

14 Russia and the South Caucasus

Peter J. S. Duncan

More than 20 years after the collapse of the USSR, Russia remains the most influential outside power in the South Caucasus. This chapter examines why the region is important to Russia, what its interests are and how it has pursued its relations with the states of the region, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. In particular, how Russia has responded to the challenges posed by the activities of NATO and the EU will be explained. The period covered will be approximately from 2003, the year of the launch by the EU of its ENP and also the year of the Rose Revolution in Georgia, up to April 2017.

Is it helpful to consider the South Caucasus a 'region?' Tracey German (2012, p. 161) in her valuable monograph *Regional Cooperation in the South Caucasus* finds that the "South Caucasus" is "an externally generated geographical label that implies a certain degree of unity and positive interdependence that does not exist". From the point of view of the theories of Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, the South Caucasus could be a sub-complex of a RSC covering the whole former Soviet Union, under Russian hegemony (German 2012, p. 14). From the Russian perspective, the Caucasus, as a whole, not just the South Caucasus, forms a region. The leading Russian expert Kamaludin Gadzhiev (2001 and 2012), chief research fellow at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) of the Russian Academy of Sciences, has written two major studies of the international relations of the Caucasus as a whole: the translated titles are *The Geopolitics of the Caucasus* and '*The Great Game*' in the Caucasus: *Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*. Similarly, Pavel Baev's (1997) *Russia's Policies in the Caucasus* and a special issue of *Europe-Asia Studies*, 'Many Faces of the Caucasus' (Kemoklidze et al., 2012) covered both the North and South Caucasus. As Tracey German says, "It is difficult to distinguish between the South and North Caucasus: the two are inextricably linked in terms of security challenges and cannot be viewed in isolation" (German 2012, p. 26).

Tsarist Russia secured nearly all of what is now the South Caucasus by 1829, gathering lands previously occupied by the Persian and Ottoman empires. It was not for nearly four decades, however, that the North Caucasus, lying between the South Caucasus and the ethnic Russian heartland, was subdued, after ferocious resistance and the deportation of parts of the native Circassian population. Aspects of this struggle were depicted in the writings of Aleksandr Pushkin,

Mikhail Lermontov and Lev Tolstoy, making the Caucasus an important part of Russia's national identity (de Waal 2010, pp. 40–43). Without control of the South Caucasus, control of the North Caucasus becomes problematic for Russia. The Chechen Republic declared its independence from Russia in November 1991, a month before the Soviet Union fell and Russia recognized the independence of the three Transcaucasian republics. Fears that hostile regimes in Georgia and Azerbaijan, which border the North Caucasus, might support separatists inside Russia have made Moscow nervous about the orientation of these states. A further factor linking north and south is that some nationalities are established on both sides of the mountain range: most notably, the Ossets in the North Ossetian republic in Russia and in South Ossetia and the Lezgins in the Daghestan republic in Russia and in Azerbaijan.

Russia's interests in the South Caucasus

The war with Georgia in 2008 demonstrated the importance of the Caucasus to Russia. It was the first time in the post-Soviet period that Russian troops had been introduced into a foreign country without the consent of that country's government. Since the Soviet collapse, experts have differed over whether Russia has been gradually withdrawing from its interests in the Caucasus or whether it is determined to stay. Baev (1997, p. 59) argued, "Russia's gradual strategic retreat from the Caucasus appears irreversible". Similarly, 15 years later, in his paper 'The Long Goodbye', James Nixey (2012, p. 2) sees Russia's influence declining, with its ambitions less than its capacities, but "it keeps pushing against the tide". Stephen Blank (2013) argues that the number of Russian troops in the South Caucasus has been steadily increasing since the end of the war with Georgia. Ronald Suny (2007, p. 68) also does not believe that Russia is retreating from the area; "Russia wants to be the regional hegemon, not the imperial overlord".

Russia's interests in the region are shaped by security, economic and ideological factors. The security factors can be conceptualized in terms of those linked with security and stability in the North Caucasus, those connected with the role of NATO and the EU in the South Caucasus and those arising from the roles of the two other immediate neighbours of the South Caucasus, Turkey and Iran, in the South Caucasus and Russia's relations with these two regional powers. All these factors overlap and intersect; for example, the EU has economic as well as political and security roles, and the projects for the integration of states within the CIS have security, economic and ideological aspects.

The North Caucasus is the most rebellious part of the R.F. As Gadzhiev argues, porous frontiers between the former Soviet republics, which in many cases exist still only on maps, allow armed groups to move around easily and instability to follow (Gadzhiev 2001, p. 287). Fears of separatism and terrorism emanating from the region have worried policymakers in Moscow ever since Chechnya declared independence in November 1991. Partial state failures in the South Caucasus in the 1990s and early 2000s allowed Chechen separatists

fighters to source supplies and base themselves across the border from Russia, particularly in the Pankisi Gorge in Georgia (MacFarlane 2012, p. 13). The Chechen government of Aslan Maskhadov between 1996 and 1999 established direct links with Georgia while Eduard Shevardnadze was president (Merlin 2011, p. 3). It was not clear whether Shevardnadze used the Chechens in the Pankisi Gorge as a possible means of pressure on Russia, or whether he was simply unable to remove them. In October 2001, it appears that Chechen fighters took part in an operation together with the Georgian military against Abkhaz forces in the Kodori Gorge (Cheterian 2008, p. 337). Russia had earlier threatened pursuit operations into Georgian territory against the Chechens, but this incident would have intensified Russian suspicions about Shevardnadze. Russia's policy of Chechenisation and the imposition of first Akhmad Kadyrov and then his son Ramzan Kadyrov as head of the republic stabilized the situation in Chechnya from 2003. The cost of this, however, was the spread of Islamism, the idea of the North Caucasus Emirate and terrorism to Daghestan, Ingushetia and other parts of the North Caucasus. There were large-scale terrorist attacks on Beslan in North Ossetia in 2004, on Moscow's Domodedovo Airport in 2011 and in Volgograd in 2013.

