

The Russo-Georgian relationship

A case-study of how security dynamics shaped the
relationship

Nick Johansson
Jacob Kristiansson

Abstract

We analyse Georgia's and Russia's relationship through four major historical events. These are: the Georgian independence, the Rose revolution, the Georgian energy crisis and Georgia's approach to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). We examine how the dynamics behind the selected events shape the Russo-Georgian relationship between the time span of the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the Georgian War in 2008. The Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) gave us a regional approach, which we hold suits the paper's aim well, as we analysed Russia's and Georgia's relationship in the post-Soviet region through a theoretical framework. The disciplined-configurative method gave us the means for taking both a materialist and constructivist approach. Our purpose with this paper is to examine how different security sectors and perceptions of security may affect states' relationships. Our findings show that their relationship has with the occurrence of the four events gone towards enmity. We also found indications of Georgia trying to distance itself from Russian influence, by seeking western integration.

Key words: Georgia, Russia, near abroad, sphere of influence, regional security complex theory, securitization, disciplined-configurative method.

Words: 9 982.

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1 Introduction

When talking about Russia and Georgia it is often about the war in 2008, and not so much about the troubled relationship between the two of them before the war. What made it so troublesome? What were the dynamics, and how did they shape the relationship? This caught our attention, so we decided to examine the two countries' relationship in order to bring light to the dynamics of different security sectors before war. The period we will examine is the one between the fall of the Soviet Union up until the outbreak of the war in August 2008.

Examining every single event or incident in this time period, stretching almost 20 years, would be an overwhelming task. Therefore, this paper will narrow its focus and take an in-depth look at *The Georgian independence*, *The Rose Revolution*, *the energy crisis* and *Georgia's approach towards NATO* and examine how they helped shape the relationship between Russia and Georgia. We believe that these 'key' events can reveal interesting insights into the dynamics of their relationship, different security sectors and influence in the post-Soviet space.

1.1 Background

Georgia and Russia share a common past together. Kari Roberts (2018) explains that Russia has regarded Georgia as historical allies in general and as belonging to the Russian so-called *sphere of interest*. Georgia became independent from the Soviet Union in 1991 (Maxim Suchkov, 2018). When Mikhail Gorbachev became general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1990, processes of decentralisation accelerated significantly in Eastern Europe (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Not only Georgia, but Armenia and Azerbaijan, gained their independence from the Soviet Union, emerging from the Union's fall (Suchkov, 2018).

When the Soviet Union dissolved, approximately 25 million ethnic Russians eventually stood under foreign leadership. (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Russia lost official control over millions of citizens and over 5.3 million km² of territory. It also meant increased difficulty to protect their regional borders (Carmen Gayoso, 2009, p.9-10). Concerning Georgia, its independence resulted in the regions Abkhazia and South Ossetia becoming part of Georgia, meanwhile e.g., the North Ossetian region became under Russian control. Gayoso (2009) writes that, considering that millions of ethnic Russians no longer lived in Russian territory, the *constructed* foreign policy objective of *protecting Russians* abroad continued to be vitally important after the Soviet Union's dissolution. Therefore, Russia sought closer relations with

post-Soviet states that had significant amounts of residing ethnic Russians (Gayoso, 2009).

In December 1991, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was created, consisting of Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia. For Russia, one purpose of the CIS creation was to demonstrate its position as bloc leader for the larger region of the CIS and to retain their *sphere of interest*. The former Soviet republics were included in Russia's sphere of interests, and this was justified by Russia as a need to protect ethnic Russians. In 1992, the idea of *Near Abroad* emerged and the term signifies among other things the importance of protecting ethnic Russians in geographically near and ex-Soviet states. The idea of *Near Abroad* became an official Russian foreign policy objective in 1993. (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Georgia (among other states) became a CIS member the same year.

Concerning the European Union (EU), Elkhan Nuriyev (2015) holds that they have increased their political engagement with the ex-Soviet states of South Caucasus (including Georgia) since the mid 1990s. In Luxembourg, June 1999, EU Partnership and Cooperation Agreements were made with Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia (Nuriyev, 2015). That Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova created the cooperation alliance GUAM in 1997 as response to Russia's regional dominance, is another example of post-Soviet states reaching for other distributions of power (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). In 1995, Georgian president Eduard Shevardnadze reached for closer relations with the United States instead of Russia. Moreover, Shevardnadze stressed in 1999 that Georgia would apply for NATO-membership if he became re-elected in 2000. Thus, Georgia became the first state in the South Caucasus to express an interest in joining NATO (Tracey German, 2015).

