivity by ensuring sufficient and clean mountain herbs. In addition, mountain pastures should be used for the purpose of high quality hay production.

Unique conditions and natural resources of South Ossetia offer great potential for the development of, and specialization in, horticulture. Growth factors are particularly favorable for fruit cultures, especially apples of different ripening cycles.

Horticulture is a socially and economically efficient industry capable of providing high returns on investments and employment in rural areas. The demand for fruits is far from being fulfilled on the Russian market, even though the volume of expensive imported goods of questionable quality is significant.

In this regard, horticulture development will be one of the main priorities of the agricultural sector within the frame of program implementation.

The program implementation assumes the following measures:

• laying out intensive and super-intensive 150-hectares gardens;

• laying out a 50-hectares vineyard;

• laying out a 50-hectares hazel;

• formation of market infrastructure to ensure the processing of crops and the service of agricultural sector.

Natural and climate conditions of South Ossetia, in combination with foreign and national marketing perspectives, are conducive to the development of industrial meat, milk, fruit, and vegetable processing.

The development of the food and processing industry aims to increase the volume of produced goods by creating high-tech and competitive production which allows for dynamic economic and employment growth.

In order to meet the objectives of the canning industry, it is planned to restore and modernize Tskhinval's canning plant by equipping it with aseptic juice filling and vegetable and fruit puree production technology in 2011.

The fodder development plan aims to purchase seeds of annual and perennial grasses, seeds of vegetable cultures, fertilizers, herbicides, and hose sprinklers.

Traditional vegetable production will be complemented by greenhouses. These greenhouses are scheduled to be laid and will cover more than 7,000 square meters and be equipped with drip irrigation and liquid fertilizers.

In 2011, some funds were allocated for the establishment of fisheries, the purchase of beekeeping equipment, and the restoration of the "Khetagurovo-Mugut" irrigation system.[17]

Road construction in South Ossetia always received particular attention. Since South Ossetia's lands are mostly midlands and highlands, road construction faces certain difficulties, such as laying roads through rock formations, installing safety fences, building bridges, tunnels, avalanche and landslide galleries, aqueducts, and viaducts.

The main road of South Ossetia is the Transcaucasian Highway, which connects South Ossetia directly with North Ossetia and Russia. This is the shortest, and most convenient transportation route, available year-round -- a secure connection between the North and South Caucasus and, in general, between Europe and Asia, thus a modern version of the Silk Road. The design of the Transcaucasian Highway took into account all the economic benefits of its construction. Besides, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan were also interested in it. The highway leads to Iran, Turkey, and, from there, to the Middle East. Another road of local importance is the seasonal Georgian Military Road. However, by closing its borders in the early 2000s, Georgia significantly reduced the highway's capacity. Such a cruel and short-sighted decision affected everyone, including Georgia. This decision was guided by political rather than economic interests. By imposing the transportation blockade, the Georgian leadership failed to dictate its political will. Clearly, it negatively affected the transit potential of South Ossetia. Nevertheless, the Transcaucasian Highway is not an economic priority for South Ossetia, but rather a factor for providing security, political independence, and an inseparable connection between the two Ossetias. Without the Transcaucasian Highway, the very existence of the Republic of South Ossetia could be called into

[17] National Investment Program for the "Development of Agricultural Complex of the Republic of South Ossetia" for 2011 (Ministry of Economic Development of South Ossetia).

question. Presently, this highway is the only route connecting South Ossetia with the rest of the world.

Over 30 years of operation of the Transcaucasian Highway allowed for the transit of tens of millions of tons of shipments and an impressive number of passengers. But most importantly, this highway became the "lifeline" for Ossetians. During the time of aggression, attacks, and blockades, it was used to supply aid; refugees used the Ruksky tunnel to flee. Now the highway is used when politicians, diplomats, businessmen, entrepreneurs, cultural workers, representatives of civil society organizations, and other guests visit South Ossetia.

But since the beginning of its operation, the highway revealed construction flaws which affected the speed and safety of the traffic flaw. Reconstruction of the Transcaucasian Highway, particularly the Rukski tunnel, began in 2011. All works are planned to be completed by 2015. The tunnel will meet all standard requirements and will be more accommodating of traffic flow. Constructed safety galleries and overpasses will make the highway safe at any time of the year. These measures will directly affect the national economy; since import-export transportation will improve, South Ossetia will attract more investors.

Besides the Transcaucasian Highway, construction and repair works are planned on other roads of national importance, such as the Tskhinval-Znaur, Tskhinval-Leningor, and Tskhinval-Kvaisa highways. In the future, the government plans to lay roads that would reach all remote villages, farms, pastures, mineral resources mines, and mineral water springs.

The issue of laying a railroad across the Caucasus Mountains dates back to the 19th century. The railroad was designed and funded, and construction contractors selected. But at the last moment, preference was given to the highway. The railroad was built in South Ossetia in 1940; it was the Gori-Tskhinval branch. As a result of the 1991-1992 aggression, its operations stopped and railways were dismantled.

The construction of the railway through the Caucasus tunnel and a tunnel under the South Ossetian mountain passes is on the agenda again. Projects and technical specifications are being discussed. Project designers estimated that the construction will not require large financial expenditures and nor take long. The commission of this railroad will address the issues of resuming operations of the "Kvaysinski" mine, capacity-building of other enterprises, stimulating agricultural workers, tourism and recreation development, and attracting investors to South Ossetia.

Air communications is another objective of transport infrastructure development in South Ossetia. Its implementation is necessary for all administrative entities, especially sovereign states, at least as an alternative to traditional types of communications. While airport construction is not being discussed yet (this is a long-term objective), the creation of a helicopter station with three platforms in Tskhinval, Leningor, and Dzau is realistic.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the issue of communications had to be addressed with urgency. Since Georgia previously regulated urban telephone communications in South Ossetia, new independent telephone lines had to be constructed. Besides gas pipeline, fiber optic cable was laid from Russia to South Ossetia; it has not reached Tskhinval yet, although this is a realistic goal. Now communication experts are more concerned with providing high-quality and affordable internet connections. Presently, mobile communications are provided by only one carrier ("Megafon"), whereas mobile users virtually everywhere have a choice of carriers, which creates competition, improves quality, and reduces the costs of mobile communications.

As previously noted, one of the most outstanding achievements in South Ossetia's economic sector is the construction of the gas pipeline "Dzuarykau-Tskhinval", which fully satisfied the needs of the whole country in this kind of fuel. Gas is now cheaper and its flow is reliable. Previously, Russian gas reached South Ossetia through Georgia, which, due to transit, raised its price.

Electricity is also supplied to South Ossetia by Russia. Additional power lines are being constructed; capacity will increase to 130 kilowatts, instead of 35. The situation improved significantly after the "Zaramagskaya" hydroelectric stations (30 km away from the border of South Ossetia) was put into operation. A project to build a thermal power plant running on gas has been also developed. In addition, there are possibilities to use wind and solar energy.

The economy of South Ossetia may be recovered and stabilized by enhancing the industrial and agricultural sectors and utilizing natural resources of the region. In this regard, South Ossetia is in a unique position. The climate is close to ideal. Temperature balance, level of precipitation, atmospheric pressure, and air circulation are conducive to keeping one healthy. The republic is located in three high-altitude zones: lowlands, midlands, and highlands. Its landscapes are quite diverse and scenic. Forests and aquatic networks complement the fullness of the picture. The beauty of the nature, clean air and water, and environmentally clean products make South Ossetia uniquely attractive in terms of resort construction and tourism development.

For a long time the unique natural resources of South Ossetia have been known. During the Soviet period, sanatoriums, resorts, retreat and guest houses, spas, tourist camps (including international), and pioneer summer camps were built near mineral water springs. The largest of the resort facilities was the sanatorium "Dzau", which received tourists from all over the USSR. As a result of hostilities and the earthquake in 1991, many recreational facilities were destroyed and the recreational sector itself declined.

The industry is being revived presently. There is a belief that this sector may boost the economy and produce a significant economic impact. In addition, the inflow of investments is viable. The development of the resort and tourism sector promotes inter-state relations, openness, and accessibility, brings people together, and offers opportunities for the implementation of diverse international projects.

South Ossetia has unique mineral water resources. It has more than 2,500 springs which differ in chemical composition, balneological features, and debit. Since Soviet times, they evoked the interest of various companies from Austria, Holland, Japan, Germany, and other countries. A preliminary agreement was reached with some companies involved in the bottling and sale of mineral water. Among those companies, some were prepared to extract drinking water. Presently, only the "Bagiatskiy" and "Dzauskiy" mineral water springs are being operated. Products of "Bagiatskiy" bottling plant are exported outside of South Ossetia; the plant is still a profitable enterprise.

In his addresses to the Parliament and people of South Ossetia, the President formulated the main priorities of socio-economic development in the upcoming decade, among which are those affecting people's prosperity. They draw attention to the fact that main efforts should focus on areas that directly affect the population's quality of life.

Tourism is one of the most important spheres of the modern economy, aiming to meet the needs of the population and improve its quality of life. Unlike other economic sectors, tourism offers greater economic stability, especially in times of volatile world markets. The tourism development program was designed to include coordinated and interrelated actions, individual projects, and extramural activities of institutional, legal, economic, political, and diplomatic nature, providing effective solutions needed to achieve dynamic and sustainable tourism development.

Provisions of this program will form a foundation for the increasing nation-wide role of tourism in the national economy, for the implementation of the main objectives of tourism development by the authorities, and in identifying directions and levels of state support for the tourism industry.

The program aims to improve tourism legislation, to establish a regulatory framework for tourist and recreational special economic zones and the construction of health and tourist complexes in

South Ossetia, to restore the tourism infrastructure destroyed during the military aggressions, to train tourism personnel, and to strengthen tourism cooperation with foreign countries. In addition, there are possibilities for development of non-traditional tourism in South Ossetia, such as mountain-, water-, cycling-, ethno-tourism, etc. In addition, winter sports centers, alpinist camps, and Olympic training bases can be created here.[18]

After the declaration of independence 20 years ago, South Ossetia paid particular attention to building international relations. During the time of military actions in 1992, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of South Ossetia was created, which initially dealt with economic issues. Shortly after, the State Economic Committee of South Ossetia was established, which subsequently transformed into the Ministry of Economy of South Ossetia.

The first economic agreement was signed in 1993 with the Republic of North Ossetia. Later, in 1996, the inter-state memorandum was signed in Moscow, which included sections on economic cooperation. Economic relations between the Republic of South Ossetia, the Republic of Abkhazia, and the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic became acts signed by these governments. These three states have created the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly "For the Safety and Rights of People." One of the Assembly's divisions deals with economic issues and economic cooperation development.

Russia provided the biggest economic support to South Ossetia. Initially, the relationship with Russia centered around its role of the USSR successor, but the framework, scope and conditions of this cooperation changed soon. Financial, technical, and other assistance was continuously provided to South Ossetia by Russia between September 1990 and August 2008, although it was significantly limited due to the unresolved political status of South Ossetia. South Ossetia was independent de facto, but not de jure.

At the end of the "five-day war" on August 26, 2008, Russia recognized the independence of the Republic of South Ossetia, and from that moment on a new era began. On September 17, 2008, the two countries signed the "Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance Agreement between the Republic of South Ossetia and the Russian Federation." Subsequently, more than 50 bilateral agreements were signed. Among those relating to economic cooperation, there is an agreement between the Ministries of Finance of South Ossetia and Russia, detailing financial assistance for reconstruction, socio-economic development, and budget balancing purposes; an agreement between the governments of South Ossetia and Russia on providing assistance in socio-economic development to South Ossetia; an agreement between the governments of South Ossetia and Russia on creating representative trade chambers; an agreement between the governments of South Ossetia and Russia to promote and protect investments; and a memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of Economic Development of South Ossetia and the Ministry of Energy of Russia on energy sector cooperation.

According to these and other agreements, since August 2008 South Ossetia received more than 30 billion rubles in aid from Russia. Significant funds are still being allocated for the reconstruction of South Ossetia's public and private buildings, government agencies, educational, health, and cultural facilities, and industrial and agricultural sectors, affected by the hostilities.

South Ossetia signed economic cooperation agreements with virtually all subjects of the Russian Federation. Different subjects of the Russian Federation continue to supply diverse help to South Ossetia (mostly free of charge or on preferential terms). Reconstruction work is also carried out by large state enterprises ("RZD", "Spetsstroy", etc.) and by workers from North Ossetia, Chechnya, Dagestan, Astrakhan, Tambov, Samara, Novgorod, Chelyabinsk, Tyumen, Volgograd, Stavropol, Krasnodar and other regions. Many buildings were restored at the expense of these enterprises and

[18] Action Plan for the implementation of the Program for Tourism Development in the Republic of South Ossetia. 2010. (Government of the Republic of South Ossetia).

subjects of the Russian Federation. Experts from CIS countries, such as Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan, also participate in the reconstruction of South Ossetia.

Some Western governments, non-governmental organizations, and international agencies are beginning to show interest in South Ossetia's reconstruction and integration into international economic communities. The support for specific, mostly joint, projects is occasionally offered. These projects assume joint participation by South Ossetia, Georgia, and possible western coordinators. The latter agrees to equal representation of both sides, even though this is just a wishful thinking, testing Tskhinval's reaction.

The Republic of South Ossetia, following international recognition, is very much interested in integration into international structures and is actively working in this direction. Nevertheless, political barriers impede this work. It is unacceptable to the leadership and people of South Ossetia that some still consider South Ossetia to be a part of Georgia and call it "occupied territory" or a "criminal and separatist hub." What kind of partnerships can we envision if South Ossetia is even denied the right to be called so? South Ossetia is expected to make politically-motivated concessions in return for speculations of future economic benefits. Neither now, not later, will South Ossetia accept political deals damaging to its national interests, even at the expense of losing substantial economic profits.