Russia's attitude to NATO and the EU has not been uniformly hostile. The Kremlin, like most Russians, tends to see NATO as a relic of the Cold War with a Cold War mindset. Although under Yel'tsin Russia signed up to NATO's PfP Programme in 1994, its relations with the alliance were fraught because of clashes over its role in the wars in former Yugoslavia and its enlargement into Eastern Europe. The situation appeared to improve for a while after September 11, 2001, when Putin and U.S. President George W. Bush joined in the 'War on Terror', with a high degree of cooperation against Al-Qa'eda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. In 2002, when NATO agreed to admit the Baltic States in 2004, Putin expressed regret but not alarm. The mood changed after the coloured revolutions. After the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003 and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004, both the new leaders, presidents Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia and Viktor Yushchenko of Ukraine announced that their countries sought to join both NATO and ultimately the EU. Russia's leaders claimed that the revolutions had been orchestrated in the West with the aim of reducing Russian influence in the post-Soviet republics. In response, it became a major aim of Russian policy to stop NATO's influence growing in the CIS states. The EU was seen rather more positively. It was perceived as having mainly economic aims, and its members bought most of Russia's oil and gas exports, which provided the larger part of Russia's foreign earnings. Nevertheless, by 2002 or 2003 Russia feared that EU enlargement would work against Russia, turning the trade of the former Soviet bloc countries away from Russia and towards Western Europe. After the enlargement of 2004 and the later smaller enlargements, the EU was seen as becoming more anti-Russian because of the presence of ex-communist countries which retained their suspicion of Russia.

The Ottoman Empire and Persia were traditionally Russia's main rivals in the Caucasus. When the USSR collapsed, there were fears in Moscow that

either Turkey or Iran might offer an alternative social and political model to the Muslims of the Caucasus and Central Asia, and that this would have security implications. Things turned out much better for Russia, with neither country making significant inroads on Moscow's influence and both countries enjoying good relations with Russia. Fears of pan-Turkism were at their height when Abulfaz Elchibei led Azerbaijan in 1992–1993 with an openly pro-Turkish stance, but after he was replaced by the former first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan and former First Deputy Prime Minister of the USSR Heidar Aliev in 1993 these fears abated. In Central Asia the states continued to be ruled by elites who largely originated from the communist-era *nomenklatura*. Émigré groups from the North Caucasus in Turkey agitated for support for the Circassian peoples who had been expelled by Tsarist Russia from the North Caucasus in the 19th century, and in support of the Chechens, and had some effect on public opinion. Generally, the Turkish governments have pursued a pragmatic approach towards Russia, however. Even in the Cold War Turkey's membership of NATO did not impede its receipt of substantial Soviet aid.

From the late 1990s Turkey's growing economic links with Russia and the completion of the Blue Stream gas pipeline from Russia to Turkey in 2003 led to Russia becoming Turkey's largest single-country trade partner (behind the EU as a whole) in 2008. The Justice and Development Party (AKP) which came to power in 2002 with its moderate conservative Islamist ideology sought good relations with all its neighbours. Critical of America because of its policy in Iraq, and feeling rebuffed by the EU, Turkey moved closer to Russia. AKP Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan proposed at the time of the Russo-Georgian War in 2008 the creation of a Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Programme, to include the three South Caucasus states, Turkey and Russia, and excluding the West and Iran. Russia welcomed the proposal, but Azerbaijan which remains very close to Turkey rejected the idea (Tanrisever 2011b; Oskanian 2011, pp. 23–24; German 2012, pp. 122–124; Nizameddin 2013, pp. 271–280). Turkey's political closeness to Azerbaijan is reflected in its continued boycott of Armenia.

Far from encouraging Islamist separatism, Iran has proved to be a partner of Russia, promoting stability in Central Asia and opposing the Taliban in Afghanistan. While differences exist over the division of the Caspian Sea and the exploitation of its resources, these are much less significant than the economic cooperation between the two countries. Russia has helped Iran develop the use of nuclear power for peaceful purposes, building now a second reactor at Bushehr, despite opposition from the United States. American fears that Iran was seeking to acquire nuclear weapons technology came in the mid-2000s to be shared by the Kremlin. In 2010, when Medvedev was president, Russia went so far as to support sanctions in the UN Security Council against Iran. From 2000, Russia abandoned its promise to America not to sign any new arms supply contracts with Iran, and has promised and delivered substantial weapons to it. The Russian arms and nuclear power industries are thus important lobbyists

inside Russia for good relations with Iran. Russia has not, however, yet delivered the powerful S-300 surface-to-air missile system which Iran has ordered. Iran is Russia's closest friend in the Middle East and its relationship with Iran is one of the factors in its consistent opposition to the removal of the Asad regime in Syria. Russia condemned the more inflammatory anti-Israeli statements made by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad when he was president of Iran from 2005 to 2013, and has continued to oppose Teheran's acquisition of nuclear weapons. In the Caucasus, Iran plays a lesser role than Turkey. Despite their shared Shi'ite Muslim heritage, Iran is suspicious of Azerbaijan in view of the substantial Azerbaijani minority inside Iran, fearing that Baku might become an alternative focus of loyalty. Its closest relations are with Armenia to whom it supplies gas via a pipeline in which a Gazprom subsidiary has a majority interest (Nizameddin 2013, pp. 253–271, 281–288; Trenin 2011, pp. 124–125; de Waal 2010, p. 181).

Despite the good relations Moscow has with both Teheran and Ankara, the two large Muslim states have been subject in the past to rapid political change. The Kremlin fears that future governments of these states might turn against Russia. Hence Russia has sought where possible to maintain the control of the former Soviet military bases in the South Caucasus. Russia has maintained its base in Gyumri in Armenia and has its forces on Armenia's borders. Opposition from Georgia led to all four bases being abandoned by Russia by the end of 2007, but following the war of August 2008, Russia proceeded to build naval and military bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Azerbaijan leased the Gabala air defence early warning station to Russia until 2011.

Russia's economic interests in the South Caucasus focus on energy. The most important issue has been to find ways of preventing oil and gas exports from Azerbaijan competing with and possibly crowding out Russian supplies of these resources in European markets. The desire of EU countries to diversify their sources of energy supply to reduce what some see as over-dependence on Russia was enhanced by the experiences of 2006 and 2009, when Russia cut off supplies of gas to Ukraine in a pricing dispute which had political undertones. This desire has been accelerated by Russia's annexation of the Crimea in March 2014 and its support for separatist rebels in Eastern Ukraine.