This paper investigates Georgia's and Russia's relationship throughout four events. It may not be surprising that Georgia's and Russia's relationship historically has been a turbulent one. However, one could argue that Georgia's story resembles merely one out of many similar cases, where post-Soviet states have had a troubled post-independence past with Russia.

1.2 Purpose and research question

This paper will examine how the Russo-Georgian relationship was shaped by four events in the period between the fall of the Soviet Union up until the Russo-Georgian war in August 2008. It is important to note that we assume that the chosen events in fact *have* affected the relationship. Whilst reading up on the subject we came to the conclusion that these events cannot be ignored since they are major events in Georgia's history. Also, because we argue that they all contain an aspect of Georgia trying to distance itself from Russia's influence. The four events, which we call 'key' are: *the Georgian independence, Rose Revolution, the energy crisis* and *Georgia's relation with NATO*. The focus will not be on if but rather *how*

certain dynamics of these ‘key’ events helped shape the relationship between the countries.

Our purpose with this paper is to bring light to, and deepen the knowledge about, different sectors of security (or perceived security) that may have been present in the relationship in question. With these events we expect to encounter for example: national security, energy security and societal security.

To help examine and analyse these events and their respective dynamics, we will use the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) and the concept of identity. This will provide the paper with a regional perspective, structure and a theoretical foundation from which we will operationalise some of its concepts regarding relationships between actors. This provides us with the analytical tools necessary to conduct our examination.

To help us achieve our purpose we aim to answer this question:

- How did the dynamics of key events help shape the relationship between Russia and Georgia before the war in 2008?

1.3 Literature review

Previous research has mostly either covered the causes of the Georgian war in 2008 or the identity aspect of the war, but there are some articles which cover the relationship. Concerning causal explanations behind the war, a common explanation is that NATO’s and EU’s march into eastern Europe was perceived as threatening the Russian regional hegemony. An example of an article discussing this is Elkhan Nuriyev’s (2015) *Russia, the EU and the South Caucasus: Forging an Efficient Over-Arching Cooperative Regional Security Scheme*. Another example of an article which shows that this reasoning not only can be applied to the Russian and Georgian relations is John Mearsheimer’s (2014) *Why the Ukraine crisis is the West’s fault: The liberal delusions that provoked Putin*, regarding the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014.

States’ behaviour are based on their conceptions of the reality of an anarchic world and of their perceived identity. This does not only concern states, as conceptions of reality and perceptions of identity also shape peoples’ foreign policy behaviour. Furthermore, that perceptions of identity ultimately fueled the conflicts between Russia and Georgia is also a common aspect which previous literature touches upon. E.g., Kari Roberts (2017) has written the article *Understanding Putin: The politics of identity and geopolitics in Russian foreign policy discourse*, which lays heavy weight on the influence of identity in Vladimir Putin’s foreign policy.

Regarding their relationship, Kornely K. Kakachia discussed this in his article *The Russo-Georgian relationship: personal issues or national interest?* (2011). His main focus being the personal relationships between leaders of the two states and how they were all riddled with enmity and particularly how Russia’s leaders seemed

to dislike nearly everything the Georgian presidents did. Besides that, he argues that Russia was “uncomfortable” with “Georgia’s democratic and independent nature” as well as “the West’s close ties” with a country within “Moscow’s ‘legitimate’ sphere of influence” (Kakachia 2011, p. 110). Our study will not focus on personal relationships. However, the part concerning Russia’s influence in the region could be of interest by comparing our results.

Finally, Ömer Kocaman’s article *Russia’s relations with Georgia within the context of the Russian national interests towards the south Caucasus in the post-Soviet era: 1992-2005* (2008) focus on Russia and its national interests in the region. He examines among other things: the importance of the Russian military bases in Georgia and the ethnopolitical aspects of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. While this article does provide some insight into the Russian point-of-view, it does not cover Georgia’s side of the story nor how different actions were perceived.

