

THE TIPOLOGY OF RUSSIAN INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION – THE GEORGIAN CASE

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Russian interventionism manifests itself in a broad number of shapes and forms, which are explained by the circumstances of international politics and generally speaking, dependent on Russia's grand foreign policy. Therefore, I have taken the case of Russian intervention in Georgia to establish whether there is a specific typology and methods followed through by Russia when it decides to intervene outside its borders.

Thus, through the motivation of international intervention, I will eventually identify, under the paradigm of the Copenhagen School, the many forms of Russian interventionism after the year 2000.

The definition of Russian interventionism is achieved both through programmatic documents and by their implementation in various ways.

Key words: *international intervention, hybrid warfare, revisionist foreign policy, responsibility to protect.*

1. INTRODUCTION: THE REVISIONIST POLICY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Russia's foreign policy over the past two decades has had several phases, starting from a clear opposition to the status quo before the events of September 2001, following an alliance with the West in the fight against terror and continuing with a fierce struggle of imperial reassertion and reunification, considered to be a revisionist foreign policy.

Over time, after many clashes, it can be noticed that Russia is not missing from the confrontation place and always finds claims, intrusion ways, ways of intervention, in an aggressive and determined tone.

On the occasion of the 42nd Security Conference in Munich in February 2007, Russian President Vladimir Putin used harsh language to challenge the existing pattern of Russia's relations with the West, which, in his opinion, had been in force since the end of the Cold War. Putin's main statement was that the West, and especially the United States, did not take Russia's opinion and interests into account. Putin criticized general issues such as the US ambition to build a unipolar world order and lack of commitment to arms control

as well as punctual issues such as NATO enlargement and missile defense. Putin's message to the transatlantic event participants was that Russia no longer accepted the existing international order. [1]

This speech symbolically marked the opening of a new phase in Russia's foreign policy, which can be mentioned as a revisionist.

In the mid-1990s, Russia has criticized the model of the relationship with the West that emerged after the end of the Cold War. But, at the same time, Moscow was reportedly trying to join the then existing global order, saying that it wanted to aspire to Western-dominated institutions and instead was pushing system adjustments that were meant to be favorable to Russia. (From this point of view, Moscow's policy towards the West must be described as a status quo policy).

Starting 2007, Russia apparently changed its mind. Moscow started to tell the world that it doesn't agree with the way the international system was shaped up.

The ministry of Russian foreign policy at that time, Lavrov, had also some intervention that clarify this trend and deliver more elements to underline the way that Russian

Federation understands the international relations:

“When Russia is being pushed into the position of a ‘revisionist power’ contesting the status quo, one should ask what status quo we are referring to, now that the Cold War has ended, a multipolar international system is objectively emerging, and the world is experiencing a financial crisis. Is it a status quo [policy] to bring military infrastructures closer to the Russian border?” [2]

Also, a year after, he said: “I would not agree that any structured international relations existed during the last 20 years. Rather, we witnessed a drift of what was before [in the Cold War period], which ultimately proved inadequate to the new reality. For this reason, speaking of a status quo seems to be irrelevant and a de facto defense of the past”. [3]

It is only at the end of 2006 and early 2007 that Russia seems to begin to shape a new model of relations with the West and a new position on the international stage. Since the Munich speech in 2007, Russia's policy towards the West and its neighbors in the CIS has become increasingly assertive and sometimes even aggressive. The culmination of this approach has so far occurred with the Georgian war in August 2008.

The global economic crisis, which started to affect the Russian economy only in the last quarter of 2008, was a factor that Russia didn't expect and didn't take into account when it launched the attack against Georgia. It triggered a speculation that Russia's "revival" and "revisionism" era was coming to an end - that Moscow would not have enough funds to implement such an ambitious policy and that it would be forced to mitigate position in international relations, and the revisionism from 2007-2008 will prove to have been a short episode, a moment of euphoria caused by the success of the Russian oil industry. However, the first year of the crisis and the years that followed did not give enough reason to appreciate that the Russian Federation's foreign policy will change.

2. RUSSIAN INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION TYPOLOGY – THE GEORGIAN CASE

Russia's military intervention in Georgia in August 2008 raised significant questions about Russian thinking and practice on the legitimate use of military force abroad, especially with regard to neighboring states or the so-called "near neighborhood." [5]

The near neighborhood concept in Russia's foreign policy is a consistent pillar in explaining interventionism in the region, ultimately representing the main justification that Kremlin leaders use.