In 2005, the 'project of the century' was completed, the oil pipeline BTC, from the Caspian shores of Azerbaijan through Georgia and Turkey to the Black Sea, from where it is shipped to customers in Europe. Because of Azerbaijan's blockade of Armenia, it is dependent on Georgia to export its hydrocarbons westwards. The BTC project had been promoted by the Clinton Administration, the British government and the EU and was built by a consortium of mainly Western oil companies led by BP. The Russian oil company LUKoil held a small stake. In 2006, the equivalent gas pipeline, BTE, was completed. The Western aim, geopolitical rather than economic, was to end Azerbaijan's dependence on the Soviet pipeline system where all oil and gas extracted from the Caspian was routed to Russia, and assure direct access to Caspian resources (Shiriev 2011, pp. 112–116; de Waal 2010, pp. 170–182). In order to find ways

of collective action to reduce dependence on Russia, Azerbaijan and Georgia joined forces with two other CIS states, Ukraine and Moldova in 1997 to establish GUAM. This had Western blessing and was linked with the EU's TRACECA, Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia, supposedly a new 'Silk Road'. The four countries concerned all had their own grievances with Russia: Georgia over Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Azerbaijan over Nagorny Karabakh, Ukraine over Crimea and Moldova over Transdniestria. (GUAM was joined between 1999 and 2005 by Uzbekistan, becoming GUUAM for that period.)

Russia was unable to prevent the establishment of GUAM within the CIS or the competition of the BTC and BTE pipelines. When the EU began in 2002 to develop plans for the ambitious Nabucco pipeline project to take Caspian gas through Turkey to Europe, and adopted these plans in 2006 in response to Russia's interruption of gas supply to Ukraine, Gazprom responded in 2007 with its rival South Stream plan. This joint project with the Italian oil company ENI would take gas under the Black Sea to Bulgaria and Serbia and thence by branches to Greece, Italy, Hungary and Austria. Since it seemed that there would not be enough gas to fill both pipelines, a struggle emerged between Russia and EU countries over gas from Azerbaijan. If Russia could use Azerbaijani gas in South Stream, it would maintain a high degree of control over the European gas market, at least until alternative sources of fuel such as shale gas could be developed.

The overarching ideological interest of the Kremlin in the Caucasus, for both internal and external political reasons, is that Russia be seen as a great power. Putin asserted Russia's '*derzhavnost'*, best translated as "having the character of a great power" in his millennium article published just before Yel'tsin's resignation (Putin 1999). This view is held by all Russian policymakers. One of the attributes of a great power, in the Russian conception, is that it should be able to defend its own citizens abroad, and also people of other citizenships who share common ethnic origin. One of the reasons given for Russia's involvement in the war with Georgia in 2008 was to defend the Russian citizens in South Ossetia from attack by the Georgian army; not only Russian peacekeepers, but also Ossets who had been issued with Russian passports. Similarly, Russia's actions in the Crimea in 2014 were justified in terms of help to ethnic Russians.

A still more important sign of great power status for Russia is to have a geographical sphere of influence. Yel'tsin in April 1993 had suggested that international organizations should "grant Russia special powers as a guarantor of peace and stability in the region of the former USSR" (Lynch 2000, p. 52). In August 2008, after the war with Georgia, Medvedev announced that Russia has a "region of privileged interests". He did not define this geographically, but said that it was not confined to Russia's neighbours (Medvedev 2008). Russian leaders have expected the former Soviet republics, apart from the Baltic States, to show recognition of their relationship with Russia, as a minimum, by joining the CIS, and preferably also by supporting Russia's integration projects within the former Soviet Union. All the South Caucasus states were in the CIS by the end of September 1993. As the CIS failed to be an engine of integration, Putin

established new organizations of those states more committed to closer economic or security links with Russia. None of the South Caucasus states joined the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) established in 2001, and only Armenia from the region joined the CSTO established in 2003. The integration process was taken further when the three largest members of EurAsEC, Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan formed a Customs Union in 2010, which in 2012 was developed into a 'Common Economic Space'. In November 2011 the leaders of the three states announced their intention to create a 'Eurasian Economic Union' by January 1, 2015,¹ while Putin (2011) argued that it was necessary to go beyond economic cooperation to form a fully-fledged 'Eurasian Union', on the model of the EU.

Integration: Eurasian versus European

In reality, the model of integration on offer in the Eurasian Union and the EEU was markedly different from that in the EU. Most obviously, post-Soviet space is dominated by Russia, whereas no single state, not even Germany, has a similar level of strength within the EU. Russian experts such as Gadzhiev (2001, p. 286) extol the benefits to Russia from integration in terms of increasing both Russia's geopolitical influence and its access to resources. With the Eurasian Union, there is a stronger ideological element which goes beyond Russia's projecting itself as a great power. This reflects the more conservative, authoritarian and anti-Western stance taken by Putin since his return to the presidency in May 2012, both at home and abroad (e.g. Putin 2013; and see Laruelle 2013). The Eurasian Union is a distinctive model of political organization, reflecting what are increasingly seen as civilizational differences with Western Europe. Instead of globalization, neo-liberalism, social permissiveness and individual choice, the states coalescing into the EEU are authoritarian (and, in the case of Belarus and Kazakhstan, personal dictatorships), conservative in their ideology and exercising a high degree of state control in their economies. Their emphasis on state sovereignty and rejection in reality of the application of universal standards of human rights means that, unlike the EU states, they refuse to surrender any sovereignty to the supranational bodies. There is little evidence that these states are actually integrating, since both Russia and Kazakhstan are expanding relations faster with states outside the region than with each other.

It would be difficult to argue that all decisions about integration inside the EU are conducted democratically. Major moves such as the introduction of the euro were introduced without public support in some key countries. The European Commission is seen as far from understanding the lives of all its citizens, as was reflected in some member states in the May 2014 elections to the European Parliament. But the countries of the EU are all liberal democracies (although admittedly Hungary seems to be moving away from this model) and would not be able to remain in the EU if public opinion in any state turned against it. In contrast, within all the countries of the EEU, the state dominates the debate

and acts in accordance with the interests of the authoritarian regimes rather than of the wider population. Putin's concept of the Eurasian Union is meant to appeal precisely to these regimes, to offer them ideological security and a cover against encroachment from the democratizing influence of the EU. An important target (perhaps the most important target) has been Ukraine, to give support to the (now dwindling) pro-Russian elements in Ukrainian society who have been resisting the pull of the EU and NATO.