Without arguing for one particular explanation for tensions between Russia and Georgia in our paper, we will instead stand out from previous research by utilising our own operationalised amity vs. enmity scale through the theoretical framework of RSCT.

Nevertheless, we will use previous research to be able to gain answers on how both material and constructivist conditions help shape the relationship between Russia and Georgia. Therefore, we will merge the concepts of identity, balance of power and amity and enmity in our research paper.

2 Theoretical perspective

2.1 Regional security complex theory

The RSCT is a theory of international relations (IR) developed by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde throughout the 1990s, and later updated in 2003. The main argument is that, to understand what they believe to be a new post-Cold War structure of the anarchic international system; RSCT is needed. Additionally, one can use it to evaluate the balance-of-power and relationships amid actors within structures (Buzan & Wæver 2003, p. 3-4). To properly understand the fundamentals of the RSCT we need to describe its theoretical point-of-view, how it relates to the concept of levels of analysis and finally why it is useful.

To begin with, the RSCT uses both a materialist and a constructivist approach. When it comes to the materialist part, the RSCT uses concepts closely related to neorealism. The neorealist concept useful for us is the distribution of power. Furthermore, the founders of the RSCT believe that their more ‘regional’ approach in terms of levels of analysis, has great synergy and unity with the neorealist structure of the anarchic system, adding a fourth (regional) level. However, the RSCT does not emphasise the system level nearly as much (Buzan & Wæver 2003, p. 4). While the RSCT sees the value in some parts of neorealism, the authors do however argue that the neorealist approach is limited in terms of explaining security when it comes to “areas other than the military-political” and “to actors other than the state” (Buzan & Wæver 2003, p. 28). This is where the constructivist elements could prove useful.

The constructivist side of the RSCT is mainly based on the authors’ previous work on a securitisation theory. The securitisation theory is centred around how actors *securitise* issues into matters of national security (Buzan & Wæver 2003, p. 4). They define security issues as “a threat to the survival of some referent object”, for example a state which “is claimed to have a right to survive”. When a state labels the issue a security issue it is basically making it into a security issue (Buzan & Wæver 2003, p. 71). The authors define security as “security is what actors make it...” (Buzan & Wæver 2003, p. 48). Clearly a reference to Alexander Wendt’s (a prominent social constructivist) idea that “anarchy is what states make of it” (Wendt 1992, p. 391). This definition of security enables inclusion of more sectors, considering that it is the actors themselves who label and therefore construct security issues, according to the RSCT.

Another theoretical concept that we will use in our paper is *identity*. While the concept has no explicit RSCT origin, constructivists utilise the concept in their

research. Wendt (1992, p.398) writes that “identities are the basis of interest”. As Christian Reus-Smit (2013, p.224) explains, “identities inform interests and, in turn, actions.” Regarding the concept of identity, we define it in accordance with Cambridge Dictionary’s (n.d.) definition as “the fact of being, or feeling that you are, a particular type of person, organisation, etc.; the qualities that make a person, organisation, etc. different from others.” Due to the concept’s importance when analysing international relations, constructivists focus on the identities of individuals or states. Thus, we can also include states in the definition. We hold that identity is a socially constructed phenomenon which therefore is not a constant. It is “effects of practice”, which reinforce the concept’s meaning (Wendt, 1995, p.74). Further theorising around the concept, Valentina Feklyunina (2018, p.7) writes that constructivists understand identity “as an inherently relational concept”. The implication of a relational understanding of who we are, is the idea of external *Others*, who are assumed to be *different from us (otherness)*. Feklyunina (2018, p.7) refers to Ringmar when writing that “some constructivists have also emphasised the importance of recognition or non-recognition of actors’ identities by their external *Others* in the processes of identity and interest construction”.

The last constructivist element, specifically within the RSCT, is the thought that distribution of power is not the only important aspect of international systems. Expanding on this, the RSCT suggests that “actions” as well as the “interpretations of actors” play a role in shaping a system, arguing that these actions and interpretations affect the relationships between units (Buzan & Wæver 2003, p. 40). Considering the fact that the RSCT uses both neorealist and constructivist concepts, our paper will therefore be able to analyse the events using parts of these prominent IR-theories which in turn will broaden our approach. Using only of these IR perspectives would give a too narrow of an approach for our purpose and also limit our possible findings. Therefore, the RSCT suits our paper well.