For example, in 2010 the OSCE and the European Union offered assistance with the economic rehabilitation of South Ossetia. Their representatives visited Zonkarskiy reservoir and its dam, which needs urgent repairs. To repair the dam, they offered 800,000 euros -- the remainder of the EU aid to South Ossetia not spent due to the outbreak of hostilities. In return for these services, South Ossetia had to allow European observers, including military personnel, on its territory. Such an "exchange" was unacceptable to South Ossetia, which refused to accept the assistance.

Besides Russia, Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Nauru also recognized South Ossetia. These counties exchanged credentials and delegations with South Ossetia. During governmental meetings it was stressed that economic cooperation will play a particular role in future inter-state relations. Parties are now exploring opportunities for trade, and participating in joint economic projects, personnel trainings, and technology exchanges.

Presently, South Ossetia's foreign trade department is working toward expanding and strengthening the process of recognition of South Ossetia by other countries. Belarus came close to a positive resolution on this issue several times, but its leaders set it aside each time due to political reasons. Most likely, Belarus will recognize South Ossetia, thereby allowing South Ossetia to enter the Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia, as well as other political and economic enterprises of the CIS and other countries.

In August 1997, the South Ossetian parliament adopted the "Free Economic Zones" Act.[19] This law aims to attract foreign investment, technology, and foreign policy management experience, and to promote growth in revenue and employment. The law defined the status of residents of free economic zones (FEZ), foreign currencies, and investors. FEZ allow for the establishment of international companies with the following benefits:

- expedited registration procedure;
- total tax exemption, except registration and annual fees;
- currency autonomy;
- exemption from customs duties and taxes;
- anonymity and trade secrets.

[19] "Free Economic Zones " Act of South Ossetia. 1997 (Parliament of South Ossetia).

Under present conditions, until South Ossetia is internationally recognized, the question of turning the country into a free economic zone must find a different solution. The South Ossetian parliament has prepared a draft of "Special Economic Zones in South Ossetia" Act.[20] This legislation aims to develop the processing industry, high-tech enterprises, new products, as well as the tourism and resort spheres. It is also stressed that customs duties and VAT do not apply to foreign goods circulated within FEZ.

Naturally, both documents are designed to revive the economy, which will be complemented by improvements in the industrial, agricultural, transport, communications, tourism, and recreation sectors, in the optimal and efficient use of natural resources, an improved banking system, and in creating jobs. These measures will lead to a significant increase in the condition of the population.

Presently, South Ossetia is not a UN member and does not enjoy a full membership in international organizations. However, various international and European organizations are gradually engaging directly with South Ossetia to work in such areas as science, culture, and education. South Ossetia has already been accepted into several international sports organizations, which allows South Ossetia to participate in sports competitions under its own flag. Although indirect, this is an act of recognition of South Ossetia.

In conclusion, in order to achieve progress in economic development, South Ossetia has to fulfill several conditions:

• maximize the efficient use of its natural resources, technological potential, human capital, and intellectual and professional opportunities;

• distribute with great precision and efficiency all incoming assistance, such as financial resources, humanitarian aid, designed projects, programs, technology, personnel training, etc.;

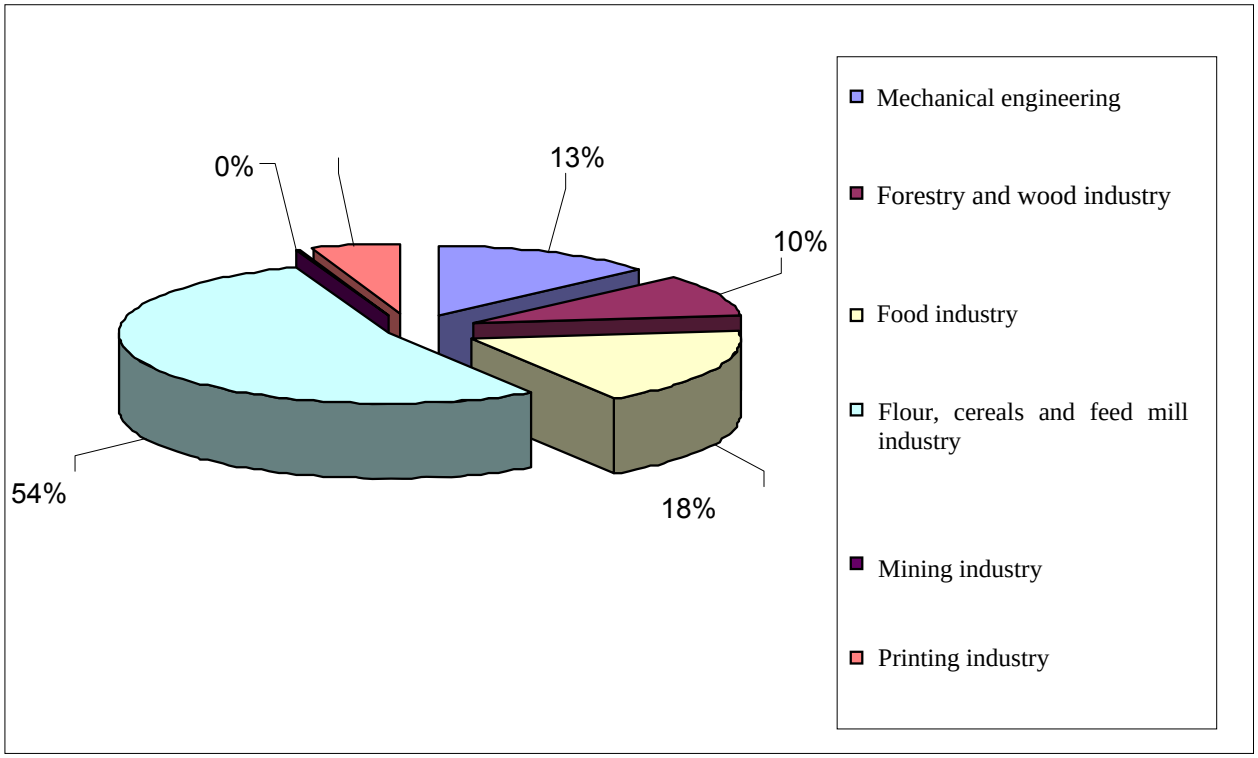
• identify economic priorities, ultimate goals, and opportunities;

• use all available opportunities for entering international economic organizations, participating in the implementation of international projects and programs, and expressing initiatives to reach these objectives.

[20] "Special economic zones in South Ossetia" Act. Law Project, 2011. (Legislative Committee of the Parliament of South Ossetia).

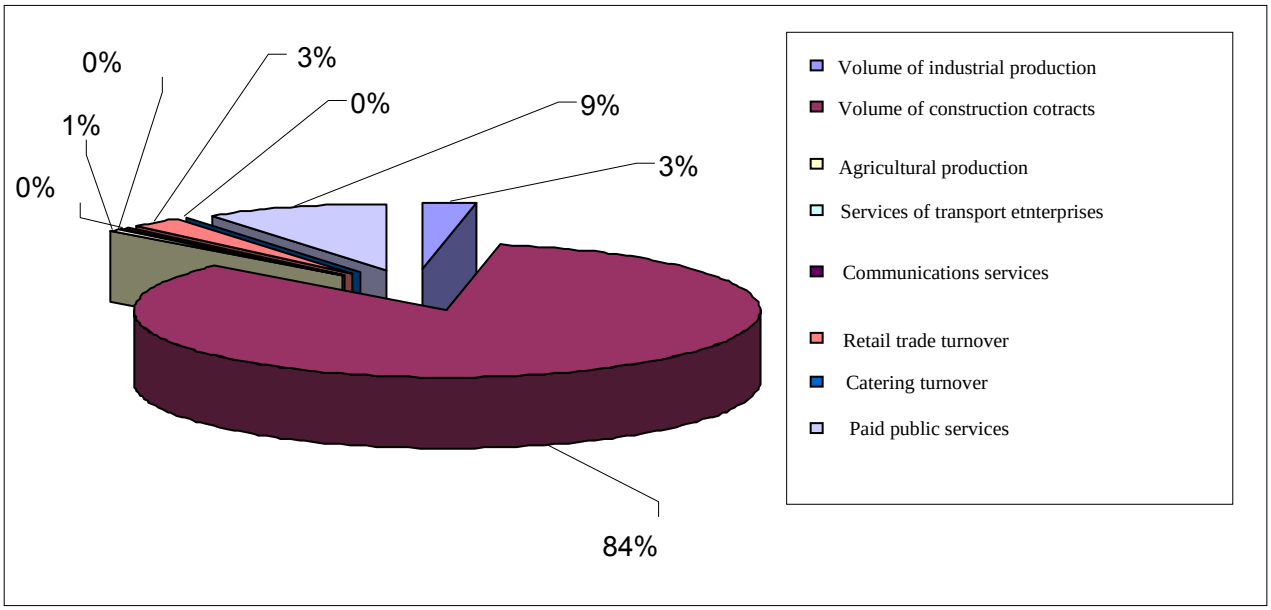
Appendix 1.

Contributions of South Ossetian Industries to Gross Industrial Output in 2010



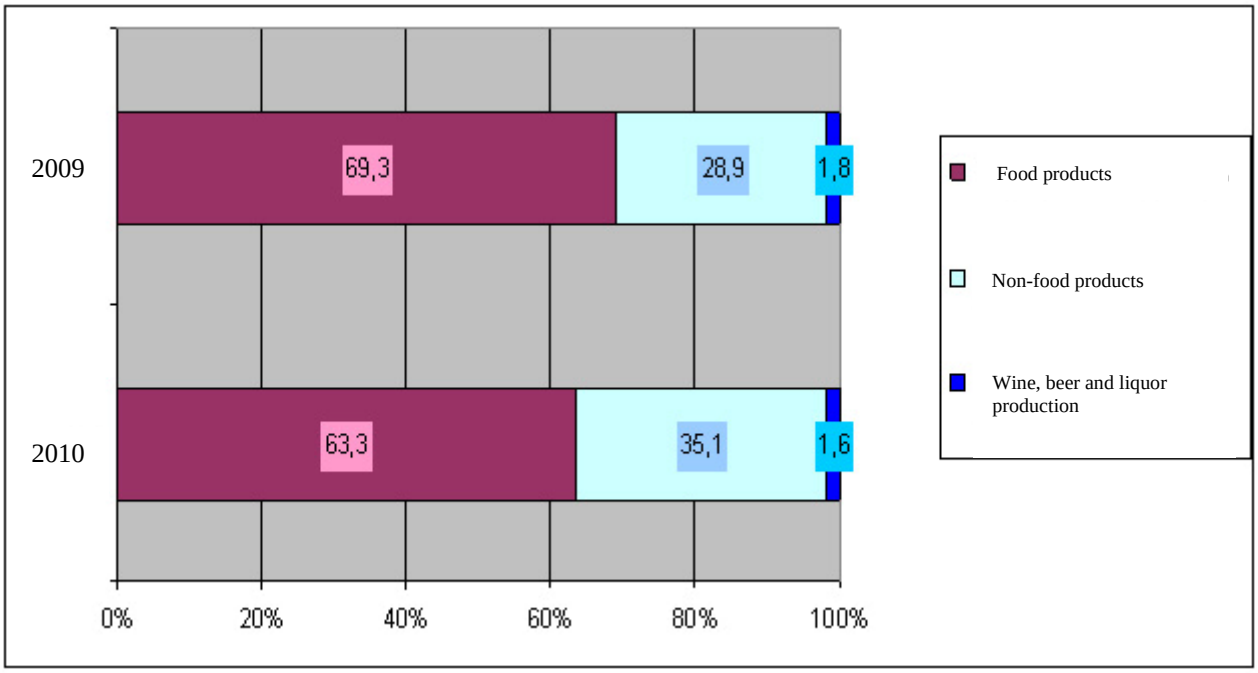
Appendix 2.

The Structure of Consumer Goods Production in South Ossetia in 2010 (%)



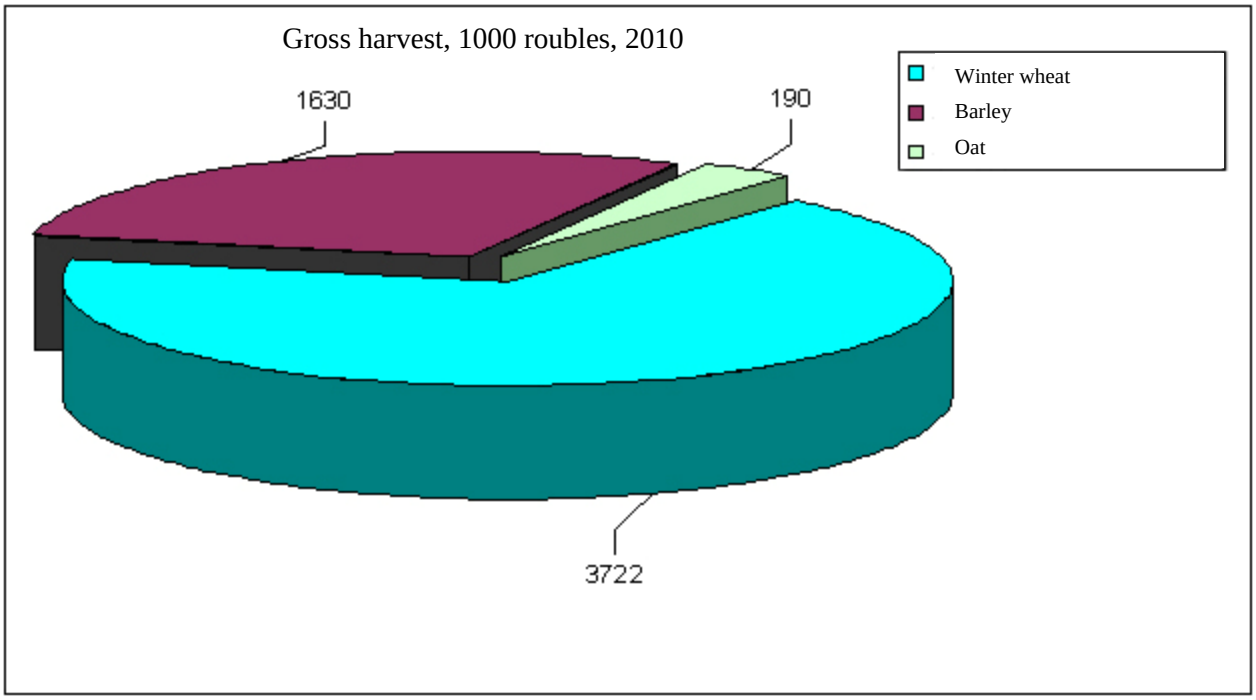
Appendix 3.