When the EU launched the ENP in 2003, its relations with Russia were still relatively warm. The two were united in support of the 'War on Terror', and Russia had joined two of the EU's leading members, France and Germany, in opposing the American-led war against Iraq. Russia's objection to the ENP was not that the EU was seeking to engage its southern and new East European neighbours, but that Russia was being treated in the same way as Georgia or Tunisia, instead of as a great power. Even so, Russia already objected to the EU's inclusion of the South Caucasus states in the EU-Russian "common [or shared] neighbourhood" (Shishkina 2013, p. 16). The relationship worsened with the coloured revolutions, the growing influence of the former Soviet bloc states in the EU and the interruptions of energy supplies. Nevertheless, in July 2008 Russia and the EU began negotiations on renewing their PCAs, which, in the words of Vladimir Chizhov (2009, p. 48), Russia's envoy to the EU, would create "a higher level of strategic partnership". The following month, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, acting as head of the EU presidency, mediated a ceasefire between Russia and Georgia after the Five-Day War, receiving praise from Medvedev. Thereafter, however, relations between the EU and Russia zig-zagged. The EU temporarily broke off relations with Russia after the war, in protest at Russia's actions in Georgia and its recognition of the independence of the two breakaway regions.

One of the consequences of the Russo-Georgian War was that it became clear to Western leaders that NATO was not in a position to defend Georgia, or, for that matter, Ukraine, against Russia. Following from this, the possibility of early membership of NATO for any former Soviet republics, other than the Baltic States who had joined in 2004, rapidly receded. Instead, the EU decided to do something to build closer ties with the post-Soviet states of Eastern Europe, other than Russia, and the Caucasus. The result was the EaP, with the six partners of the EU being Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, and the three South Caucasus states, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. The European Commission explained that the EaP was "a step change in relation to these partners . . . responding to the need for a clearer signal of EU commitment following the conflict in Georgia and its broader repercussions" (cited in Averre 2009, p. 1694; emphasis in European Commission document). As the partners individually adopted the norms of the EU, the latter would sign AAs and trade agreements with them, giving greater access to the EU markets and possibly visa-free travel, but no promise of EU membership.

From the start many in Russia considered the EaP as an unwelcome move into its region of influence, although Medvedev told Belarusian journalists in

November 2009 that there was nothing ‘anti-Russian’ in the project and Russia would not object to its neighbours’ participation (Shishkina 2013, p. 43). The EaP did not end Russia’s cooperation with the EU; in May–June 2010 at the regular EU–Russia summit Medvedev and the EU leadership launched a ‘Partnership for Modernization’ (DeBardeleben 2011). But as Russia’s relations with the West deteriorated from 2011, over issues of missile defence, Russia’s support for the Asad regime in Syria and internal repression in Russia, the states of the EaP came further to the fore as major battlegrounds for influence between Moscow and Brussels.

Russia and Georgia: the war and after

Of all the South Caucasus states, it is Georgia with which Russia has had the most difficult relations. The *de facto* independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia had been protected by Russian peacekeepers since 1992. Moscow’s unwillingness to allow Tbilisi to regain control, despite proclaiming a commitment to Georgia’s territorial integrity, had led Shevardnadze to seek allies in the West from the mid-1990s. Relations between Shevardnadze and Russia were so bad by the time of the Rose Revolution in 2003 that Putin smoothed Saakashvili’s path to power by sending Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov to Tbilisi to mediate a relatively peaceful transition. When Saakashvili sent troops to re-impose his control over the autonomous region of Ajaria, Ivanov again helped him by persuading the recalcitrant leader Aslan Abashidze to leave power and move to Russia.

Thereafter, relations soon soured, as Saakashvili made clear his intention to do whatever was needed to restore central control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Georgia’s defence spending quadrupled between 2003 and 2008 and its military cooperation with the United States increased. Georgia’s role as a conduit for the passage of Azerbaijani oil to the West, avoiding Russia and competing with Russian energy in European markets, exacerbated relations. Worse, Saakashvili made clear his intention for Georgia to join NATO and the EU. The Russian leadership became increasingly angry with Saakashvili on a personal level, because they had helped him earlier and now he was working against them. In March 2006, Russia imposed a boycott of Georgian wine and mineral water. Six months later Georgia arrested four Russian officers based in Tbilisi, accusing them of spying. Russia responded furiously, not only breaking transport and postal links but beginning a brutal process of throwing hundreds of people with Georgian names out of Russia – even after the ‘spies’ had been freed. Such an outburst of ethnic hatred was bad for Russia’s international image, and the crisis cooled down (de Waal 2010, pp. 188–210).

Tensions along the border between Georgia and the separatist regions continued up to the outbreak of the war in August 2008. Responsibility for the war is still bitterly contested; much of the decision-making process in Moscow and Tbilisi remains unknown. The most exhaustive attempt to examine the roots of the conflict was conducted by the Independent International Fact-Finding

Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (IIFMCG), established by the EU and chaired by the Swiss diplomat Heidi Tagliavini (IIFMCG 2009). This apportioned blame fairly evenly, criticizing Georgia for starting the war and Russia for invading Georgia after the attack had been repulsed. Some commentators have nevertheless claimed that Russia instigated the war (Illarionov 2009; Felgengauer 2009). The evidence is not convincing; as Richard Sakwa (2012, pp. 592–94) points out, for example, evidence of preparing for war is not evidence of actually planning a war. None of these accounts explain how, if Russia attacked first, Georgia would be able to occupy Tsinkhvali, the capital of South Ossetia.

The motivations for war were complex. Undoubtedly, Russia gained from its victory in that not only Georgia's but also Ukraine's aspirations for NATO membership were put on indefinite hold. It does not follow from that, though, that Russia wished for a war at that time. Indeed, it seems to have been taken by surprise (Trenin 2011, p. 29), with Putin away at the Beijing Olympics and Medvedev in Sochi, and to have responded rather slowly. Saakashvili's motives in sending troops into Tskhinvali on August 7, 2008, clearly included his intent to begin the process of bringing the separatist territories back under his control. He was facing growing opposition at home, which he had dealt with by using force against demonstrators in 2007, bringing international criticism, although he had been re-elected in January 2008. He had only the remainder of his four-year term to fulfil his promise of reunifying Georgia. It is nevertheless hard to understand why he thought he could take on the military might of Russia. He may have overestimated Georgian military strength or underestimated that of Russia (Mouritzen and Wivel 2012, pp. 69–76). It cannot be excluded that he believed that the United States would come to his aid, nor that he had received some indications from Washington insiders of this. Nevertheless, as Ronald Asmus (2010, pp. 10, 48, 151) says, Western officials from President Bush downwards repeatedly urged Saakashvili not to use force and not to respond to Russian provocations. The most likely explanation is that Saakashvili had become cut off from reality and had the illusion that either Russia would not respond or that the United States would come to his aid, either militarily or with diplomatic pressure on Russia.