Additionally, we need to describe how the theory positions itself in terms of ‘level of analysis’. Often, IR theories use the system, state/unit and individual level of analysis and while the RTSC in some ways uses the first two, its main level is a new ‘regional’ one. This regional level is placed under the system level and above the state level. It differs from the state level by the fact that for a region to be counted as a ‘region’, it must contain several independent states/units with a close geographical proximity. The main difference between the system level and the regional is that the latter contains a lot less actors than the ‘whole’ of the system level (Buzan & Wæver 2003, p. 27).

Finally, when it comes to *why* the regional perspective and the RSCT should be used, the key underlying assumption made is that “most threats travel more easily over short distances than over long ones” (Buzan & Wæver 2003, p. 4). For instance, if Brazil were to threaten Argentina it would be of greater concern to Argentina than if Germany were to do the same, simply because of the difference in distance between the countries. This assumption is important for the main argument: *geographical proximity* is key when it comes to establishing the main security environment of actors without a global reach, i.e. The US. Considering the geographical proximity, this results in their local region being the main security environment (Buzan & Wæver 2003, p. 4). If the local region is important for actors,

then using the regional perspective of the RSCT is fitting. We believe that this regional level will be of great use to us because it will give our paper the means necessary to analyse how the events helped shape the relationship with the help of concepts like *distribution of power*, *balance of power* and patterns of *amity* and *enmity* in a regional context, not only on a state or system level.

In closing, Buzan and Wæver (2003, p. 4) argue that actors in these local regions form what they call Regional Security Complexes (RSCs).

2.1.1 Regional security complexes

The Regional Security Complex (model) is defined by Buzan and Wæver as:

“...a set of units whose major processes of securitisation, desecuritisation, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another.” (Buzan & Wæver 2003, p. 44)

These ‘sets of units’ together form structures on a regional level where they are linked together by security interdependence (Buzan & Wæver 2003, p. 40, 43). Within these RSCs the interactions are mostly centralised within the structure. Going back to the assumption that threats travel more easily over short distances, this tends to make states more fearful of their neighbours and therefore seek alliances with actors in the region (Buzan & Wæver 2003, p. 41, 45). This also implies that RSCs are characterised by the fears and ambitions of the units within it (Buzan & Wæver 2003, p. 41). What further characterises a RSC is the “pattern of rivalry”, “balance-of-power” and “alliance patterns” within it (Buzan & Wæver 2003, p. 47). These concepts are also integral for the relationships between units within RSCs.

Every region has its own distribution of power and balance-of-power. Buzan and Wæver (2003, p. 49) suggest that these regions can be defined in terms of polarity ranging from unipolarity to multipolarity. This power distribution is mainly formed around ‘materialistic’ factors (Buzan & Wæver 2003, p. 6). There are three types of powers that could be used in a polarity analysis. *Superpowers*, which have the capability to reach or interfere with every other RSC. *Great powers*, who can interfere with other RSCs in the near vicinity. *Regional powers*, which only operate within its own RSC (Buzan & Wæver 2003, p. 34-35). Other states are limited to their respective RSCs and in a ‘weak’ relative position in comparison to the powers forming the polarity (Buzan & Wæver 2003, p. 46). For weaker states the balance-of-power logic (balancing against the biggest power) may lead to a desire of help from external powers. If an arrangement is made with a power outside of the RSC it is called *penetration* (Buzan & Wæver 2003, p. 46).

Regarding the constructivist part, with amity and enmity, Buzan and Wæver (2003, p. 53-54) use three types of categories: conflict formation, security regime and security community. These categories summarise the current status quo of all the patterns combined in an RSC. Thus, they can neither explain the relationship

between two units, nor specific actions between units, nor what constitutes as a pattern of amity or enmity.