The Structure of Consumer Goods Production in South Ossetia in 2010 (%)

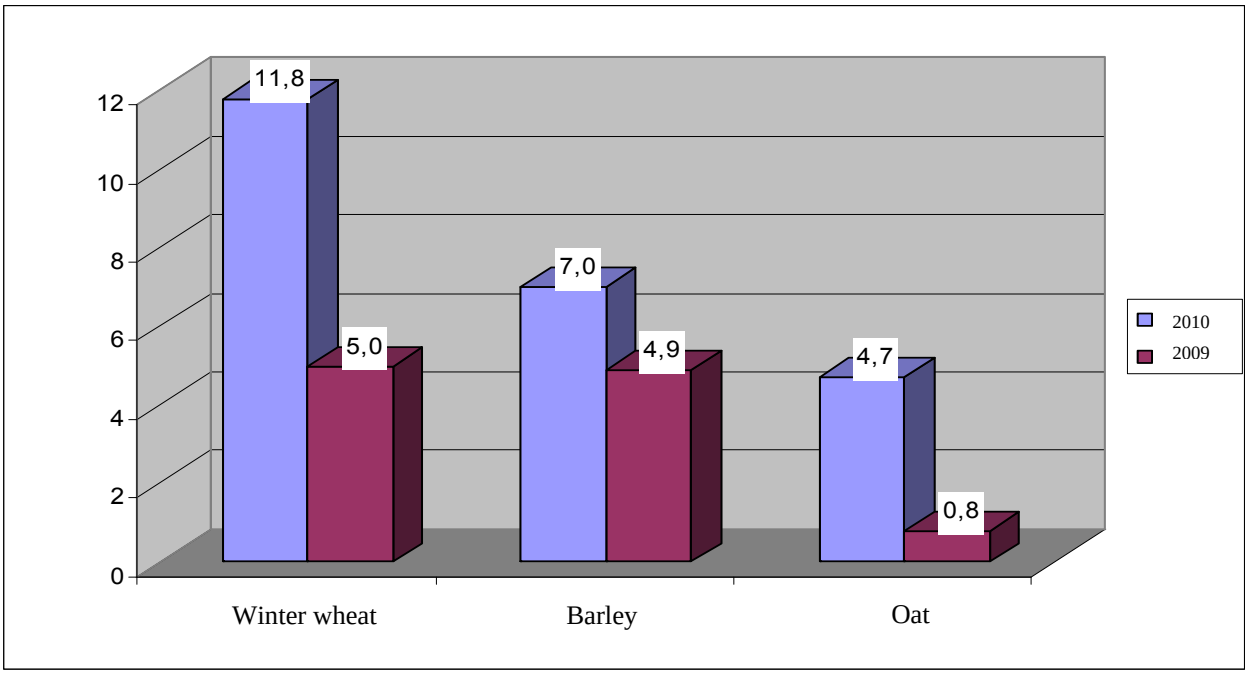


Appendix 4.

Gross Harvest of Major Crops in 2010

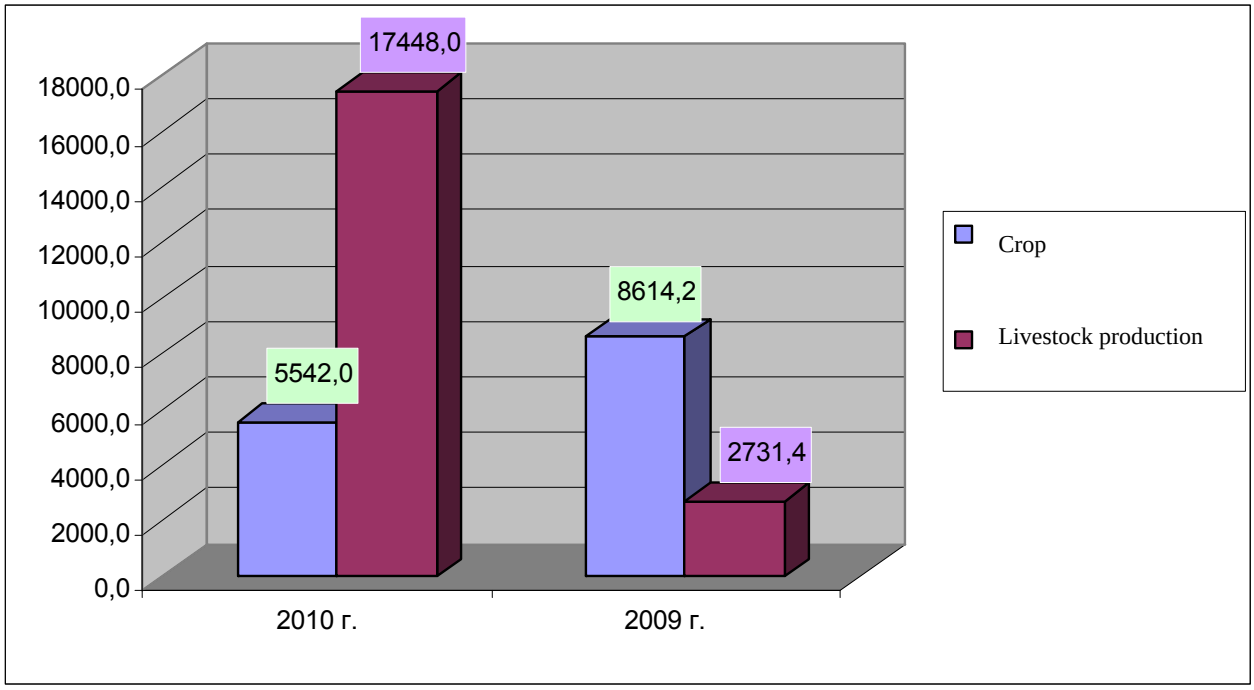


Productivity of Major Crops over the Past Two Years



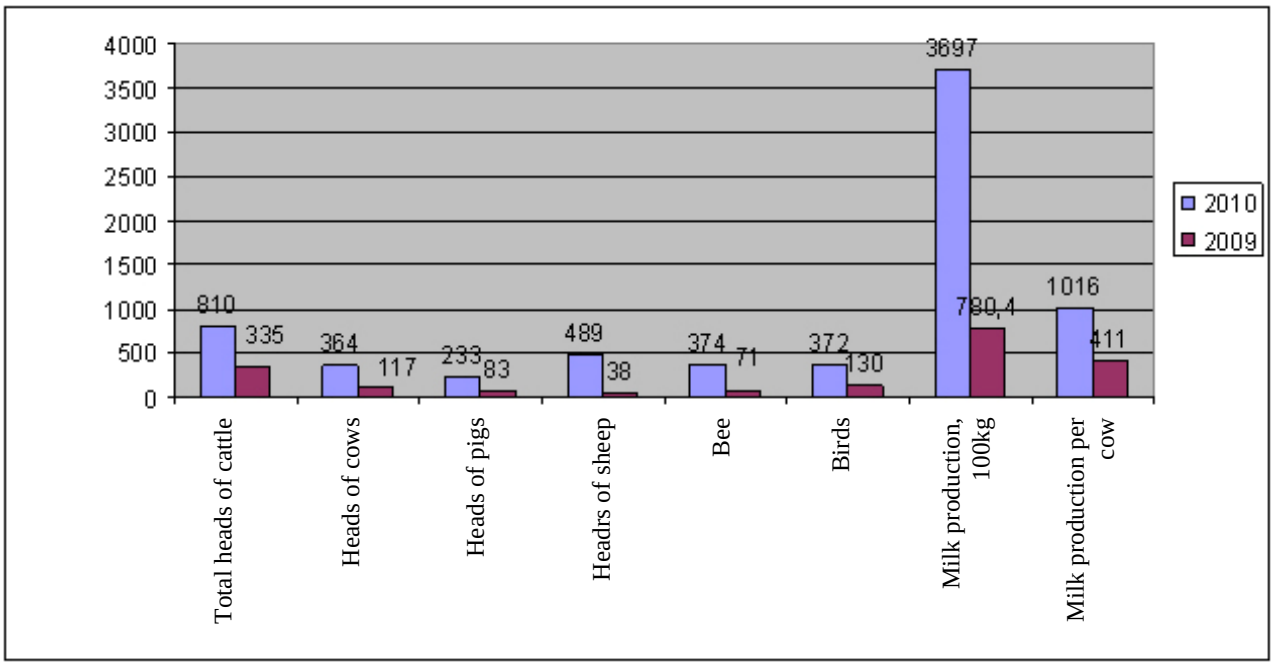
Appendix 5.

Agricultural Output in South Ossetia 2010 (in rubles), excluding Private Farms



Appendix 6.

Cattle Population in Farms of South Ossetia in 2010



SOME ASPECTS OF SOLVING THE PROBLEMS OF REFUGEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN LIGHT OF GEORGIAN-OSSETIAN RELATIONS

Merab Chigoev

Conflicts, especially those that involve armed confrontation and human losses, cause irretrievable material and emotional damage to the conflicting parties. In order to overcome the consequences of a conflict, both substantial efforts and a large amount of time are required. This also depends on the volatile influence of objective and subjective factors.

One of the most difficult consequences of a conflict to resolve is the future destiny of the refugees, i.e. should they adopt the new environment or return to their original place of residence. This issue is hard to resolve because of its impact on every aspect of life of both the displaced and host populations. It affects legal, political, moral, and ethical aspects; it also involves the adaptation of the population to the renewed need to coexist, together with economic adaptation including at the household level, the issue of land use, and access to educational, cultural and social services, etc.

The Georgian-South Ossetian conflict in this respect, with its first active and then passive phases lasting altogether from 1989 to 2008, demonstrated some features common for all conflicts, as well as traits specific to this conflict alone.

To understand the context of this paper best, it should be noted that according to the Soviet 1989 census data, 98,000 people resided in South Ossetia, of which 67,000 were Ossetians and 27,000 were Georgians.[21]

In order not to miss some of the key variables, this expert study of the problems of refugees and IDPs also requires a brief discussion of the history of Georgian-Ossetian conflict. Without this discussion it would be impossible to understand the main causes of the conflict and its consequences, including the outflows of the population from Georgia and South Ossetia. It would be also difficult to analyze the circumstances, which, we believe, could either contribute to or be an obstacle to resolving the conflict in general, as well as to the return of refugees and IDPs to their permanent residence, or to their settlement in their current residence.

Conflict resolution specialists in the field of political science mostly believe that the main reason for the conflicts on the territory of the former Soviet Union, including the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, was the collapse of the Soviet Union itself, together with the following 'parade' of sovereignties in the former Soviet republics.

At the same time, some social scientists consider that the responsibility for the onset of the conflict between Georgia and the Republic of South Ossetia that started in November 1989 lies entirely with the nationalist-minded Georgian government.

While partly supporting this thesis, we believe that the causes of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict are deeper and have roots in the history of Georgian-Ossetian relations.[22]

Since its inception this conflict took on an ethno-political nature. The Georgian authorities, regardless of their political views or political system at the time – feudal, princes, Mensheviks, Bolsheviks or democrats -- for centuries pursued a strategy of building a mono-ethnic state. By all possible means they tried to resolve the question of national minorities to the authorities' advantage,

[21] Soviet population census of 1989.

[22] The first specialized study of the conflict components of Georgian-Ossetian relations is discussed in the publication of Dzidzoev V.D and Dzugaev K.G., South Ossetia in the retrospect on Georgian-Ossetian relations. Tskhinval, 2007.

i.e. by depriving the minorities of their ethnic identity. In this regard, the 20th century gives us the best examples of such practices. In 1920, Georgia used the occasion of the collapse of the Russian Empire, which it had been part of since 1801, to form a Georgian Democratic Republic and launched a full-scale military operation against South Ossetia using a struggle with revolutionary elements as an excuse. In reality, the Georgians aimed to physically destroy the Ossetians and/or to arrange their exodus to the North Caucasus.

Over 18,000 Ossetians died in that war; close to 50,000 Ossetians became refugees and never returned to their motherland.[23] And while Georgia never achieved its goal of complete liquidation or exile of the native South Ossetian population, the South Ossetian people suffered severe damage.

To reach their goals in the following decades, the Georgian government changed tactics and applied more 'peaceful' and sophisticated methods to enforce 'Georgianization' of the Ossetians in Georgia. As a result of this policy, a major part of the ethnic Ossetian population residing today in western Georgia and the Kakhetian region consider themselves Georgians and are almost completely assimilated by Georgian society.[24] Similar attempts were also made towards the indigenous population of South Ossetia: ethnic Ossetians. And while these attempts were less successful than on the territory of Georgia, the threat of gradually losing their national identity, language and culture while remaining an integral part of independent Georgia became more than real.