Developments outside the Caucasus played a role in the evolution of Russian policy. In February 2008, against the protests of Russia, the United States and most Western states recognized the independence of Kosovo from Serbia. According to Georgian sources, Putin warned Saakashvili that Russia would take revenge on the West at Georgia's expense. In March the Russian State Duma called on the government to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Asmus 2010, pp. 105–107, 146). Such parliamentary resolutions could be taken only on the initiative of the Kremlin itself. The decision of the NATO Bucharest Summit in April 2008 to promise membership to Ukraine and Georgia, although without naming a date or approving MAPs, seriously alarmed Moscow. Putin warned Georgia that the prospect of its joining NATO was a “direct threat” to Russia (Shearman and Sussex 2009, p. 6).

It seems that Saakashvili played into Putin's hands by sending forces to seize Tskhinvali. Russia justified its military response, culminating in the approach of Russian forces towards Tbilisi the bombing of Georgian airports, and the destruction of Georgian military facilities, as defence against Georgia's assault on Russian citizens. These included the peacekeeping forces, but also the great majority of the South Ossetian population who had been given Russian passports in previous years. Russian forces remained in Georgia for several days after the ceasefire mediated by Sarkozy. On August 26 Russia recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russia had shown that NATO was impotent to stop Russia imposing its will in the Caucasus. It was this fact, together with Western anger at Saakashvili for his adventurism which put an end to further consideration of Georgia's prospects of NATO membership.

Apart from making the Putin regime feel good, the recognition of the independence of the separatist territories was in every other respect irrational. It undermined Russia's long-held position against the independence of Kosovo. It showed Russia's diplomatic isolation, as only four countries followed Russia in recognizing the regions. None of the other members of the CIS, nor China, followed Russia. Moreover, it alienated and alarmed countries from Ukraine through Kazakhstan to China where a potential separatist threat existed. Georgia itself gave notice of its intention to leave the CIS, and did so after the required 12-month notice. Russia's step gave succour to the arguments of separatists in Russia's own North Caucasus. While fears that Russia might annexe the regions, as it did in Crimea in 2014 after recognizing the independence of the republic, have not yet been realized, both regions are dependent on the Russian government for their functioning, and particularly in South Ossetia the security and other bodies are staffed by men from Russia. Russia has opened military bases in both regions.

While Putin told Sarkozy that he wanted to hang Saakashvili 'by the balls',² in reality Russia's hopes of removing him came to nothing and Saakashvili was able to sit out his term as president. In the meantime, Saakashvili was able to obstruct Russia's entry into the WTO until European pressure forced him to give way, to give support to North Caucasian separatists who wanted to commemorate the expulsion of Circassians from the Russian Empire under Alexander II, and establish a television channel, 'Pik-TV' in the Russian language, aimed at the North Caucasus. Saakashvili's opponents in the Georgian Dream coalition, headed by the multi-billionaire Bidzin Ivanishvili, won the parliamentary elections in 2011 and the presidential elections in 2012. Although Saakashvili painted all his opponents as pro-Russian, Georgian Dream maintained Georgia's pro-Western orientation. Relations with Russia improved, particularly in trade; in 2013, Moscow ended the boycott of Georgian wine and mineral water. No Georgian government, however, could meet Moscow's prerequisite for the re-establishment of diplomatic relations: that it recognizes the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Lekov 2013, p. 185). This inability to normalize Georgian-Russian relations itself accelerated Georgia's move towards the EU.

Russia's relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan: the Nagorny Karabakh conflict

Russia's relations with Armenia and with Azerbaijan are so involved with each other and with the Nagorny Karabakh conflict that it is sensible to discuss them all together. Since the fall of the USSR Armenia has been the most important country for Russia in the South Caucasus. Armenia is Russia's most reliable ally in the Caucasus, and possibly in the world. It is a member of the CSTO and Russian troops are stationed on its frontiers with Turkey and Iran. In 2010, it extended the lease on the Russian base at Gyumri until 2044 (Trenin and Trenin 2010). Armenia's reliance on Russia stems from the blockade imposed by both Turkey and Azerbaijan since 1993, when the two states closed their borders with Armenia in an attempt to force it to withdraw from Karabakh.

Since the 1994 ceasefire, mediated by Russia, Armenia has maintained its military support for the Nagorny Karabakh Republic. This ethnic Armenian enclave within Azerbaijan has sought independence from the latter and a transfer to Armenia since the last years of the Soviet Union. The Soviet leadership could not solve the Karabakh issue, and indeed this contributed to the fall of the USSR itself. The RF has been still less able to bring about a settlement, either on its own or together with the other two co-chairs of the 'Minsk Group' of the OSCE, the USA and France. The uneasy truce along the 'LoC' between the Armenian and Azerbaijani armies is regularly disturbed by shootings and deaths of soldiers. Azerbaijan has used its energy revenues to increase its armed strength with the long-term perspective of taking back Karabakh by force if Armenia refused to return it through negotiations. Armenia expects that Russia would defend it against such an Azerbaijani attack, and the fear of a military conflict with Russia has deterred Azerbaijan from taking large-scale action.

Despite its alliance with Armenia, Russia has refrained from making an unambiguous choice in favour of Armenia over Nagorny Karabakh for fear of driving "Baku still more strongly towards the embrace of Turkey and the USA" (Gadzhiev 2012, p. 236). Azerbaijan, unlike Georgia, is not seeking membership of NATO and the EU, and the current state of human rights inside the country rules this out in any case. Russia's desire for a share, if not control, of Azerbaijan's gas in order to maintain its position in European gas markets pushes Russia to seek good relations with Baku. Putin improved Russia's relations with Heidar Aliev soon after becoming president (their common background in the KGB probably eased tensions). He gave his blessing to the Azerbaijani leader being succeeded by his son, Ilham Aliev, in 2003, and further endorsed the latter in the two subsequent presidential elections in 2008 and 2013. The Alievs banned the activities of Chechen separatists in Azerbaijan and dealt harshly with Islamist groups (Todua 2006, pp. 104–111).

After the war with Georgia, Medvedev embarked on a serious quest to consolidate Russia's supremacy in the South Caucasus and resolve the Karabakh conflict. Six trilateral summits were held between him, Ilham Aliev and the Armenian president Serzh Sargsyan, between November 2008 and June 2010.