The patterns of amity and enmity in a RSC vary between the regions. These patterns are often affected by aspects such as “history, culture, religion and geography” but the authors highlight that they are also often “path-dependent” (Buzan & Wæver 2003, p. 50). In addition, who sees who as a friend or enemy stems internally from within the region by a mix of “history, politics and material conditions” (Buzan & Wæver 2003, p. 47). Since the RSCT view on the patterns is constructivist, all these factors add to the actor’s own ‘constructed’ perception of actions depending on who the actor or unit is. Finally, specific events or issues that cause “conflict” or “cooperation” also help shape the relationships between actors which in turn make the actions and the perceptions of these actions a key part in the patterns. (Buzan & Wæver 2003, p. 40, 50).

The four events we have chosen to examine (*Georgian independence*, *The Rose Revolution*, *the energy crisis* and *Georgia’s approach towards NATO*) all have one important common denominator: the Georgian desire to distance itself from Russia’s influence. This is an important reason as to why they were chosen for our paper since it is reasonable to assume that when one actor tries (or desires to) distance itself from another actor, the relationship will be affected. Another reason is that they are also too ‘big’ to ignore, for instance; independence is a major event in a country’s history. A revolution likewise.

When it comes to connecting the RSCT to these events we expect to find: consequences of Russia’s hegemony, influence and a balance-of-power aspect concerning NATO. We also theorise that on the scale of amity and enmity these events will have more indications of enmity, considering that the two countries ended up in a war, but also because of the aforementioned distancing by Georgia away from Russia, which Russia might not endorse. Lastly, we theorise that the events will relate to security - energy, national and societal.

3 Method and material

3.1 Case-study

We will utilise the method of a qualitative disciplinary-configurative (alias: interpretive) case-study, as an examination of Georgia's and Russia's relationship needs both explanatory and interpretive approaches in order to understand the case. We will use John Gerring's (2004, p.341) definition of a case study as "an in-depth study of a single unit (a relatively bounded phenomenon) where the scholar's aim is to elucidate features of a larger class of similar phenomenon." Regarding the concept of a unit, it "connotes a spatially bounded phenomenon... over some delimited period of time", according to Gerring (2004, p.342). First of all, this paper consists of an in-depth analysis of the unit: the relationship between Russia and Georgia. It will be a within-unit case study as our analysis is constructed upon spatial and time boundaries, the nation states of Russia's and Georgia's territories and the period between 1991 and 2008.

This paper's main aim is not to explicitly generalise our results at the examination's end. We will make a theory-guided case study from which a theoretical framework will be utilised systematically. .

Regarding qualitative text analysis, we use this approach to thoroughly dig out the most central substances of the texts about our case. We will generally be more interested in the meaning-making processes behind the states' actions rather than simply stating facts around how they act. We will not seek objective truths on the questions of why and how certain historical events occurred. The reason is that the qualitative text analysis approach does not consider the reality of being independent of how it is viewed. Instead, its' assumptions are that reality is a construction and based on *conceptions* about reality. Thus, meaning-making processes would e.g. mean an analysis on how perceived identities, threats or security can reconstruct certain reality conceptions (Peter Esaiasson et al., 2017).

3.2 Operationalisation

To begin with, we need to define our thoughts on the concepts of 'amity' and 'enmity'. This will be done with a constructivist lens in the sense that perceptions and emotions are central for the interpretation of them. Amity will relate to "friendship between actors", therefore, positive actions and emotions between two

actors will be interpreted as signs of amity. Enmity will relate to “hostilities between actors” where ‘negatively’ charged actions and emotions will be emphasised.

Our operationalisation of amity and enmity should be seen as an addition to Buzan and Wæver’s formations of amity and enmity. Their aim was to develop a framework for describing a whole RSC at a given time, summarising what the patterns of amity and enmity have led to in terms of current status. Since our interest is focused on the interstate relationship between Russia and Georgia, a summary of the whole region is incapable of determining how different events shaped their relationship. The RSCT lacks examples of what constitutes as an *act* of amity or enmity. Therefore, we created a scale which will provide us with a tool to examine an interstate relationship in terms of acts of amity and enmity.