At the NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008, the US President George W. Bush announced that Georgia and Ukraine should receive the Accession Action Plan, and even if they did not receive it in the end, but only got the NATO's intention to receive it, the two states entered in the North Atlantic Club, which irritated Russia, given its categorical opposition to NATO's eastward expansion process.

However, Russia had begun long before the conflict to carry out a series of actions leading to a possible military intervention in Georgia, some of them intensifying as a result of Georgia's steps to the west.

Thus, Georgia participates in the region's most important economic project: the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, which allows Azerbaijan to diversify the routes of its energy resources to the world market and not to depend on Russia. It was Georgia's first step to get away from Russia.

In 1999 Georgia became a member of the European Council. Moreover, the country's leadership officially announced the intention of Georgia to become a NATO member. Subsequently, the US has initiated the so-called "Train and Equip" program to modernize the Georgian army and enhance interoperability with NATO. [4]

In addition, Georgian soldiers participated in the NATO mission in Kosovo in 1999. Then President George W. Bush paid a visit to Georgia in 2005 as a warning message to Moscow. Georgia has tried to show its Western partners that it wants to be not only the consumer of security (from the Euro-Atlantic security system) but also the security provider. Thus, the Georgian soldiers joined

the coalition forces in Iraq as well as the NATO mission in Afghanistan as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

Moscow has begun to consolidate its positions in separatist regions of Georgia, while Tbilisi has tried to significantly increase its partnership with the West. Russia provided military equipment to the armed groups in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Moreover, it stepped up the process of issuing passports to citizens of these regions.

All this was happening in the context of continued tensions in Georgia due to the risk of territorial disintegration due to the separatist demands of the two provinces, especially in the case of Ossetia, which had held a referendum in 2006 to obtain independence.

At the same time, Russia announced that its army was ready **to protect its citizens abroad**. Thus, the first signs of a possible armed conflict between Russia and Georgia had become visible in 2005.

On this basis, Russian military expert Pavel Felgenhaur predicted that Vladimir Putin would launch a military intervention against Georgia in Abkhazia and South Ossetia in August 2008.

Finally, on 8th of August, the military confrontation began, Russia attacked Georgia and invaded South Ossetia. During this period, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev was on



vacation, and world leaders were at the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in Beijing.

Fig. 1 Georgia map with the two regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Source: The Economist

Military intervention in Georgia was also called the blitzkrieg war, lasting only six days. The first Kremlin leader's statement highlighted that "women, children and the elderly die in South Ossetia, and most of them are citizens of the Russian Federation," and "those responsible for it will be punished properly." [6]

Thus, Georgian President Mihail Saakashvili ordered the army to respond to the attacks of secessionist groups in South Ossetia on Georgia's incursion into South Ossetia on Thursday August 7 to stop the bombing of Georgian villages by the Ossetian militia. Air strikes in the region and military troops were sent to South Ossetia.

The ceasefire was immediately followed by peace talks, mediated by a third state - France. The six-point Peace Plan, an agreement contested by the United States, recognized Georgia's sovereignty, but not its integrity. The two regions remain separate from Georgia, and Russia is committed to withdraw the troops.

On August 26, the President of Russia signed an official act acknowledging the independence of the two regions. The US reaction was not late, and G.W. Bush said at the time: "The United States condemns the decision of the Russian President to recognize the Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states. Georgia's territorial integrity and borders must be respected, just like those of Russia or any other country." [7]

With regard to the instruments used in this intervention, in addition to the terrestrial and airborne armed force used, the cyber and informational dimension should also be mentioned.

A cyber-attack was reported thus unfolding a new front of the invasion coordinated by Russia. On August 8, Georgia's presidential website was taken under external control and began to expose pictures of Adolf Hitler interspersed with photographs of President Saakashvili. But another 38 major Georgian

websites have been attacked, including the Foreign Ministry, the National Bank, the Supreme Court, and the Central Electoral Commission, the American and British embassies. Obviously, the ability of the Georgian authorities to reach out to the public has been affected.

In order to facilitate communication between the authorities and the outside world, Poland and Estonia, allies of Georgia, intervened and offered the Georgian government their websites as alternative and temporary platforms.