In the very difficult circumstances of unprecedented growth of ethno-nationalism in Georgia in the 1990s, the people of South Ossetia in order to self-preserve as an ethnic group found the only possible solution: to initially upgrade the status of South Ossetia from an Autonomous Oblast (region) to an Autonomous Republic within Georgia. [25] But after the Georgian government abolished the autonomous status of South Ossetia,[26] South Ossetian authorities decided to leave

[23] Archive of the South Ossetian part of Joint Control Commission and database of the office of Attorney General of the Republic of South Ossetia

[24] Along with the anti-Ossetian campaign, Georgia also continued with the process of intensive 'Georgianization of non-Georgians'. Below we present a paragraph demonstrating decisions of the official government body of Georgia about the 'Georgianization' of Ossetians:

Soviet Peoples Deputies of Khashurski raispolcom's decision # 296 July 26, 1990.

The ispolcom of the raysoviet of People's Deputies of Khashurski rayon has issues a decree regarding the correction of Ossetian and Armenian last names. The following residents of Khashurski region of Georgian nationality with Ossetian and Armenian last names (Tskhovrebashvili, Kulumbegovy, Mikojan, Shaverdjan and others) appealed to the historic-archival institute of Academy of Sciences of Georgian SSR of Dzhavahishvili. The institute notes that the individuals carrying the above mentioned last names are Georgians and recommends these people to change their last names to their original form.

According to the historic-archival institute of Academy of Sciences of Georgian SSR of Dzhavahishvili and by request of the mentioned above individuals, the Ispolcom of the raysoviet of People's Deputies of Khashurski region HAS RULED:

1. To include to the birth certificates of the mentioned individuals their nationality as Georgians. Last names Kulumbegov – Kulumbegashvili, Mikoyan – Mikashvili etc. Tskhovrebashvili, at their request, can resume their original names of Tskhovrebuli, Shaverdyans– Shaverdashvili.

2. To sssist the passport office of the Khashurski department of interior affairs in issuing passports reflecting the new last names.

3. To inform other regions and raysoviets (regional councils) about this decision in order for them to ensure the continuation of similar work.

Ispolcom president: A Danelia.

To compare: 'In 1926-1979 years alone over 100,000 representatives of other nationalities in Georgia were 'Georgianized'.

[25] Ruling of the XII session of the South-Ossetian Regional (Oblastnoy) Soviet of People's Deputies from Nov 10, 1989.

[26] Ruling of the XIV session of the Supreme Soviet of Georgian SSR from Nov 16, 1989 and from Dec 11, 1990.

Georgian jurisdiction and proclaimed the creation of an independent state of the Republic of South Ossetia.[27]

The events that followed confirmed that the decision was correct.

In the media and in workplaces across Georgia, an anti-Ossetian campaign began; using chauvinistic slogans, an Ossetian was turned into the image of an enemy and started being portrayed as an invader of Georgian lands, etc.

A considerable part of the Georgian population representing all segments of Georgian society gave in to this propaganda. Everywhere, Ossetians found themselves fired from their jobs, denied housing and property, and sometimes even lost their lives.[28]

Starting in 1989 and in the following years, about 100,000 Ossetians were expelled from Georgia. Most of them were forced to leave their homes and belongings, which the Georgians then took over. Most of the Ossetian refugees from Georgia settled in Russia. About 5,000 settled in South Ossetia. To the present day, with a few exceptions, almost none of these refugees have returned to Georgia.

At the same time, from 1989 to 1992, i.e. before peacekeepers were deployed in the Republic of South Ossetia, Georgian nationalists established a complete economic blockade of South Ossetia followed by military aggression. The result of the latter was the burning down and destruction of 117 Ossetian villages, the killing of about 1,000 Ossetians, the wounding of another 2,500, and 150 still missing. The agricultural, industrial, and social infrastructure was destroyed, and schools and hospitals burned. [29]

According to expert estimates, the economy of South Ossetia has suffered damage equal to 34 billion Russian rubles.[30] During these years, in order to escape the horrors of war and in search of a better life, 40,000 Ossetians fled the republic. Many never returned to their motherland. 5,000 were forced to move from the destroyed Ossetian villages to Tskhinval. At the same time, approximately 16-18,000 Georgians fled or moved from South Ossetia to Georgia in search of a better life. Most left the city of Tskhinval several days before the first armed aggression by Georgia against South Ossetia on January 6, 1991, and are not recognized by the authorities of South Ossetia as refugees.[31]

To further discuss the question under consideration, terminology must be clarified. There is a substantial difference in the way that the Georgian and Ossetian sides use the terms "refugees", "internally displaced person", etc. The legislation of the Republic of South Ossetia uses the following definition for “refugee" and "internally displaced person:"

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[27] Ruling of the XIV session of the South-Ossetian Regional (Oblastnoy) Soviet of People’s Deputies from Sep 20, 1990, re-confirmed on October 16 and November 29 1990, during the XV and XVI sessions respectively.

[28] Archive of the Joint Control Commission’s South Ossetian part:

-an article by Professor Kvanchilashvili (Georgia) on the demographic aspects of development of Georgia, which expressed the idea of limiting the fertility of the non-Georgian population in Georgia (newspaper Literaturuli Sakartvelo September 30, 1988);

- an article by Professor Z. Chkvanava (Georgia), entitled "the Found Path", which proposed to deport all non-Georgians with more than two children from Georgia (newspaper “Kommunisti", November 21, 1988);

- an interview with the writer A. Bakradze (Georgia), written in a manner of neglect of other peoples’ languages and cultures in Georgia (newspaper "Georgian Youth”, November 1988), etc.

[29] The conclusion of the trilateral Russian-Georgian-South Ossetian Commission created by the Joint Control Commission in order to assess the property damage in the Georgian-Ossetian conflict.

[30] Conclusion of the Russian-Georgian-South Ossetian Commission

[31] Data from the Joint Control Commission’s South Ossetian part

"A refugee is a person who is not a citizen of the Republic of South Ossetia and who by virtue of well-founded fear of persecution because of his religion, citizenship, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion is outside the country of his citizenship and is unable or does not desire to accept the protection of that country because of such fear, as well as not having a particular citizenship and being outside the country of his former residence, as a result of such events; is unable or unwilling to return to this country as a result of such fear."[32]

1. "A forced migrant is a citizen of the Republic of South Ossetia, who left the place of his residence because of violence committed against him/his family members, other forms of harassment, or because of the realistic risk of persecution on grounds of membership in a particular social group or because of his political views, that have provoked hostile acts towards a particular person/group of people or mass violations of the public order.[33]

2. Forced Migrant (internally displaced person) is:

a) a citizen of the Republic of South Ossetia who was forced to leave his/her place of residence in a foreign country and arrived to the territory of the Republic of South Ossetia;

b) a citizen of the Republic of South Ossetia who was forced to relocate from a specific region of South Ossetia to another region or city in the Republic of South Ossetia;

c) a foreign citizen or stateless person residing permanently and lawfully in the territory of South Ossetia who relocated within the borders of South Ossetia under the circumstances listed in clause A above;

d) a citizen of the former Soviet Union residing on the territory of a former Soviet Union's republic who received refugee status in the Republic of South Ossetia but then lost this status, preventing the person from settling in the territory of South Ossetia, and instead gained the citizenship of the Republic of South Ossetia.

It should be noted that as used by the Republic of South Ossetia's legislature, the term "forced migrant" refers to "internally displaced person."

There are also serious contradictions in use of the definition of "refugees" or "internally displaced persons" by the South Ossetian and Georgian sides. There are contradictions in both the formal use of the terms "refugee," "internally displaced person," and the meaning of these concepts due to the fact that the law assigns these two categories a different status, and therefore with different rights and responsibilities.

The reasons for these differences in the definitions by South Ossetians and Georgians of the terms "refugee" and "internally displaced person" are both legal and political. The South Ossetian approach is based on universally recognized principles of a nation's self-determination, as well as the results of referenda held in the territory of South Ossetia which ruled their state to be sovereign, independent, recognized by several members of the United Nations, and the subject of international law. Therefore, any person forcefully moved from Georgia to South Ossetia as well as displaced from South Ossetia into the territory of the neighboring state of Georgia, are considered to be refugees under South Ossetian law.

However, the Georgian side refers to these people as "internally displaced persons" based on its belief that South Ossetia is an integral part of Georgia.

[32] Republic of South Ossetia's "Law on Refugees"
[33] Republic of South Ossetia's "Law on Forced Migrants"

Throughout the duration of the conflict, the most active anti-Ossetian participants were the residents of Georgian villages in South Ossetia close to its capital city of Tskhinval. Between 1989 and 1992 all the Ossetians in these villages were expelled from their homes; their property was either destroyed or taken away by their fellow villagers, the Georgians. The only road that passed through these villages from the city of Tskhinval to North Ossetia was systematically blocked. Even when it was opened, Ossetians passing through it were regularly subjected to humiliating inspections and harassment. Armed groups, i.e. gangs, created by the residents of these villages, carried out a series of hideous crimes against the Ossetian population.[34]

In the following years, these villages and their inhabitants were used by the Georgian authorities as a base for intelligence operations, various provocations, and other anti-Ossetian actions against South Ossetia.

Despite these sufferings, several years after the violent phase of the conflict in 1992, attitudes in South Ossetia started to "thaw". Casual Ossetian-Georgian contacts at the household level resumed. Initiated by both Georgian and Ossetian citizens, on the South Ossetia-Georgia border near the village of Ergneti, a functioning market emerged. The market was located on both the territory of South Ossetia and the territory of Georgia. People, regardless of their nationality, freely traveled through the market, communicated with each other, made deals, etc.

Several thousand people attended the market daily. Such communication initiated the restoration of mutual trust, and helped to regain the lost connection between people. The authorities of South Ossetia did not interfere with the freedom of movement throughout the country, the mutual visits to sacred places, and business contacts between Georgians and Ossetians. In 1992 the Joint Control Commission (JCC) was established on the basis of the Dagomys agreements; the JCC was composed of representatives from South Ossetia, Georgia, the Russian Federation and the Republic of North Ossetia–Alania (the subject of the Russian Federation where most of the refugees from Georgia had resettled). The JCC made progress in strengthening confidence-building measures between South Ossetia and Georgia, creating favorable conditions for strengthening peace in the region, trade and economic contacts between both countries' citizens and economic entities. On February 13, 1997 the JCC, with the mediation of the UNHCR and the OSCE, adopted an important for the displaced population document: "The procedure of the voluntary return of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict's refugees and IDPs to the places of their former permanent residence."

The same year, South Ossetian leadership adopted a package of legal regulations intended to facilitate the return and resettlement of refugees and other displaced persons.[35]

On February 23, 2000, the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of Georgia with the participation of the Government of the Republic of South Ossetia signed an agreement on economic recovery cooperation in the conflict area, the return of refugees, and the development of interstate programs for the return, resettlement, integration and reintegration of displaced persons. And, although the program was not fully implemented, it demonstrated the will of the conflicting parties to be proactive in solving the problems of refugees and internally displaced persons.

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[34] On May 20, 1992, a gang formed by the residents of the Georgian villages of Kekhvi, Kurta, Achabeti, Dzartsemi ambushed the bypassing road near the Ossetian village of Zar and shot a column of refugees from the city of Tskhinval. Total of 34 people were killed. Among them elderly, women and children . On March 18, 1991 near a Georgian town of Yeredvi a gang with the participation of its residents stopped a passing from neighboring ethnic Ossetian villages bus. First they tortured, and then buried alive 12 men, etc.

[35] Decree of the President of the Republic of South Ossetia "Urgent measures to facilitate the return of refugees and IDPs to South Ossetia "(attached), July 1997

Resolution of the Government of the Republic of South Ossetia about adaptation of the "Programs of integrated solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons" (attached).

The government efforts mentioned above do not define a breakthrough in solving the problems of refugees, or the creation of conditions for their safe, voluntary and respectable return/resettlement in their former places of residence.

Nevertheless, the process to create the conditions for return was started, albeit slowly and with difficulties.

Within the next few years, the JCC in cooperation with UNHCR worked within the above-mentioned format of "The Procedure…" to assist the return of 67 families from the Russian Federation to Georgia and the return of 470 families to the Republic of South Ossetia.[36] Some refugees also started to return from Georgia to South Ossetia, mostly to Tskhinval and Znaursk regions.[37]

However, this development of Georgian-Ossetian relations did not satisfy the Georgian leadership of Mikhail Saakashvili, who seized power in Georgia in 2003, promising his people fast "reunification" of South Ossetia and Abkhazia with Georgia. The new Georgian authorities cancelled all the earlier positive steps that were aimed to settle the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict and to resolve the problems of refugees. Georgia unilaterally withdrew from all international agreements related to the settlement of the conflict.[38] It started to ignore its JCC obligations, and gradually made its participation in JCC nothing more than a formality. The new government of Georgia enforced an economic blockade of South Ossetia, and closed the Ergnetsky market, despite its benefits to the Georgian population. In short, the Georgian government's actions were aimed to interrupt the building of understanding and mutual trust between Georgians and Ossetians. Almost openly, the Georgian authorities were preparing for a military solution to the Georgian-South Ossetian and Georgian-Abkhaz conflicts, which they later attempted to implement.[39]

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[36] Archive of the South Ossetian part of the Joint Control Commission

[37] It is symptomatic that the vast majority of returnees to South Ossetia settled there, whereas the Ossetian families who returned to Georgia within a short period of time had to go back to Russia. According to the poll of these repeat refugees the identified cause of the exodus was simple and clear: Georgia failed to create basic conditions for their resettlement. No one expected nor wanted them there.

[38] Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Georgia, with the participation of the leadership of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania, and the Republic of South Ossetia "On Principles for the Regulation of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict" 24 June 1992 (Dagomysk Agreements).

The agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Georgia on economic rehabilitation of the districts in the Georgian-0ssetian conflict zone. September 1993.

Memorandum on Security and Confidence Building Measures between the Sides of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict.