While establishing our scale we took great inspiration from The Basins at Risk project. This dissertation was centred around freshwater resources and international conflict (Yoffe 2001). While the topic was not relevant, their scale - ranging from cooperation to conflict - was. It provided a foundation to which we made simplifications and adaptations as well as putting a constructivist touch on in order to better suit a general approach to interstate conflicts. This resulted in a scale with categories ranging from -4 to +4 where everything above 0 is considered ‘amity’ and everything below as ‘enmity’. 0 is neutral and therefore neither amity nor enmity.

Enmity

Amity

-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4
Declaration of war.	Military actions.	Perceived negative political, economic or diplomatic actions.	Perceived verbal hostility.	Neutral actions	Perceived verbal support.	Perceived positive political, economic or diplomatic actions.	Strategic alliance, military support.	Unification into one nation.

It is important to note that while the scale may give the appearance of being in intervals, it is not. For example, -2 is not to be considered exactly halfway to -4, and therefore exactly halfway to a declaration of war. The numerical value should instead be seen as an indication of a level of amity/enmity where, for example, an action which is categorised as -4 is worse than -2, but not necessarily twice as bad.

On the amity side we have a (voluntarily) *Unification into one nation*. After this, *Strategic alliance, military support* as in, enter into or be helped militarily. *Perceived positive political, economic or diplomatic actions* is a broad category which includes agreements or support in time of need. This is an example of our constructivist touch; it is up to the recipient’s perception as to what is a positive or

negative action. Finally, *Perceived verbal support* is for example support of goals, values, regime or praise.

Neutral are acts which are not considered as either amity or enmity.

On the side of enmity, an act of *Perceived verbal hostility* is expressing threats, instilling fear, humiliate or otherwise (verbally) induce ‘negative’ emotions. *Perceived negative political, economic or diplomatic actions* could mean breaching of an agreement or obligation, blackmailing, interfering with the other states’ interests etc. *Military actions* consist of not respecting another state’s sovereignty, engaging in military conflict, actions causing strategic damage or death. The final category is *Declaration of war* either through a formal declaration or a ‘full on’ invasion.

3.3 Disciplined-configurative method

According to Jack Levy (2008), theory-guided case studies (e.g. disciplined-configurative) are also idiographic as they seek to interpret or explain a single historical event rather than to generalise their results. We are neither constructing nor testing generalisable theories. We are mainly utilising RSCT to try to understand key aspects and historical events of our case.

Using the RSCT as a theoretical and conceptual framework follows a risk; that our operationalisations of the theory’s concepts will be influenced by our own preconceptions about the selected events. However, according to Levy (2008, p.5), “the more case interpretations are guided by theory... the easier they are to empirically validate or invalidate.” To define concepts is vitally important in order to gain internal validity. Conceptual and theoretical frameworks will aid us in this.

A descriptive case study method makes little effort to generalise its results onto other cases. Similarly, our paper will not mainly aim at generalising our results onto other cases. However, John Odell (2001) explains that, in contrast to a descriptive case method, which merely aims to *document* the correct stories of the historical event, the disciplined configurative method tries to *interpret* crucial breaking points concerning the phenomenon. Therefore, we will not be limited to only reporting facts of the events. We seek to understand particular events and will use the theoretical concepts and framework of RSCT.

Achieving external validity (generalising) could be difficult, as Odell (2001, p.164) writes that “most events are consistent with more than one interpretation”. Nevertheless, we do not claim that our interpretations of the events in our case maintain the final word. Instead, our paper will contribute to the general research on selected historical events. We will see if the RSCT framework can aid us in understanding our case, which may be valuable for further RSCT research. Concerning elucidating features of a larger class of cases, Georgia resembles one out of many other similar cases, where post-Soviet states have had a troubled post-independence past with Russia. Our results could be valuable for future research papers on post-Soviet states’ relationships with Russia. In this way, our paper will also gain external validity.

Another possible risk, however, with the disciplined configurative method usage is that we ourselves select events that we think may have had an impact on Russia's and Georgia's relationship. The risk consists of selective reconstruction of the event, in order to support our theory (Odell, 2001, p.164). We may be criticised for selecting events that we think can be understood through the framework of RSCT and thus legitimise our paper's results. Nonetheless, we neither aim to criticise nor defend the theory. There is no hidden agenda in selecting specific events. Systematically and objectively, we will see whether the RSCT can be applied to the selected events or not. For this reason, this paper's research could also interest those who care more for the theory rather than the historical events examined.