Media campaigns began on both sides. A study by Hans-Georg Heinrich, professor of political science at the University of Vienna, together with Moscow-based journalist Kirill Tanaev on the trends of the six-day war in Georgia and his echoes in a selection of Western newspapers (New York Times, Le Monde, The Guardian, Washington Post, Der Standard) and, of course, Georgian (independent) and Russian, Rossiiskaia Gazeta (power) and Novaya Gazeta (opposition) analyzed this situation. [8]

The conclusion of the research claims that initially the Western newspapers went to Georgia and President Saakashvili and accused Russia, and later the same newspapers became much more critical and circumspect over the circumstances in which the conflict was triggered, acknowledging the falsity of the theory that Georgia would have been the victim of Russian aggression.

So we have elements of the hybrid warfare, a type of warfare considered to be of new generation, but, in my opinion, its new-ness consisted in the transformation that have arise from the technological leap and globalization. The hybrid warfare in the Russian version is beginning to become a concept since the publication of an article in 2013 by Russian General Valery Gerasimov, Chief of Staff of the Russian Armed Forces. The article mentions the different types of modern warfare by referring to operations led by Western states, exemplifying the case of Libya and Syria. He points out, among other things, that the hybrid warfare involves political, economic, informational, humanitarian and other non-military measures. [9]

However, this article is not a strategy of the Russian Federation itself, especially since the implementation of these ideas would materialize during the intervention in Ukraine. From a strategic point of view, promoting the concept of hybrid warfare under the name of the Gerasimov doctrine can be considered as a legitimation of actions for Russia's subsequent interventions and is certainly an important document from the point of view of the analysis of Russian interventionism.

Even though hybrid war is assimilated to Russia's intervention in Ukraine, according to current definitions, it also applies to Georgian case.

3. CONCLUSIONS – FROM MOTIVATION TO ARGUMENTATION AND LEGITIMIZING THE RUSSIAN INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION

The motivations of Russia's intervention in Georgia have several dimensions: the strategic, the economic and the consistency with the principles of the Russian foreign policy are implicit.

Russia has strategic motivations considering geographic location of Georgia. Located in Transcaucasia, between the Russian region of the North Caucasus and the Middle East, Georgia is part of the "buffer zone" between Russia and the Middle East, the South Caucasus. The region is bordering on Turkey and Iran. So the strategic importance of the region has made Georgia a security concern for Russia.

Major economic reasons, such as the presence or transport of oil, have also increased interest in Transcaucasia and therefore Georgia. Control over Transcaucasia, in the opinion of Swedish academician Svante Cornell, would allow Russia to control Western influence in the geopolitically important region of Central Asia. [10]

Russia has appreciated the Black Sea coast and the border with Turkey as Georgia's strategic attributes. Russia had more interests in Abkhazia than in South Ossetia, because Russia's military presence on the Black Sea

coast was considered vital for Russia's influence in the Black Sea.

The closeness of the Western structures and declared ambitions of Georgia to join the North Atlantic Alliance, as it is observed also in Ukraine's case, where ties with the European Union were more visible, made Russia demonstrate that the area in its near neighborhood is an area of influence that Kremlin wants to control at all costs.

The arguments put forward by Russia to justify this campaign show that Russian interpretations of international law as well as rules on the use of force have served as instruments of state policy rather than being rooted in an international consensus.

Russia's speech in this context on sovereignty, self-determination and the legitimacy of recognizing South Ossetia and Abkhazia as states appears similarly strongly influenced by its own political interest and Russian views on its right in the CIS region.

Among Russian claims, Moscow's commitment to protect "citizens" in territories beyond its borders has been particularly controversial. It was considered that Russia, through its justifications to trigger the war against Georgia, disputes to a greater extent the interpretation of certain international norms, which they consider to be essentially constructed by the Western states.

On the other hand, we can note that the argumentation of interventionism in this case can fall within the scope of the concept of responsibility to protect, with the specification of the importance of the ethnic aspect transposed into a dimension with emotional implications, as observed in the Russian leaders' speeches.

Today, Georgia is closer to the West than to Russia, despite geographical proximity. Tbilisi has significantly stepped up cooperation with Washington and NATO, with new institutions, including the NATO-Georgia Commission. Also, the Georgian-European relations have advanced to a new level after the signing of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement.

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