Statement about the results of the meeting between E. Shevardnadze and L. Chibirov (Presidents of Georgia and Republic of South Ossetia) in Vladikavkaz August 27, 1996, November 14, 1997 in Java (South Ossetia) and June 20, 1998 in Borjomi (Georgia).

Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of Georgia (with the participation of the government of the Republic of South Ossetia) "On Cooperation in Rehabilitation of the Economy in the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict Zone and in the Return of Refugees." December 23, 2000.

Statement about the results of the meeting between E. Kokoity and Z. Zhvania November 5, 2004 (President of Republic of South Osstia and Prime Minister of Georgia).

Decision of the Joint Control Commission February 13, 1997 (Protocol No. 7) "Modalities for the Voluntary Return of Refugees and Persons Forcibly Displaced by the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict to the Places of their Former Permanent Residence." And also the Statutes of the Committee on Assistance to the Voluntary Return of Refugees and Forcibly Displaced Persons the the Places of their Former Permanent Residences (attached).

[39] In August 2004, Saakashvili's regime made the first attempt of solving "the South Ossetian issue" by force. Several special units of the Ministry of Defense and Internal Affairs of Georgia attacked South Ossetia in an attempt to capture the strategic heights around the city of Tskhinval, which would allow to enter into Dzauski region and to seize vital for the Republic of South Ossetia Ruksky tunnel. Georgia's initiative to forcefully solve the conflict was held off, and its military attempt failed. However, the Georgian authorities' desire to use tme military force in order to resolve the problem remained.

The Georgian villages from which where Tskhinval was shelled during the military action were destroyed following the counterattack and responding artillery fire on August 10-12, 2008. The majority of the residents were moved by the Georgian authorities to the territory of Georgia just a few days before their attack on South Ossetia. They haven't been able to return to their former residences and at present are among the refugees. Their number is approximately 15-16,000.

More than 30,000 Ossetians fled South Ossetia because of the Georgian aggression from August 7-12, 2008. After the war, the majority of them returned to their homeland.

According to Ossetian sources, during the five-day war of 2008, more than 600 Ossetians were killed, 2,000 wounded approximately, and 7 remain missing. The Republic of South Ossetia and its citizens suffered irreperable material damage totaling several billion rubles. The infrastructure has to be totally rebuilt.[40]

There is not a single family in South Ossetia who did not lose a relative or was not somehow injured as a result of the conflict with Georgia between 1989 and 2008.

When discussing avenues for normalizing the Georgian-Ossetian conflict including a solution for the problem of refugees and IDPs, the above mentioned circumstances should be taken into consideration, along with subsequent factors which additionally complicate the prospect of refugees and IDPs returning to their former residences in South Ossetia and Georgia in the foreseeable future.

Below are some of these factors:

1. Diametrically opposite positions by South Ossetia and Georgia regarding status that negatively affects the solution of refugees;

2. Lack of political evaluation of the Georgian government's actions against South Ossetia from 1989 to 2008, not only by the Georgian authorities, but also by international organizations such as the OSCE, EU, and UN. The citizens of South Ossetia are mostly outraged at attempts to turn Georgia from the aggressor into the victim with assertions that Georgia did not start the August 2008 war;

3. A lack of desire by the Georgian Government to sign a judicial document not to use force against the Republic of South Ossetia and Abkhazia very negatively affects the solution of the refugees problems;

4. It should be taken into consideration and clearly explained to the refugees from Georgia and South Ossetia that by agreeing to return to their previous permanent residences, they are also agreeing to return to a different country. Taking this factor into consideration, one basic principle should be respected for return: all return should be voluntary;

Only 4 years after the first attempt, after a lengthy and comprehensive training the Georgian leadership decided to engage in a military adventure again: on the night of August 8 2008, Georgia launched a full-scale military aggression against the Republic of South Ossetia, using aircrafts and all kinds of heavy artillery. Late at night the city of Tskhinval and several other Ossetian villages and towns were bombed and shelled by multiple rocket launchers, mortars and tanks (including with banned cluster bombs and shells), which resulted in a massive loss of civilian population. After its invasion of South Ossetia, Georgian tanks and soldiers started shooting at the refugees who tried to escape via the Tskhinval - Vladikavkaz. highway The residents of Georgian villages in South Ossetia took an active part in the fighting. The bombardment of Tskhinval and Ossetian villages was carried out from these villages.

Russian army units approached the city of Tskhinval in the late afternoon of August 9, 2008. They stopped the attack of the Georgian military forces, and by August 12 ousted them from the territory of South Ossetia. The Leningor region of South Ossetia, which was under the occupation of Georgia for 18 years, was liberated.

[40] Materials from the Investigative Committee of the Prosecutor's Office of the Russian Federation and the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of South Ossetia, and also data from the President of the Republic of South Ossetia's Human Rights Envoy.

5. The destructive, detrimental, and most importantly, the incorrect interpretation of the history of Georgian-Ossetian relations by the representatives of the governmental structures of Georgia, and also by some Georgian historians, ethnographers and mass media, does not support confidence building between Ossetians and Georgians;

6. Regarding the issue of returning refugees and IDPs, a very important, by our opinion, fact, should be taken into consideration: after living for the last twenty years in almost total isolation from each other in South Ossetian and Georgian communities, a new generation has inherited feelings of enmity and mistrust of each other as a result of the conflict;

7. A serious complication can be expected when addressing the issue of refugee return and resettlement in their previous residences. "Socio-economic" problems, i.e. the lack of economic and social conditions, at the place of resettlement and will inevitably necessitate almost totally rebuilding such infrastructure;

8. An analysis of the situation brings out serious doubt if Georgia has the political will and financial resources to support the safe and dignified return and settlement in their previous permanent residences of approximately 100,000 Ossetians -- refugees from Georgia -- or if its government is able to pay compensation for the lost property of those who do not desire to return. These doubts have a factual basis, and do not assist the solution of the return of refugees;

9. Different attitudes of the conflicting parties on how to to define and assign the status of "refugee" and/or "Internally Displaced Person (IDP)" to individuals displaced as a result of the conflict;

10. It is well known that the Geneva consultations, where representatives of the Republic of South Ossetia and Abkhazia are participating as independent delegations, are working the most intensely for solutions in regard to refugees and IDPs of the Georgian-Ossetian and Georgian-Abkhazian conflicts. In this arena, there has been some progress made in solving the fate of refugees and IDPs. Besides this, the Georgian authorities, trying to gain political dividends, three times put the problem of refugee and IDP return on the agenda of the General Assembly of the United Nations. However, representatives from the Republic of South Ossetia and Abkhazia did not participate in the discussions and could not declare their visions for resolving the problems. As a result, the UN General Assembly accepted the Georgian resolution, which further complicated already difficult work in the format of the Geneva discussions;

11. It must be taken into consideration that in the Republic of South Ossetia, the positive solution of refugee and IDP return to their previous permanent residences and resettling them appropriately is closely tied with providing material and financial compensation to the Republic of South Ossetia and its citizens as payment for the material and moral damage resulting from the Georgian aggression.

Thus, the above-mentioned circumstances and factors undoubtedly prevent the return and resettlement of refugees from Georgia and South Ossetia in their previous permanent residences.

What are the perspectives of this complicated and painful problem taking into consideration the existing realities? What steps must be taken to make it possible for refugees and IDPs to return to their homes eventually?

I think that in order to make progress on resolving these issues, it is expedient to take as the basis the globally accepted norms of international law regulating relations with refugees and IDPs. The principles are also part of the Convention of 1957 regarding the status of refugees and in its Report of 1967, and also in the Guided Principles of Internal Displacements (1998), i.e. rights on the voluntary, safe, and deserved return of refugees, IDPs, and other individuals displaced between 1989-2008 from Georgia and South Ossetia.

At the same time, it is necessary to take real steps to improve the situation, and to increase confidence, following these major principles:

a) The necessity to achieve political regulation of Georgian-Ossetian relations. This is the most important part to support, and with appropriate coordination, to obtain the guarantee of security for returnees in accordance with the requirements of voluntary, safe and dignified return;

b) To give an objective political evaluation by the Georgian authorities and international organizations on the aggressive actions by Georgia against South Ossetia which took place in 1989-1992, 2004, and 2008, and to acknowledge these as the major reasons why people fled from Georgia and South Ossetia. The refugees from Georgia and South Ossetia have the right and should know the true reasons of their displacement from their previous residence, and should not be influenced by wrong views propagated by the authorities and mass media. The unbiased political evaluation of the actions of the authorities, we think, will assist in resolving the refugee problems because:

– Accurate information would become the basis for IDPs to fairly evaluate the events that occurred in the past and to try and find their place there. Taking these circumstances into consideration, they can make a conscious decision, based on existing realities, whether or not to return to their previous permanent residence, taking into account the security guarantees there;

– Additionally, unbiased political evaluation of the actions of Georgia in South Ossetia would assist representatives of the host communities to be more patient and understanding of returnees who, in their opinion, would carry the image as representatives of the nation whose leadership brought them so much sorrow;

– And, finally, it would be a lever for the host country for a moral, psychological and political platform to push for a fair and objective decision regarding the problems of the IDPs;

c) In deciding on refugee-related problems, it is important that official authorities, make decisions with a focus on the fate of refugees, and not with an intention to use refugees for political games. In this regard, we must note the Georgian authorities' position regarding the refugees from Leningor region of the Republic of South Ossetia. There are approximately 6,000 Georgians living in the village of Tserovani in Georgia since the August 2008 war. The authorities of South Ossetia officially declared agreement to the return of these refugees to Leningor, to their previous permanent residence and property, based on the fact that these refugees did not participate in the military actions against the Republic of South Ossetia. The official Tbilisi reaction on this offer was very distinctive. The refugees were deprived the right to return to their homes based on the fabricated reason of a lack of security, despite the fact that the majority of them regularly visit, freely and safely, their homes, work in their fields, and receive the same benefits as the other residents of the Leningor region;

d) Georgia's signing a legal document taking responsibility for the misuse of force against South Ossetia and Abkhazia. If this act is made by the Georgian authorities, it will increase the confidence level. Opinion poll research in South Ossetia among its population and also Georgian refugees from Leningor region indicates that a considerable majority of our citizens do not trust the stability of peace in their country and are still afraid of aggression from the Georgian side;

e) Recognizing the refugees' and IDPs' rights for voluntary, safe and dignified return to places of their previous permanent residence and creating the conditions for this return. In addition, recognize their rights on resettling in their previous place;

f) Taking into consideration that many victims of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict did not register under refugee or IDP status at the time, and in a period of time when many of them lost their status but still experienced material and moral damage, it would be justified if the criteria were defined under which the victim will obtain the right for restitution and/or compensation. This will be through the documented fact of forced migration, and also damage to the individual as a result of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, and not just the status of refugee or IDP, or giving or restoring the status of refugee or IDP to all individuals living in the Republic of South Ossetia and Georgia, despite their nationality and previous place of residence between 1989-2008;

g) Recognition by the conflicting sides and appropriate international organizations working on this problem of the rights of all the refugees and IDPs from Georgia and Republic of South Ossetia, despite their nationality, place of previous and current residence, to obtain restitution and/or compensation for lost home and property:

- Voluntarily, safely and with dignity return to their previous residence;

- The new place of residence and the right to compensation for lost homes and property and also, for the morale damage paid to the people who do not wish to return to their previous residence.

At the same time, to force refugees, IDPs, and other displaced individuals in any manner to make a decision against their will regarding the return and resettlement to a new place is unacceptable;

h) Taking into consideration that as a result of Georgian aggression against the Republic of South Ossetia, the latter suffered significant material damage. (The agriculture, industrial, construction, and social infrastructures are almost destroyed.) Many years of economic blockage from Georgia caused the downfall of South Ossetia's economy. Because of this, the realization of social programs, including resolving the issues of refugee return and resettlement, requires large financial resources. Accordingly, Georgia should reimburse the material damage it caused to the Republic of South Ossetia;

i) Both sides of the conflict have the obligation to restore respect and understanding of each other, to get rid of any form of hatred while taking into consideration the risks of the incidents. These measures will assist to build the confidence between the conflicting parties.

The necessary steps to create the conditions to solve the problems of refugees include measures to strengthen national legislation and democratic institutions, and attempts to revise and if necessary annul the legislative acts and norms which do not align with the above mentioned principles.

Important steps to increase the confidence could include efforts by the conflicting sides to prevent border incidents, and also joint efforts to fight crime as these obstacles prevent the creation of conditions for the process of return.

After the conflicting parties reach an agreement on a mutually beneficial decision regarding the above mentioned basic principles for refugee return, the opportunity to move on to the next level will be achievable. They will be able to solve not large scale, but still important problems, for refugees and IDPs. The first steps from both sides should be informational activities through the mass media to create a positive and transparent psychological and social environment in the public, the host communities, and among returnees themselves.

Whenever the appropriate conditions that bring a sense of confidence and security will be created, the host side could allow the displaced persons to visit their previous residence. These trips could be an input to the security principle for return.

Aiming to exercise the rights of the refugees and IDPs on restitution and/or compensation and to fulfill these rights, it is essential to create a database that examines the number of refugees, IDPs and displaced individuals who don't have the official status of refugee or IDP. The number of these people who have returned to their previous residences should be calculated, and a list prepared of lost property and homes. Prior to collecting the information, both sides should define and agree upon the methodology of information collection.

The list of refugees and the property account could be agreed on by both sides and mediated by a third party.

It is necessary to find the financial resources to restitute and compensate the damage. In this case, it is appropriate and possibly necessary to create a commission (also a negotiation commission) where specialists from international organizations will be included to work on the tasks we mentioned above.

Appendix 1.