Despite the fact that the disciplined configurative method takes both causal and interpretive approaches, we will not focus on causal mechanisms behind the outbreak of the 2008 war. Instead, we try to interpret the selected events with help of the theoretical framework of RSCT, in order to understand them. This is the main aim of using the disciplined configurative method. Because of the objective usage of the RSCT, the readers of this paper could analyse the results of our paper and be able to develop or add new suggestions to the theory in their future research. *Nota bene*, that we do not seek to develop the theory ourselves.

3.4 Material

As it is beyond the time limit of our paper for conducting interviews and transcribing them, which constitute primary sources, this paper's scope will be limited to analysing secondary sources. We could have acquired memoirs or autobiographies, which also constitute primary sources. However, we will conduct a theory-guided case study of the selected historical events. Therefore, we find that using secondary source books, journal- and news articles and official documents in order to analyse the relation between Georgia and Russia through the RSCT concepts suits this paper's scope the best. Through the usage of Barry Buzan's & Ole Wæver's book *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, we will be able to directly apply the theoretical and conceptual framework of the RSCT.

Furthermore, by using sources which bring up the topic of Georgian and Russian relations during the time span of the events that we have selected, we will be capable of analysing the events through an objective and academic way. One could argue that the usage of journal articles and a book about only one particular theory does not automatically transform the paper into an objective research study. However, as we try to acquire different interpretations of Russian and Georgian relations during the events by the help of secondary sources, it will not pose a major threat for our paper's results.

4 Analysis

4.1 Georgian independence

Georgia became independent from the Soviet Union in 1991. However, that Georgia (as other former Soviet republics) was perceived by the Soviet Union as being included in their *sphere of interest* has not necessarily meant that Georgia that year has become excluded from it. In fact, the creation of the strategic alliance CIS was merely a mean for Russia's end of retaining their *sphere of interest* and to demonstrate Russia's bloc leadership for the post-Soviet RSC. The post-Soviet RSC consists of former Soviet republics, and it is a region as it contains several independent states with a close geographical proximity (Buzan & Wæver, 2003).

Georgia's unification with the Soviet Union in the first place may not have been an act of amity. Nevertheless, one could argue that the relationship between Russia and Georgia went towards enmity in 1991 because of the Georgian independence, as they lost their +4 status towards amity (Georgia was not unified into one state through the Soviet Union anymore). However, one could perceive the CIS creation, which was created the same year, as a Russian attempt to move their relations towards +3 (strategic alliance). That Georgia joined the alliance in 1993 could be perceived by Russia as a positive diplomatic Georgian action. Nuriyev (2015) writes that Russia concentrates on strengthening security arrangements with former-Soviet republics, with the help of CIS and the *near abroad* objective. The main reason for these arrangements is to limit ex-Soviet republics to developing closer ties with the 'West', i.e., the EU and NATO (Nuriyev, 2015).

As identity is the basis of interest, it is important to analyse Russia's perceived identity to understand Russia's interest in Georgia. Their perceived identity may have affected the relationship between the countries. Feklyunina (2018) explains that Russia has both historically and in the post-Soviet period searched for recognition as a *great power* by the external *Others*, in this case by the 'West'.

Buzan & Wæver (2003) explains that the historical construction of the Russian state identity involves an absence of the political concept of nation. That Russia did not become a nation-state has its roots in Russia's historical continuous expansion. Buzan & Wæver (2003) refer to Trenin when writing that "Russia is a geographical concept" rather than statehood. Furthermore, Russians perceive their state identity more as civilizational and as imperial rather than a state (Buzan & Wæver (2003). Perceptions on what Russia entails have implications for its foreign policy and the relationship between the two countries. Not only CIS, but the foreign policy

objective of the *near abroad* is a means to an end of having influence over the post-Soviet RSC and in turn be recognized at the global level as a *great power*.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union meant a promise of former Soviet republics' independence. However, that Georgia gained its independence does not mean that Georgia got rid of the Russian influence in their RSC. Scott Littlefield (2009) writes that when Georgia gained *de jure* legitimacy as a state after the Soviet collapse, its legitimacy was questioned both by Russian politicians and by separatist movements in e.g., Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Mikheil Shavtvaladze (2018, p.54) explains that "Russia sought to undermine Georgia's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity by supporting separatist regimes in breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia".