With the breaking of Russo–Georgian relations leaving Armenia practically cut off from its transport link with Russia, Yerevan tried at the same time to improve its relations with Turkey. Negotiations began in April 2009, and in October, the two countries signed agreements to re-establish diplomatic relations. This alarmed Azerbaijan, which feared that Erdoğan might be moving away from supporting its position on Karabakh. Baku showed its displeasure by opening negotiations to sell gas to Gazprom instead of through Turkey and the Nabucco pipeline. Turkey reassured Baku that it would not restore relations with Armenia until the Karabakh conflict was settled (Kandel' 2011, pp 205–208). Armenia's fear of isolation was reflected in its designing in August 2010 of the major military agreement with Russia extending the lease on Gyumri. It typified Russia's approach to the two states that, in Yerevan for the signing, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov implicitly justified Russia's sales of S-300 land-to-air missiles to Azerbaijan, pointing out that they were purely defensive.³ Medvedev had hopes of an agreement on Karabakh at the Kazan trilateral summit in June 2011, but the sides were too far apart (Chernyavsky 2012, pp. 166–167).

Despite its close military alliance with Russia, Armenia made no secret of its desire to join the 'European family' and, as an EaP member, to sign an AA with the EU. This led Alisher Babadzhanov (2013, pp. 109–113) to suggest that Armenia's strategic relations with Russia were only temporary, for as long as was required to settle the Karabakh dispute. One might add that neither Armenia nor Azerbaijan are committed to either the West or Russia, but manoeuvre between the two to achieve their aims.

The Vilnius summit

The European Commission expected to initial AAs and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements with four EaP members – Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Armenia – at the Vilnius summit of November 2013. In the event, only Moldova and Georgia initialled the agreements. The major upset at the summit was the *volte face* by Ukraine's president, Viktor Yanukovich, who, under intense direct personal pressure from Putin, postponed negotiations with the EU on the proposed agreements, leading a few months later to his overthrow by the revolutionaries in the Maidan. But it was the EU who made it clear to Yerevan, in January 2013, even before Moscow, that Armenia could not both join the Eurasian Customs Union and also agree the trade agreement with the EU (Coalson 2013a). In September, Sargsyan made a *volte face*, like Yanukovich, after a personal meeting with Putin in Moscow: Armenia would seek to join the Customs Union and then the Eurasian Union, implicitly abandoning the agreements with the EU. He explained that Armenia's economic relations had to be aligned with its security alignment. It appears that Putin had threatened to supply Azerbaijan with high-quality weapons if Armenia signed the EU agreements (Coalson 2013b). But he was unable to prevent Georgia from finally signing its association and trade agreements with the EU in June 2014.

Putin consolidates in the South Caucasus

Armenia voted in March 2014 against a UN General Assembly resolution, promoted by NATO states, opposing Russia's annexation of the Crimea, while Azerbaijan and Georgia supported the resolution. While the Kremlin's relations with the West deteriorated seriously in 2014 after Russia intervened in Eastern Ukraine, Putin and Lavrov have continued to mediate between Armenia and Azerbaijan. After clashes on the Nagornyi Karabakh LoC in summer 2014, Putin hosted another trilateral summit in August. In a clear gain for Russia, on January 2, 2015, Armenia joined the EEU, Putin's pet project which had been inaugurated the previous day by the members of the Customs Union and which effectively superseded it. Anti-Russian protests have recurred in Yerevan since then. In June Russian politicians accused the West of fomenting revolution in Armenia, after a week of demonstrations in Yerevan against electricity price rises (Holdsworth 2015).

In April 2016, further clashes occurred on the LoC. This led to protests in Yerevan against Russian arms sales to Azerbaijan (RFE/RL 2016). Russia, the major arms supplier to both sides, justifies this position by claiming that the sales are calibrated so that the two countries are deterred from attacking each other (Broers 2016, p. 20). The reality is that it maintains Moscow's role as the principal outside influence on the conflict. Russia's influence in Armenia seemed to be further consolidated by the appointment of a senior Gazprom executive, Karen Karapetian, as prime minister in September 2016.⁴ Moscow's continuing indifference to rights violations in Armenia and to the more serious abuses committed by the Aliiev dynasty in Azerbaijan, in contrast to Western public concern over these issues, strengthen Russia's links with both regimes.

Against Georgia, Russia used its military might to shift the borders of the *de facto* states further into the country. For example, in July 2015 Russian troops moved the South Ossetian border signs into Georgia, annexing part of the Baku-Supsa pipeline which takes oil from Azerbaijan through Georgia to the Black Sea (North 2015). As in 2008, NATO was in no position to come to Georgia's defence. Its promised membership of NATO was postponed to the distant future. The alliance insisted that Georgia would need to fulfil a MAP before it could join, but refused to issue such a document or give a date when it would do so. France and Germany maintained their opposition, and the Obama administration also did not want to upset Russia on the issue. Moscow denounces joint exercises and other defence cooperation between NATO members and Georgia as 'provocative' (Fuller 2016a). Such rhetoric has its impact inside Georgia. In June 2016, Ivanishvili, still the main figure behind Georgian Dream, governing in coalition, said that Georgia would have to wait for Russia to realize that it was time for Georgia to join NATO and the EU before being able to do so.⁵

Saakashvili's decision to leave Georgia and take up the post of governor of Odesa *oblast'* in Ukraine in May 2015 weakened his United National Movement. In the October 2016 parliamentary elections, Georgian Dream won a

substantial triumph, able to govern on its own and with enough seats to be able to change the constitution (Fuller 2016b). This was a victory for forces favouring pragmatism in Georgia's relations with Russia. The United National Movement split after the election into pro- and anti-Saakashvili factions, completing the former president's humiliation and thereby fulfilling one of Putin's personal aims.

After the Georgian election, the Russian Ministry of Defence stepped up its military integration with the breakaway states. In November 2016, Russia and Abkhazia agreed to develop a joint military group, housed in a new Russian base, and with the Russians taking command in time of war.⁶ The South Ossetian Ministry of Defence resisted Russian attempts to incorporate some of its units into the Russian Army, but in March 2017 allowed the recruitment of South Ossetian citizens into the Russian Army. Such measures routinely provoke Georgian protests (Fuller 2017a). Integration of Abkhazia and South Ossetia into Russia does not seem to be on the agenda, not least because Moscow does not wish to repeat the experience of Western opprobrium and possible sanctions which followed its Ukrainian adventures. Russia's latest foreign policy concept, adopted at the end of November 2016, speaks of "assisting the establishment of the Republic of Abkhazia and the Republic of South Ossetia as modern democratic states, strengthening their international positions, ensuring reliable security and socio-economic reconstruction".⁷ This position seems to have been reaffirmed despite the victory in the April 2017 South Ossetian presidential elections of Anatolii Bibilov, an advocate of early unification with Russia, over the more cautious incumbent Leonid Tibilov who enjoyed Russian support. (Fuller 2017b).