DECREE of the PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC SOUTH OSSETIA

Regarding the First Measures that Need to Be Taken to Assist the Process of Refugees and IDPs Return to the Republic of South Ossetia

The Georgian-Ossetian conflict of 1991-1992 forced tens of thousand of people from burned and destroyed villages in South Ossetia and Georgia to leave their permanent residences and become refugees or Internally Displaced Persons.

The great majority of them found the shelter in the Republic of North Ossetia –Alania where they still reside today, and usually live in public buildings: tourist facilities, health resorts, hostels, village clubs, etc. Several thousand displaced persons from South Ossetia and refugees from Georgia reside in the town of Tskhinval.

Meanwhile, together with the positive changes taking place in the stabilization of the situation in the conflict zone, the first positive results of the peaceful resolution of the Ossetian-Georgian relations are: "The Procedure of Voluntary Return of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict to The Places of Their Former Residence" - approved by the Joint Control Commission, activation of the international humanitarian organizations assisting the returning refugees, and opportunities for the Republic of South Ossetia to resettle refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in their former residences.

Rebuilding the burnt and destroyed villages, facilitating the return of the population, restoring the agriculture, and also assisting the refugees from Georgia in their desire to settle in South Ossetia, also respond to our national interests.

Based on the statements mentioned above and in order to encourage the process of voluntary return of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons to the places of their previous permanent residence we issue

A DECREE:

1. The Government of South Ossetia should procure the funding to obtain the building materials for the restoration of the houses for the refugees and internally displaced persons.

2. The Ministry of Industry and Transportation, heads of towns and regional administrations together with the State Committee for Nationalities and Migration should provide free transportation and delivery of personal property to internally displaced persons voluntarily returning to their previous residences.

3. The Committee of the Forestry and heads of towns and regional administrations together with the State Committee for Nationalities and Migration should provide to refugees and IDPs, who returned to their previous residence and have the capability (and desire) to rebuild their houses independently, the permission for the free procurement of wooden materials in the amount of 10 cubic meters per family.

4. The Government of the Republic of South Ossetia should prepare and present for approval a plan for rebuilding the social and cultural buildings in the compactly populated areas of returned refugees and IDPs by the end of the third quarter of 1997.

5. The refugees and IDPs who return to the places of their former residence should be released from any type of agriculture taxes for five years, excepting only commercial activities.

6. The Military Commissariat of the Republic of South Ossetia should provide a two-year postponement from the military draft to the refugees and IDPs returning to their previous residences, and who are of military draft age.

7. To recognize high school diplomas, university diplomas, and other education documents received by the refugees in the country of their temporary residence.

8. To maintain the rights of the returned refugees to receive humanitarian assistance and other forms of the Republic's social security system.

9. The Government of South Ossetia should assign 0.15 hectares of land per family to refugees and IDPs previously not residing in South Ossetia, and choosing South Ossetia as their new place of permanent residence.

10. The Ministry of Agriculture should find ways to sell the seeds and saplings, poultry and farm animals to the returned refugees at discounted prices.

11. The Committee of the Material Resources and Trade of Republic of South Ossetia should foresee to sell the furniture and the consumer goods to the refugees and IDPs residing in South Ossetia in the places of their compact settlement.

12. The Ministry of Internal affairs, the heads of town administrations of Tskhinval and other regions should assist those refugees who independently resettled in the territory of the Republic of South Ossetia to obtain legal documents proving ownership of the newly acquired estate.

13. The State Committee for Nationalities and Migration should define the possibility and extent of the UNHCR (United Nations) and other international humanitarian organizations' participation in the resettling of refugees in their places of previous residence.

14. The State Committee for Nationalities and Migration of the Republic of South Ossetia should organize meetings and discussions with refugees in places of their temporary residence in the Republic of South Ossetia, and introduce them the "Order of Voluntary Return of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict to Their Former Places of Residence" approved by the Joint Control Commission and the following Decree.

15. All rights and privileges of the refugees and IDPs should be also applied to the refugees who choose South Ossetia as their new place of residence.

16. The mass media should provide true and operational information to public regarding the process of refugee return.

17. The State Committee for Nationalities and Migration of the Republic of South Ossetia is responsible for the execution of this Decree.

President

Of the Republic of South Ossetia

L.Chibirov

Tskhinval

No. 59 of 06.11.1997

Appendix 2.

Procedures of the Voluntary Return of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons[41] of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict in the Previous Places of Their Permanent Residence

In recognition of the rights of all citizens to live in the place of their origin and the return to the place of their previous permanent residence expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,

Acting in accordance with the Agreement on the Principles of Regulation of Georgian-Ossetian Conflict signed in Sochi on June 24th, 1992, Provisions of the Joint Control Commission (JCC) from October 31rst, 1994, Memorandum on Measures to Provide Security and Strengthen Mutual Trust between the Conflicting Parties of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict, and the Statement on results of the meeting between Eduard Shevardnadze and Ludwig Chibirov in Vladikavkaz,

Confirming our aspiration to reconciliation of nations, peace and respect of human rights,

Expressing our readiness to assist the voluntary return of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons to the places of their previous permanent residence, and respect their right to freely choose their new place of settlement,

The sides shall provide:

- The right of voluntary return of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons their pervious permanent residences;

- Provide security to refugees and Internally Displaced Persons against possible persecution or limitation of their freedom, or any other measure that contradicts their security and dignity upon return. These security measures do not apply to those individuals who committed serious non-political crimes, military crimes, and crimes against humanity as defined in accordance with international definitions;

- The right of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons to restore their property rights that were lost because of the conflict;

-Right of free movement;

- Protection from persecution, threat to life or property, and from collecting non-sanctioned payments or other dues;

- Protection from actions against refugees' and Internally Displaced Persons' national dignity;

- Conditions to freely exercise political, civil, and citizenship rights;

[41] The corresponding side should include the meaning of "forced displaced person" to the meaning of "Internally Displaced Person."

- Prepare the conditions for the development of culture, national heritage, and teaching returned refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in their native language;

- Provide reliable and immediate information on the process of return to public.

1. Return of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in strict accordance with principles of voluntarism and appropriate documentation to the place of their permanent residence should be:

- In the preserved residence legally owned by refugees and IDPs. The residence will be returned to them as soon as possible even if it is occupied by the other refugees or Internally Displaced Persons;

- In the rebuilt residence;

- In the temporary residence.

2. In order to assist the process of return, and to identify the previous permanent residence the refugees and Internally Displaced persons should fill inn the application (Appendix 1) in two copies, and submit them to the appropriate administrative body of the host side through the migration administration's channels of their current residence.

3. Based on the application data the migration body should prepare the combined lists in accordance with the previous residence, and together with one copy of the application send it to the appropriate administration body of the host side.

The second copy should be kept in the administration of the appropriate side.

4. Examination of the submitted lists and applications should be performed within thirty days from the moment of the registration of their delivery by the appropriate administrative structure of the host side.

Upon finishing the examination of the lists of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, the documents should be approved and delivered to the migration bodies of the appropriate side.

5. If the decision regarding the place of previous permanent residence is to be negative, the migration bodies of the appropriate sides should receive the legal explanation of the refusal in writing.

6. The resettlement process of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons is executed in accordance with their readiness. Simultaneously, the appropriate administrative body in a timely manner should send the host side an official notification.

7. For the voluntary return of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, the host side, in close cooperation with UNHCR, provides:

- Reception and delivery to the place of their previous permanent residence;

- Security of return and living;

- All civil, political, socio-economic and cultural rights;

- Assistance in adaptation and reintegration in the places of their previous permanent residence, including the postponed military draft.

8. For the purpose of the family preservation, the spouses and/or children of returned refugees and Internally Displaced Persons who are not the citizens of the host country, are allowed to return and stay with their family members.

9. Voluntarily returned refugees and Internally Displaced Persons do not have to follow the articles regarding the procedures of crossing the border and highways; immigration, tax administration and other formalities; they are also released from all taxes on their vehicle transportation. The personal and public property of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons they carry, including domestic animals, are not taxable.

10. All rights and privileges of returned refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in the places of their previous permanent residence apply the same to people who choose new places of residence.

11. The permanent administrative body, consisting of the sides' representatives and provided by the appropriate JCC authority, is responsible for the implementation of these Procedures.

Vladikavkaz, February 13, 1997

For the Russian side _____

For the Georgian side _____

For the South Ossetian side _____

For the North Ossetian side _____

Participating sides:

For OSCE _____

For UNHCR – the United Nations _____

Appendix 3.

AGREEMENT

On the Principles of the Regulation of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict

Russian Federation and Republic of Georgia pressing for the faster cease of bloodshed and complete normalization of conflict between Ossetians and Georgians, following the desire to restore the peace and stability in the region confirm their devotion to the principles of the United Nations Charter and the Helsinki Final Act, act in respect with the human rights and freedoms, and the rights of national minorities, taking into consideration the agreement reached in Kazbegi on June 10th agreed on the following:

…

Article 4.

The sides should immediately begin negotiations for economic rehabilitation in the regions situated in the conflict zone, and create the necessary conditions for the return of refugees.

The sides consider unacceptable the use of economic sanctions and blockades, as well as any other obstacles to free movement of goods, services and people, and take responsibility for providing opportunities for humanitarian assistance to the local population.

…

For the Republic of Georgia For Russian Federation

E. Shevardnadze B. Yeltsin

· Galazov

T. Kulumbekov

Appendix 4.

AGREEMENT

Between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Georgia on Restoring the Economy in the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict Zone

The Government of the Russian Federation and The Government of the Republic of Georgia, in order to restore the regions in the Georgian-Ossetian conflict zone, and to create conditions for the return of refugees to the places of their permanent residence, agreed on the following:

…

Article 4.

The participant sides should organize a census of refugees from the Georgian-Ossetian conflict zone residing in the territory of Russian Federation and Republic of Georgia. Furthermore, the sides should assist their return and assist in rebuilding their houses, and other social purpose buildings.

…

Originally signed in Moscow on September 26, 1993 on two copies; each in Russian and Georgian language. Both texts are equally authentic.

For The Government of	For The Government of
Russian Federation	Republic of Georgia

Appendix 5.

AGREEMENT

Between The Government of the Russian Federation and The Government of the Republic of Georgia on the Restoration of the Economy in the Zone of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict and the Return of Refugees

The Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of Georgia (the Executive power, when addressed to Georgia), referred to as contracting parties,

In accordance with the regulations of the Agreement on Principles of the Settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict signed on June 24th, 1992 (in Sochi), Memorandum on Measures for Security and Strengthening the Confidence Between the Conflicting Parties signed on May 16th, 1996 (in Moscow), and the Statement of the Meeting for a Full Scale Settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict signed on March 5th, 1997 (in Moscow),

In order to restore and develop economy of the regions affected in the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, and to create conditions for the organized return of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (displaced by force) to the place of their previous permanent residence,

Agreed on the following:

Article 1

The sides acknowledge the necessity of the future financing of works in the zone of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, and joint development with authorized representatives of both the South Ossetian and Georgian sides:

- The inter-governmental program of coordination in order to rebuild the economy in the zone of the Georgian-Osstian conflict;

- The inter-governmental program of return, resettlement, integration and reintegration of refugees, including measures to restore households in the rural regions where the refugees return.

The parties will take measures to implement the mentioned programs jointly with international organizations.

The Georgian side should take measures to restore the rights of the refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in their previous residences in accordance with the norms of International Law.

The sides will assist international organization efforts to implement social, economic, and humanitarian programs in the regions affected by the conflict.

…

Originally signed in Tbilisi on December 23, 2000 on two copies; each in Russian and Georgian language. Both texts are equally authentic.

For The Government of	For The Government of
Russian Federation	Republic of Georgia

LENINGOR REGION: ITS POLITICAL PECULIARITY, DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS, ECONOMY, AND BOUNDARY PROBLEMS

Maria Kotaeva

The small Republic of South Ossetia, with its 100,000 population[42] located on the Southern slopes of the Greater Caucasus mountain range, became world-famous due to the extensive media coverage of the August 2008 war on its territory. On August 26, 2008, after repulsing the aggression, the Russian Federation recognized the Republic, and several other countries followed Russia's example. Today, South Ossetia continues developing as an independent state. The relations with Georgia, which does not recognize its sovereignty, and the state border with South Ossetia remain extremely tense. In fact, all relations with Georgia are broken off.

Since ancient times, Leningor (Akhalgori in Georgian) region of South Ossetia traditionally has been a compact area of mixed residence of Ossetians and Georgians. Ossetians began settling on the territory of the present day Leningor region during the early medieval ages, from the Big Liakhva riverhead in Dzauski Region of the Republic of South Ossetia. The following Ossetian highland communities were founded first in Ksansk and then in Lekhursk gorges: Dzimyr (Jamuri) in the Ksan riverhead, Tsurta and Kartsukh[43] in the Ksan middle course, Aleu[44] to the east of Ksan, Chisan in the Ksan middle course and Lekhur in the Lekhur river gorge. According to the Georgian historian and geographer Vakhushti Bagrationi, the Ossetian population was approximately two thirds of all the residents in Ksanskoye Eristavstvo (Duchy of Ksani). There is an Eristovy-Ksansky princes' palace in the Leningor village that became a museum now. There are also many historical monuments in the region: Ikorta church (1172), Kaben (IX century) and Larguis[45] (XIII century) monasteries, Lomis, Armaz and Bikar basilicas, Tsirkol and Tsikmor fortresses.

In the XIXth century and up to 1922, the territory of today's Leningor region was part of the Dushetski uezd (district) of the Tifliss (Tbilisi) province.

During the formation of the South Ossetian Autonomous Region in 1922 the territory of the present day Leningor region became part of the autonomy in three separate regions: Akhalgorski, Lekhurski and Monasterski. Leningor region was established in its current borders in 1940. In September 1990 at the session of the Leningor Regional Soviet of People's Deputies the Leningor village was given a new name Akhalgori (in translation from Georgian – "New Gori"). In turn, these decisions were recognized as illegal and unlawful by the South Ossetian Autonomous Region's Soviet of People's Deputies.