Conclusion

Russia is not planning to leave the South Caucasus. Indeed, overall its influence in the region has increased since the war with Georgia in 2008. Armenia remains the focal point of this. Russia's perceived security needs are taking precedence over its economic interests; otherwise, it would have made Azerbaijan, with its energy resources, the focus of its policy rather than Armenia. In Abkhazia and South Ossetia, it has been able to exert some soft power as a better alternative to Georgian rule. In the rest of the South Caucasus, however, Russia's main instruments are its military power and its capacity to sell weapons. Armenia's alliance with Russia is pragmatic, based on its security needs and those of Nagornyi Karabakh.

Russia's policy in the South Caucasus has not always been rational. In general, it has followed the pursuit of the Kremlin's security, economic and ideological needs. Sometimes, however, as shown in Putin's personal hostility to Saakashvili and in the recognition of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, emotion seems to have taken the place of reason. It is this element of irrationality in Putin's behaviour which has made Russian foreign policy sometimes unpredictable.

Notes

- 1 'Deklaratsiya o evraziiskoi ekonomicheskoi integratsii', November 18, 2011. Available at: President of Russia website, http://news.kremlin.ru/ref_notes/1091, (Accessed: 24 January 2014).
- 2 Vladimir Putin threatened to hang Georgia leader "by the balls", *The Telegraph*, November 13, 2008. Available at: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/3454154/Vladimir-Putin-threatened-to-hang-Georgia-leader-by-the-balls.html, (Accessed: 26 August 2014).
- 3 'Moscow Plays Both Sides on Nagorno-Karabakh', *IISS Strategic Comments*, 16, 25, 3 September 2010. Available at: www.iiss.org/en/publications/strategic%20comments/sections/2010-13ad/moscow-plays-both-sides-on-nagorno-karabakh-3da0 (Accessed: 26 August 2014).
- 4 Ex-Gazprom Executive becomes New Armenian Prime Minister, RFE/RL, September 13, 2016. Available at: www.rferl.org/a/armenias-new-prime-minister-karapetian-gazprom/27983645.html (Accessed: 8 May 2017)
- 5 Ivanishvili suggests Georgia must 'patiently wait' for Russian approval on NATO, RFE/RL, June 3, 2016. Available at: www.rferl.org/a/georgia-ivanishvili-nato-russia-approval/27778208.html (Accessed: 8 May 2017)
- 6 Georgia, U.S. criticize new Russian-Abkhaz military force, RFE/RL, November 23, 2016. Available at: www.rferl.org/a/us-russia-abkhazia-military-force/28134275.html (Accessed: 8 May 2017)
- 7 Kontseptsiya vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii (utverzhdena Prezidentom Rossiiskoi Federatsii V.V. Putinym 30 noyabrya 2016 g.), para. 57. Available at: www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICk6B6Z29/content/id/2542248 (Accessed: 8 May 2017)

References

- Asmus, R.D. (2010) *A Little War That Shook the World: Georgia, Russia and the Future of the West*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Averre, D. (2009) Competing Rationalities: Russia, the EU and the "Shared Neighbourhood". *Europe-Asia Studies*, 61(10).
- Babadzhanov, A.Y. (2013) *Voenno-politicheskoe sotrudnichestvo postsovetskikh gosudarstv: Problema sochetnostsi natsional'nykh dokhodov*. Moscow: MGIMO(U) and Aspekt Press.
- Baev, P. (1997) *Russia's Policies in the Caucasus*. London: Royal Institute of International Affairs.
- Blank, S. (2013) Russian Defence Policy in the Caucasus. *Caucasus Survey*, 1(1).
- Broers, L. (2016) *The Nagorny Karabakh Conflict: Defaulting to War*. Russia and Eurasia Programme, Chatham House, Research Paper. July. Available at: www.chathamhouse.org/publication/nagorny-karabakh-conflict-defaulting-war (Accessed: 8 May 2017).
- Chernyavsky, S. (2012) Russian Diplomacy and the Nagorno-Karabakh Settlement. *International Affairs: A Russian Journal of World Politics, Diplomacy and International Relations*, 58(2).
- Cheterian, V. (2008) *War and Peace in the Caucasus: Ethnic Conflict and the New Geopolitics*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Chizhov, V. (2009) Russia and the European Union: Forming a Strategic Partnership. *International Affairs: A Russian Journal of World Politics, Diplomacy and International Relations*, 55(6).
- Coalson, R. (2013a) *Invigorated Customs Union Presents Russia's Neighbors With Stark Choice*. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. 8 January. Available at: www.rferl.org/articleprintview/24818232.html (Accessed: 9 January 2013).
- Coalson, R. (2013b) *News Analysis: Armenia's Choice Stirs Competition Between Moscow, EU*. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. 4 September. Available at: www.rferl.org/articleprintview/25095948.html (Accessed: 30 September 2013).