According to the 2002 census, the population of this mountain area of no more than one thousand square meters was 8,500 people.[46]

Despite the prolonged Georgian-Ossetian conflict, the relations between Georgians and Ossetians living in this region in general are smooth and often friendly, but the region itself became politically disputed by Georgian and Ossetian authorities. Georgia has never recognized South Ossetia's territorial integrity and Georgia considers that the capital and all the regions of the Republic of South Ossetia are part of Georgia. Although Leningor region went under the jurisdiction of Georgian authorities back in the 1990s when Zviad Gamsakhurdia was in power and remained so

[42]Before the USSR desintegration and the 1989-1990 Georgian-Ossetian conflict.
[43] Former Karchokhi
[44] Former Alevi
[45] Former Largvisi.
[46] The Georgian Census data. The South Ossetian authorities have not conducted a census of full value yet.

until 2008, it went under full political and socio-economic control of South Ossetia after repulsing the military aggression in August 2008.

Both South Ossetia and Georgia have always considered the entire Leningor region in its pre-conflict borders as part of their territory. In August 2008 Ossetian detachments jointly with the Russian army instituted control over the Ksanskoye gorge, thereby spreading actual jurisdiction of South Ossetia over the entire Leningor region.

Conflicts between the region and the district authorities started back in 1990 when on the special session of the Leningor Regional Soviet of People's Deputies on September,4th, 1990 it was decided to condemn the Declaration of Sovereignty of the South Ossetian Autonomous Region, and also to rename the Leningor village into Akhalgori. As a result of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict in the beginning of 1990s Leningor region became divided between two countries for sixteen years. The western part of the region, inhabited almost exclusively by Ossetians (Lekhurskoye gorge and Tirifonskaya plain), remained controlled by the Republic of South Ossetia, not recognized at that time. The Ossetian part of the region kept the Soviet name "Leningor rayon" and the actual center of the region was the Tsinagar village. The authority of the Republic of Georgia was established on most of the region (Ksanskoye gorge) with its center in Leningor. The population here was mixed but the majority was Georgian. The center of the region restored its historical name Akhalgori and therefore the region was given a new name Akhalgorski. After the authorities of the South Ossetia established control over the Ksanskoye gorge there was a considerable decrease in the Georgian population there. In the following years, there was a complicated process of migration of Georgians in both directions. Currently, it is hard to define the actual number of the Georgian population, but during the planned issue of South Ossetian passports it can be expected that the structure of the population will be clarified. According to the data provided by M.Dzukaeva - the head of the Passport Office of Leningor region - as a result of a door-to-door count the population of the Leningor village itself is 1,600 people, not including four rural villages.

As a response to the fact that Leningor region went under the jurisdiction of the South Ossetian authorities in August 2008, Georgia cut off the gas supply to the region's population because gas, electricity and social security services were provided to the population of the region exclusively by Georgia. It should be noted that life here (as well as in the entirety of South Ossetia) has been divided into "before" and "after" 2008. This region is particularly a place of compact coexistence by Georgians and Ossetians living as a mixed population. Despite the fact that on the territory of Leningor region not a single shot was fired in August 2008 during the armed conflict, the tension among the Georgian population is increasing. The change of power, the translation of passport data into Russian, and further changes in the passport system cause discomfort for the Georgians. Meanwhile, the Georgian authorities quickly build hundreds and hundreds of prefabricated cottages in the Georgian village Tserovani, adjacent to Leningor. The cottages are for the Leningor residents to whom Georgia offers "better living conditions than in Leningor."

According to the Leningor residents "many locals are moving to Tserovani and are getting cottages there." At the same time they don't leave their houses in Leningor and part of the village residents begin to live "on two fronts," i.e. both in the new cottages in Tserovani and in their former residences in Leningor. It is remarkable that the Leningor region residents preserve their Georgian citizenship and Georgian passports. There is no accurate border with Georgia but people show their Georgian passports at the Razdakhan[47] checkpoint, where the South Ossetian Migration Servicemen work. Russian border guards perform further inspection and the Georgian migration service meets those who arrive on the Georgian territory.

[47] Former Mosabruni

Meanwhile, the authorities of South Ossetia realize that the Georgian policy is to resettle as many Georgians to Tserovani as possible and therefore minimize the Georgian population of the region, so the Georgian government allocates significant resources for the region's development. The region's plan for expansion includes in the first place – building an 80-km road Tskhinval-Leningor, laying electric transmission cables, connection to the natural gas supply line – gas pipeline "Dzuarikau – Tskhinval," reconstruction of the public health care and culture facilities, issue of passports to the population, provision of the necessary border facilities, etc.

The most important domestic problem is still the absence of a natural gas supply in houses during the heating season. Currently, people install wooden stoves in their houses and heat schools with diesel fuel. Meanwhile, the South Ossetian representatives at the Geneva Discussions bring up this problem during each round. Before the 13th round of the discussions, the Georgian authorities announced their consent to resume gas service in the region on the condition that the Russian border guards will not consume this gas. In response, the South Ossetian side refused to get gas under the mentioned conditions.

According to the Assistant to the Head of the Leningor Region Administration Sergei Gagloev, the Social Security Department of the Leningor Region Administration supplied 64 low-income families from the Leningor region with free firewood for the winter at one cubic meter of firewood per family. One cubic meter of firewood is approximately half of a truck load and it costs 10,000 Rubles.[48] The Administration representatives emphasized that their help is not limited only to low income families. "Many people submit applications to us and we redirect these applications to the local forestry enterprise. According to the applications the forestry enterprise prepares firewood and delivers it to the households. We (the administration) pay part of the wood 's cost – 3,000 Rubles", said Gagloev.

As for the diesel fuel Gagloev informed: "Schools and kindergartens are equipped with diesel boilers. We deliver low grade diesel fuel to schools and this helps keep the kids warm. We bought electric oil heating radiators for the classrooms, bedrooms and dining hall of the Leningor orphanage. This is all we are able to do. Unfortunately, there is no gas supply to the Republic. This is how we make do for the last three years." The wood is prepared in the forests close to the Leningor region.

The electricity situation looks much better. According to the region's administration, since the beginning of 2010, when the power supply lines to the Leningor region of South Ossetia were completed, this electricity is used by more than sixty villages. Only two villages - Akhmadz and Tydjyta[49] - remain without electricity. Russian border guards are building a frontier post in Akhmadz and they are going to provide electricity there by themselves. The state enterprise "Energoresource - South Ossetia" is now purchasing all the necessary equipment in order to lay electric cables to Tydjyta village. The company is responsible for completing the job as soon as possible.

In 2010, the Administration of Leningor region of South Ossetia granted land to the Russian border guards to build their administrative buildings. New Russian frontier posts are now being built on the location of a dilapidated boarding school and its dormitory buildings that had stopped being used in 1992. Meanwhile, the Russian border guards are located in the building of the local forestry enterprise and in tents in the surrounding area.

The head of the Border Guard Office in Leningor, V. Lyubchenko, points out that the Russian border guards established friendly relations with the local people. Local Ossetians and Georgians

[48] It is equivalent to 450 Lari in the Georgian currency.
[49] Former Nagomevi.

consider the presence of the Russian border guards a positive fact. “Although we did not experience the horrors of the military aggression in 2008, still it’s much calmer to live under the protection of the Russian border guards” – says a grocery store assistant in Leningor, A.Kozaeva. “I don’t recall that Russian soldiers bother anyone here. On the contrary, with their presence business is looking up. Let them be here if they bother nobody,” says a vegetable seller, A. Mamishvili.

Meanwhile, the Georgian Foreign Ministry announces that the Russian border guards destroyed school #3 in Leningor region. Therefore, they accuse the Russian Federation of continuing the policy of ethnic purges of Georgians and also of ignoring one of the fundamental human rights, the right to get an education in one’s native language. According to Georgia, 150 Georgian and Ossetian children went to this school.

Following this statement, the deputy head of the Leningor Administration, A.Baratashvili, commented that no school in the Leningor region of South Ossetia was destroyed, and that Georgia tries to destabilize situation in the region again. Back in 2008, the Georgian authorities announced the closing of the Georgian schools, but it was not confirmed to be true by the human rights activists who visited Leningor. As of today, there are two schools working in Leningor a Georgian school and a Russian one. Since the Russian school building became completely dilapidated, its director Tsiala Dryaeva moved the schoolchildren to the Georgian school. Now both the Russian and Georgian kids study in one building, as there is no other building for school. Former school #3 Russian language teacher Zaira Chochieva described the situation in the classrooms: “Last winter, we were working in very difficult conditions. There was no heating in the classrooms, because Georgia cut off the gas supply back in 2008. We don’t have gas since then. We had to install wooden and oil stoves at school. We had low grade diesel fuel delivered. That’s how we heated the building. This situation was not just at school. There are 42 children in the busy Leningor orphanage who were never divided neither by Georgian authorities nor by Ossetians. The children are gathered in a room with a TV, toys, comfortable beds and the potbelly stove that provides the heat in the winter.”

There were up to 1,000 schoolchildren in Leningor schools before the August war, and today there are not even 300 in the entire region. There are wall newspapers and inscriptions in Georgian on the school walls even in the Russian school. For example, a fifth-grader from Tskhinvali won’t understand a Georgian inscription because he does not study this language and does not hear Georgian at home or in the streets. As for Leningor, every pupil there despite the main language speaks Georgian and understands it. However, the Russian school teachers are concerned not about kids speaking Georgian but about them forgetting Ossetian.

The teachers of Ossetian language and literature at the Leningor Russian school express their concern about lack of teaching aid in their native language, Ossetian language textbooks, works of Ossetian writers, traditions and customs study programs, etc. They repeatedly appealed to the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth policy of the Republic of South Ossetia with requests to provide the school with such materials, but not all their inquiries were satisfied. The problem still remains to be addressed.

There are only 33 pupils left in the formerly wealthy Russian school. There are 48 students in the Georgian school. This decrease is caused not so much by the bad conditions as by the fact that parents who move to the Tserovani cottage community near Mtskheta take their children with them. During the past three months, the Georgian authorities have built more than 2,000 cottages there.

According to the South Ossetian authorities, this practically uncontrolled resettlement to Georgia and back will stop after the passport system is implemented. Entering the Leningor region might require payment of a fee.

The Head of the Migration Control Committee at the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of South Ossetia, Police Colonel S.Tigiev, says that the Migration Office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of South Ossetia is preparing to implement taxes for crossing the Georgian-Ossetian border for foreign citizens. Georgian passport holders will be considered foreigners when entering the Leningor region of the Republic. They will have to pay 320 Rubles of state taxes in accordance with article #14 of the "State Taxes of the Republic of South Ossetia" law. The law states that "while entering or leaving the Republic of South Ossetia the state taxes are paid as follows: a foreign citizen or a stateless individual has to pay 320 Rubles for obtaining temporary stay permission or for extension of a stay in the Republic of South Ossetia".

Nowadays, individuals entering Leningor region of the Republic don't pay any taxes. This was confirmed by the Head of the Leningor region Administration A.Jussoev and the Police Colonel S.Tigiev, whose employees are on duty at the Razdakhan Border Checkpoint. In order to get the internal South Ossetian passport, accompanied by a full package of social services applicable to a citizen of South Ossetia, residents of the Leningor region wishing to do so receive nowadays documents of a so called "Form #9" and later they will start receiving the passports (although still there are no passport samples and the whole passport system invention is delayed). There is a lot of technical work involved: birth certificates' translation from Georgian to Ossetian, and filling of the address form and the statistical registration card also take time. The "Form #9" fee is 35 Rubles. It was taken into consideration that the residents of the region have low income levels, and therefore it was decided to lower the certificates' prices for them.

At the same time, the residents do not have to travel to Tskhinval Passport Office to change their documents and to be naturalized as South Ossetians, because they can do everything at their local passport offices. According to the region's Passport and Visa Office, they have already issued 600 "Form #9" certificates, and about 800 more applicants are waiting for their turn. This data includes only certificates and applications from the Leningor village itself. No certificates have been issued in the rural districts yet.

Dual Georgian-Ossetian citizenship is not stipulated by the existing legislation of South Ossetia, and based on the current political realities it is not likely that the appropriate agreements will be signed in the nearest future. This makes it clear that Georgians living in the Leningor village will have to make their choice: either keep their Georgian citizenship and refuse the South Ossetian one, or vice versa. It is preconditioned for everybody to refuse the Georgian citizenship in written form and deliver the Georgian passport to the passport office in order to receive the South Ossetian Passport.

"There are people that have been living in Leningor for decades, but they still have a Tbilisi residence permit. We have to register them here temporarily, but they don't want to cancel their Tbilisi registration because they have residences both there and here. Most of the people would like to have both Georgian and Ossetian passports, but we explain that it's impossible. It's time to make a choice. They can't live on the South Ossetian territory with both Georgian and Ossetian citizenship,",notes M. Dzukayeva.

The Border Administration of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSS) in South Ossetia noted that Leningor residents keep visiting Georgia with their Georgian passports. The press service of the Border Administration added: "The residents of the region can cross the border also using their temporary identity cards (Form #9), but they don't use them. The other side of this problem is that the Leningor residents will not be allowed to enter Georgia with these documents because the Georgian authorities do not recognize them as legal documents."

Last January, the Russian military announced a strengthening of the border control between Georgia and South Ossetia in the Leningor region, where they would limit crossing the border for those who

do not have either Russian or Ossetian passports. However, the residents are not ready to get passports under these conditions. For several reasons the Leningor residents consider these conditions of getting the South Ossetian passports disadvantageous. These reasons include having relatives in Georgia, trade and economic ties, studying at the higher educational institutions in Georgia, and qualifying for medical aid in Tbilisi. The Leningor residents are sure that they will not be allowed to enter Georgia through the Georgian border checkpoints with their South Ossetian passports. "I own a shop and I have to visit Gori regularly to get merchandise. I don't want to get into the politics but I think that every step of the two governments has an impact on ordinary people. They have invented some translations of the documents into Russian so far. We spent lots of time standing in lines there. Now we have to change passports. Nobody cares how I can go there to get the merchandise and how I will support myself," says Leningor resident I.Charaeva.

It should be observed that there are also other moods among the local residents.

"I am Ossetian by nationality. Twenty years ago we had to change our last names' endings into Georgian "-shvili" and "-dze" along with the Georgian passports. If not, one would find many paths closed. You could have got neither a decent job nor education. Everything is completely changed now. Why being an Ossetian and living in Ossetia should I need to carry the Georgian passport in my pocket? I will change the passport. However, I've only got the Form #9 so far. They said that the passports will be brought later ," says 65-year old pensioner S.Margiev.

The local residents, both Georgians and Ossetians, willingly describe their problems, although some of them do not want to disclose their names. They suppose that it could cause them problems in the future, when they will cross the Georgian border. Fatima works in the souvenir shop in Leningor. She does not have the Form #9 yet, and she intends to delay this procedure as long as possible. "I am Georgian. I am working as a sales assistant. My son is living and studying in Tbilisi. I wouldn't mind getting the South Ossetian passport, according to the decision of the authorities but you should understand me, too – how will I be able to visit my son in Tbilisi then? I am almost sure that this passport will be either confiscated or torn off by the Georgian police at the border. At best, they won't let me cross the border. Refusal to keep Georgian citizenship simply means never seeing my son again. But I don't want to leave Leningor either. I have a house and property here. Do I have to sell everything because of the passports?" Fatima is puzzled. Sixty-three-year-old D. Javanashvili has diabetes. He came to the passport office to receive his and his wife's Form #9. At the same time, he is not ready to reject Georgian citizenship. David is sure that nobody in the village will give up Georgian passports, but everybody will come to get the South Ossetian ones. "The majority of people want to have Russian passports. Then, you can easily find a job everywhere in the Leningor region. I am Georgian myself but my grandmother was Ossetian. I am not against the Ossetian leadership, but I can't find a job without a Russian passport. And how will I visit the doctors in Tbilisi with my Ossetian passport? I have to visit the doctor in Tbilisi at least once a month. I definitely won't go there with my Ossetian passport. They simply will not let me in at the border. In Tskhinval, they won't be able to provide me with the same medical service as in Georgia," believes D. Javanashvili.

Speaking about the quality of Georgian medical services, we need to give good credit to Georgian doctors, because nowadays high quality medical attention is guaranteed to patients in Tbilisi and other cities. As for the Leningor region, its only hospital is facing difficulties not only with the medical aid itself, but also with lack of qualified specialists and the bad conditions in which the medical services are provided. One part of the building is under major repairs these days. 30 million Rubles are allocated for the hospital reconstruction. Meanwhile, the doctors work in the other half of the building. One can smell dampness and smoke inside the building, because it is still heated by firewood.

Leningor Central Regional Hospital in the Leningor village started functioning in 1964. Since then, major repairs were undertaken only twice! As the Head Doctor of the hospital Z.Margiev says, "The whole hospital requires major repairs now. The working conditions, to say the least of it, leave much to be desired. Moreover, we need more pediatricians and dentists. There is no dentalprothetist at all. We sort of have a dentist, but he lives in Tserovani and comes to Leningor twice a week.

Zaur Mikhailovich has been working here as the Head Doctor nearly since the hospital was opened. During the first war,[50] at the times of "zviadizm" as he names it,[51] he was relieved of his position because he was Ossetian. Then, a surgeon whose last name ended with the Georgian "-shvili" was appointed as the region's Head Doctor. As soon as South Ossetia restored its control over Leningor, Zaur Mikhailovich legitimately reacquired his previous position. "Nationality doesn't make any difference for us," he says. "We attend to all patients, making no difference between Georgians or Ossetians. Within nine months, we have attended to 193 patients. They promise to carry out major repairs in the hospital after the New Year. It would be great if this promise is fulfilled. Everything is alright with the medicine. The Ministry of Public Health of South Ossetia is regularly providing us with all the necessary medicine upon our requests." One can hardly recognize sickbeds, surgical tables, antibacterial lamps, X-ray unit, etc. in the deformed pieces of iron while walking through the cabinets. There is no surgery department. X-ray and Ultrasound cabinets are falling into decay.

"The hospital will have enough room for at least 50 patients. Due to the pressure for money we'll have to unite temporarily the emergency area, sanitary-hygienic station, outpatient department, and the hospital itself in the main building," the Minister of Capital Construction, Road Building and Architecture of the Republic of South Ossetia, Ch.Khugaev tells us. The Russian contractor "Dagstroy" is renovating the hospital building. All the main specialists came from Dagestan. Two thirds of all the workers were hired locally. According to the plans of the Ministry of Construction, the hospital building renovation is supposedly to be finished in September this year.

Under these circumstances, the emergency and immediate care is still provided. "We go to all the rural districts as soon as we are called out. We get approximately up to ten emergency calls a day. We quickly drive out and provide firstaid to the populace. The Ministry of Public Health of South Ossetia provided us with five ambulances. It vastly improved the quality of the emergency aid. This was proof of the authorities of South Ossetia giving us much attention. We had only two old cars before,"-Z. Margiev tell us. The doctors don't complain about their salaries. They say that this year their salaries were increased. A group of doctors from the Leningor hospital took advanced training courses in Russia last year. People are certain that, after the building renovation is finished, the working conditions will significantly improve and that the medical staff will be supplied with the new equipment.

All the mentioned problems of the Leningor region are held back by the biggest one, the poor road between Tskhinval and Leningor.

It takes four hours to cover the distance of eighty kilometers between Tskhinval and Leningor. The road is full of ruts caused by tractor traffic. These ruts can cause other vehicles, except "Kamaz" trucks and military vehicles, to become stuck in the mud. Hitting potholes and falling into the mud from time to time, a car slowly moves to Leningor. A big part of the road is a narrow mountain serpentine. The road goes past small villages, mountains and forests. There are builders, machinery, piles of crushed stone and other things along almost the entire road. The development of the road infrastructure in Leningor region of South Ossetia is one of the main parts of the Investment Program aimed to assist the Republic of South Ossetia in its social and economic

[50]Here the speech reflects the military phase of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict in 1991 – 1992.
[51] It is time when Zviad Gamsakhurdia was in power, characterized by the display of national extremism.

development in 2011. The importance of this development is noted at each meeting of the South Ossetian government. Russia has allocated 6.8 billion Rubles from its budget for the implementation of this program. More than half of it is planned to be spent on road construction. The largest project is building the Tskhinval-Leningor road. Moreover, it is planned to build local roads connecting the rural districts with each other. Meanwhile, road contruction was started by the Inter-departmental Commission (IDC) for Restoration of the Republic of South Ossetia. Then, last year, their work was taken over by the FSI (Federal State Institution) "Southern Directorate on Programs and Projects Implementation." This year, the contract oversight was changed again. Now, the Ministry of Construction of South Ossetia will have to finish building the road. The Minister of Capital Construction, Road Building and Architecture of the Republic of South Ossetia Ch.Khugaev notes that building standards were not observed at some sections of the road. In particular, there have been retaining wall installation breaches revealed. These retaining walls are meant to protect the road from the mudslides that occur here because there are a lot of hills along the road. The State Unitary Enterprise (SUE) "Dorexpostroi" is assigned as a general contractor.

It is clear that this road has a strategic importance for developing relations between the region and the capital of the Republic, which have been practically separated from each other for the past twenty years. Moreover, the road goes through many villages of the Tskhinval region. It will take approximately one hour to get from Tskhinval to Leningor by the new asphalt road – four time less than before! The importance of the Tskhinval-Leningor road, therefore, is comparable with the importance of Trans-Caucasian highway for the foreign policy of the Republic of South Ossetia.

It is becoming possible to develop cultural, educational and even economic relations between Tskhinval and Leningor on a new level.

The "Aluton"[52] brewery is an important economic facility located in the region. After a long downtime caused by the August 2008 fighting, it has started working again. A newly arrived specialist, I.Karimov, was appointed as a business leader. The brewery has reached its normal production capacity. 160 tons of beer of three kinds: "Aluton", "Jigulyovskoe", and "Karlov Most" were produced between December 2009 and April 2010. The beer was sold in Leningor, Tskhinval and in other regions of South Ossetia. However, the public prosecutor's office has discovered that 800,000 Rubles received from sales did not reach the Republic's National bank account. Therefore, on the 20th of April 2010, the brewery's property was confiscated. A criminal case was filed against the brewery's management based on the Criminal Code Part 4, Article 160 (misappropriation or embezzlement) and Part 4. Article 171 (illegal entrepreneurship) of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation.[53] According to the general public prosecutor's office, the brewery's entire accounting documentation has disappeared along with the management as soon as the investigation started. The company is not currently operating, but the General Public Prosecutor's Office of South Ossetia is ready to release the brewery from attachment as soon as the Ministry of Economic Development of the Republic is ready to take it over and resume the production.

Leningor region is constantly attracting much attention from international and various human rights organizations. It is regularly discussed in Geneva and at different meetings of the Western, Georgian and South Ossetian non-governmental organizations (NGOs). One of the reasons for such intent attention to the region is that it is a place of compact mixed settlement of Georgians and Ossetians. A visit to the region of by a well-known Georgian politician and political scientist, Paata Zakareishvili, in summer 2009 drew a wide response in the public. He made sure himself that there is no oppression of the Georgians in the Leningor region, that social and economic problems are sequentially being solved and that the new administration is starting to work in a normal administrative routine. At the same time, Paata Zakareishvili's visit raised questions in the South Ossetian Parliament addressed to the border guards leaders and to the Leningor administration

[52] After the name of a heady drink from the Ossetian national epos Nartiadi.
[53] The Republic of South Ossetia uses the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation.

representatives. An article was published in the Government newspaper "South Ossetia" expressing a low opinion of Paata Zakareishvili as a Georgian public figure and about his visit to the region.

In November 2010 the OSCE High Commissioner on Minority Groups visited South Ossetia. It should be noted that after August 2008, the OSCE has completely lost its authority among the population and the leaders of the Republic of South Ossetia due to its treacherous position on South Ossetia. That is why letting Mr. K. Vollebaek visit the region was South Ossetia's expression of good will to have an open talk with international organizations. The Commissioner met the authorities and national communities of South Ossetia and also visited the Leningor region. Summarizing the results of his visit, K.Vollebaek reported at the OSCE Permanent Council. The authorities of South Ossetia considered it necessary to state their position on this report. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of South Ossetia was charged to announce this opinion.[54] "Unfortunately we have to state that many parts of this report contradict reality and Mr.Vollebaek's statements during his visit to South Ossetia." Mr. Vollebaek expressed his gratitude to the Russian and Georgian authorities who assisted him in organizing his visit but he "did not even mention the authorities of the Republic of South Ossetia (RSO) although giving him an opportunity to visit South Ossetia as a sovereign and recognized state, not yet a member of the OSCE, was granted exclusively by the authorities of our country." Then, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the RSO points to the proof of an outrageous political commitment of the Commissioner: "Mr. Vollebaek noticed empty Georgian villages to the North and to the East of Tskhinval but he did not mention neither the ravages (of war) he saw in Tskhinval nor the ongoing reconstruction there or even the Georgian military aggression in 2008 against South Ossetia when all nationalities living in the Republic suffered. He discounts other nationalities while expressing his concerns on preservation of the Georgian ethnic identity in the South Ossetia, including the Leningor region. The report does not mention that there are eight Georgian schools in the South Ossetia, including six schools in the Leningor region, and that pupils study using Georgian textbooks and programs in these schools. The initiative of the South Ossetian authorities under the UNHCR supervision to return people who are considered in Georgia displaced and who are huddled together in Tserovani to the places of their permanent residence in the Leningor region was left unnoticed by the reporter. The report does not say anything about the possibility for the Leningor region residents to come visit their homes and work their lands. Nothing is said about the Russian humanitarian actions (including ones in the public health sphere) in the Leningor region. The report expresses concern about freedom of movement across the border (although they note about 800 border crossings daily) but it is not made clear that the obstacles for the cargo and people movement, including the humanitarian aid deliveries, are created by the Georgian authorities, not the South Ossetian ones, although that was experienced by Mr. Vollebaek personally." The most indignation in South Ossetia was caused by Mr. Vollebaek's approach to the problems of Ossetians: "We consider not mentioning in the report neither the Ossetians evicted from Georgia nor the problems of Ossetians currently living in Georgia as a display of a selective approach to the problems of minorities." Despite the facts that during his visit to Tskhinval Mr. Vollebaek was given proof of violations of the rights of Ossetians in Georgia and that he received "a lot of complaints from Ossetians living in the Kakheti zone," he did not mention any of these facts in his report. The South Ossetian Foreign Ministry statement ironically quotes Mr. K.Vollebaek constantly repeating persistent demands of the international organizations about the "necessity of a wider international presence" in the South Ossetia.

The Leningor region thereby has entered a new era in its history that started after the recognition of the Republic of South Ossetia. The conditions of this new era are determined by the beginning of the realization of massive reconstruction and development programs in the newly recognized state. As for the relations with Georgia and the border problems in the Leningor region, South Ossetia will be solving them in the interests of the people living in the area.

[54] Comments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of South Ossetia on the OSCE High Commissioner on Minority Groups Knut Vollebeck's report at the OSCE Permanent Council session // South Ossetia Oct,27,2010.