- De Waal, T. (2010) *The Caucasus: An Introduction*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Debardeleben, J. (2011) Revising the EU's European Neighborhood Policy: The Eastern Partnership and Russia. In: R.E. Kanet (ed) *Russian Foreign Policy in the 21st Century*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Felgengauer, P. (2009) After August 7: The Escalation of the Russia–Georgia War. In: S.E. Cornell and S.F. STARR (eds) *The Guns of August 2008: Russia's War in Georgia*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- Fuller, L. (2016a) *Georgia's Hopes of NATO Membership Recede*. RFE/RL. 26 April. Available at: www.rferl.org/a/georgia-hopes-of-nato-membership-recede/27699636.html (Accessed: 8 May 2017).
- Fuller, L. (2016b) *Will Georgia's Ruling Party Use Super-Majority for Common Good or to Further Its Own Interests?* RFE/RL. 1 November. Available at: www.rferl.org/a/georgian-dream-super-majority-for-common-good-or-selfish-ends/28089134.html (Accessed: 8 May 2017).
- Fuller, L. (2017a) *Putin Gives Green Light for Incorporating Some South Ossetian Units into Russian Army*. RFE/RL. 20 March. Available at: www.rferl.org/a/russia-south-ossetia-army-incorporation/28379998.html (Accessed: 8 May 2017).
- Fuller, L. (2017b) *South Ossetia's Bibilov Wins Election, Puts Moscow in a Bind*. RFE/RL. 11 April. Available at: www.rferl.org/a/south-ossetia-bibilov-victory-presidential-election/28424108.html (Accessed: 8 May 2017).
- Gadzhiev, K.S. (2001) *Geopolitika Kavkaza*. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya.
- Gadzhiev, K.S. (2012) *"Bol'shaya igra" na Kavkaze. Vchera, segodnya, zavtra*. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya.
- German, T. (2012) *Regional Cooperation in the South Caucasus: Good Neighbours or Distant Relatives?* Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Holdsworth, N. (2015) Russia Says West Behind Revolution in Armenia. *The Times*, 26 June.
- IIFMCG (Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia). (2009) *Report*. Available at: www.ceiig.ch/Report.html (Accessed: 14 October 2011).
- Illarionov, A. (2009) The Russian Leadership's Preparation for War, 1999–2008. In: S.E. Cornell and S.F. Starr (eds) *The Guns of August 2008: Russia's War in Georgia*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- Kandel, P. (2011) Regional'nye konflikty v Evrope i ikh uregulirovanie: Yuzhnaya Osetiya, Abkhaziya, Kosovo, Pridnestrov'e, Nagornyi Karabakh, Kipr. In: V.V. Zhurkin (ed) *Bezopasnost' Evropy*. Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Europe, Moscow: Ves' mir.
- Kemoklidze, N., Moore, C., Smith, J. and Yemelianova, G. (eds) (2012) Many Faces of the Caucasus. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 64(9).
- Laurrelle, M. (2013) Conservatism as the Kremlin's New Toolkit: An Ideology at the Lowest Cost. *Russian Analytical Digest*, 138(8).
- Lekov, R. (2013) Abkhazia and South Ossetia: Problems of the Rise of Statehood. *International Affairs: A Russian Journal of World Politics, Diplomacy and International Relations*, 59(6).
- Lynch, D. (2000) *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS: The Cases of Moldova, Georgia and Tajikistan*. Basingstoke and New York: St. Martin's and Palgrave Macmillan.
- Macfarlane, S.N. (2012, April) *Georgia: National Security Concept Versus National Security*. London: Chatham House, Russia and Eurasia Programme Paper.
- Medvedev, D. (2008) *Interv'yu Dmitriya Medvedeva telekanalam "Rossiya", Pervomu, NTV*. Sochi, President of Russia website. 31 August. Available at: <http://president.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/08/205991.shtml> (Accessed: 1 September 2008).
- Merlin, A. (2011) Relations Between the North and South Caucasus: Divergent Paths? *Caucasus Analytical Digest*, 27, pp. 2–4.

- Mouritzen, H. and Wivel, A. (2012) *Explaining Foreign Policy: International Diplomacy and the Russo-Georgian War*. Boulder, CO and London: Lynne Rienner.
- Nixey, J. (2012) *The Long Goodbye: Waning Russian Influence in the South Caucasus and Central Asia*. London: Chatham House, Russia and Eurasia Programme Briefing Paper.
- Nizameddin, T. (2013) *Putin's New Order in the Middle East*. London: Hurst.
- North, A. (2015) Russia Accused of Seizing Territory at Georgian Border. *The Guardian*, 15 July.
- Oskanian, K. (2011) Turkey and the Caucasus. In: *Turkey's Global Strategy*. London: LSE Ideas Special Report, May, pp. 23–27.
- Putin, V. (1999) Rossiya na rubezhe tsysyacheletiya. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 29 December.
- Putin, V. (2011) Novyi integratsionnyi proekt dlya Evrazii: budushchee, kotoroe rozhdaetsia segodnya. *Izvestiya*. Website of the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation. 4 October. Available at: <http://premier.gov.ru/events/news/16622/print> (Accessed: 19 January 2012).
- Putin, V. (2013, 19 September) *Zasedanie mezhdunarodnogo diskussionogo kluba "Valdai"*. Website of the President of Russia. Available at: <http://news.kremlin.ru/transcripts/19243/print> (Accessed: 14 February 2014).
- RFE/RL Armenian Service. (2016) *Armenians Protest Against Russian Arms Sales to Azerbaijan*. 13 April. Available at: www.rferl.org/a/armenia-protest-russian-arm-sales-to-azerbaijan/27673173.html (Accessed: 8 May 2017).
- Sakwa, R. (2012) Conspiracy Narratives as a Mode of Engagement in International Politics: The Case of the 2008 Russo-Georgia War. *The Russian Review*, 71(4).
- Shearman, P. and Sussex, M. (2009) The Roots of Russian Conduct. In: P.B. Rich (ed). *Crisis in the Caucasus: Russia, Georgia and the West*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Shiriev, Z. (2011) Impact of Afghanistan on Energy Security in the Caspian Sea Basin: The Role of Azerbaijan. In: O.F. Tanrisever (ed) *Afghanistan and Central Asia: NATO's Role in Regional Security Since 9/11*. Amsterdam: IOS Press.
- Shiskina, O.V. (2013) *Vneshnepoliticheskie Resursy: Rossiya i ES na prostranstve "Obshchego sosedstva"*. Moscow: MGIMO(U) and Aspekt Press.
- Suny, R.G. (2007) Living in the Hood: Russia, Empire, and Old and New Neighbors. In: R. Legvold (ed) *Russian Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century and the Shadow of the Past*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Tanrisever, O.F. (ed) (2011a) *Afghanistan and Central Asia: NATO's Role in Regional Security Since 9/11*. Amsterdam: IOS Press.
- Tanrisever, O.F. (2011b) Turkey's Evolving Role in the Security of Afghanistan and Central Asia Since 9/11: Sources and Limitations of Ankara's Soft Power. In: O.F. Tanrisever (ed) *Afghanistan and Central Asia: NATO's Role in Regional Security Since 9/11*. Amsterdam: IOS Press.
- Todua, Z. (2006) *Ekspansiya islamistove na Kavkaze i v Tsentral'noi Azi*. Moscow: In-oktava.
- Trenin, A. and Trenin, D. (2010) *The Wider Implications of the Russian-American Defense Deal*. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. 24 August. Available at: www.rferl.org/articleprintview/2136480.html (Accessed: 22 September 2010).
- Trenin, D. (2011) *Post-Imperium: A Eurasian Story*. Washington, DC: Carnegie.