The fall of the Soviet Union meant an increasing difficulty for Russia to protect their regional borders, because of the spread of sovereignty and national identities (Gayoso, 2009). Neil Melvin (2018) means that Russia has perceived the disorder and localised conflicts on their borders (including Abkhazia and South Ossetia) as a major threat, as the disorder might spill over into Russia and fragment their country. Littlefield (2009, p.1462) holds that Russia's role as peacekeeper since the early 1990s in these provinces has been a tool to "preserve a conflicted status quo as a means of leverage in relations with Georgia". In effect, also able to gain regional border control.

That Russia has had military presence in Abkhazia and South Ossetia since 1991, might also be a move towards enmity relations between the countries. At least from Georgia's point of view, as the military action taken by Russia puts their amity/enmity relationship on -3 on the scale. One could think that their relationship according to Russia would be placed on +2 as Russia could perceive it as a justified positive political action. Russia has instead since independence, one can argue, acted in enmity as they have maintained (frozen) the border conflicts rather than solving them, which in turn has been a major concern (negative) for the Georgian state.

The presence of the Russian military in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, has been perceived by Georgia as "the most serious threat to Georgia's national sovereignty" (Nuriyev, 2015, p. 60). One can argue that Georgia perceived the Russian military presence in Georgia's break-away provinces as a further questioning of their legitimacy as an independent state. Also, perceived *threat* being understood as something negative makes the relationship again lean towards enmity.

Concerning Russia being understood as a geographical concept, rather than statehood, Russia's involvement and interest in Georgia could be made clear if one considers their historically and geographically imperial state identity. Russia's involvement in Georgia could be understood through the Russian popular saying: "He who does not regret the passing of the USSR has no heart; he who wants to restore it has no head" (Buzan & Wæver, p. 430). Russia did not at the time of Georgian independence try to reclaim Soviet territory. Instead, one can argue that Russia wanted to increase their border control and maintain their RSC influence, in an effort to be perceived and recognised by the 'West' as a *Great Power*. Therefore, Russia's perceived identity is of importance when analysing Russian and Georgian relationship during the Georgian independence.

4.2 Rose Revolution

Nino Lejava (2021) holds that since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Georgian independence, Georgia has directed its foreign policy towards western integration. The rose revolution in 2003 was one step closer to realising it. Littlefield (2009) explains that protests against manipulation of parliamentary elections in Georgia in 2004 led to Russian-backed Eduard Shevardnadze getting removed from the presidential office. He further argues that it was improbable that the new Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili's rise to power, following the rose revolution, would have nurturing effects on their relationship with Russia. There were two main reasons behind it. Saakashvili reached for stronger ties to the EU and NATO and the new president also sought to regain Georgia's control over the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russia opposed the latter since they wanted to maintain their influence in the breakaway regions, to be able to continue to use it as leverage against Georgia (Littlefield, 2009). It further challenged Russia's efforts to become a *great power* with larger influence over the post-Soviet RSC.

As an understanding of who we are is relational, with an underlying assumption of external *Others* in contrast to 'us' (we), Georgia's relation to Russia (in this case constituting Georgia's external *Others*) must be analysed. German (2015) explains that Georgia perceives themselves as a European state, rather than post-Soviet, in an effort to emphasise their *otherness* from Russia. In Saakashvili's inauguration speech in 2004, German (2015, p.607) writes, he stated that "not only are we old Europeans, but we are ancient Europeans", reproducing the perceived identity of Georgians as being Europeans. This in turn makes Georgia's path to European integration seem natural and as though Georgia is rightfully moving away from their post-Soviet RSC towards their 'home' region of Europe (German, 2015). This is deduced through an assumption of a dichotomy between Europe and Russian post-Soviet RSC. E.g., the Cold War was socially constructed based on a dichotomy between the West and the Soviet Union, which in turn were effects of practice, reproducing the dichotomy perception. (Wendt, 1995)

However, with Georgia's perceived European identity, Saakashvili sought to develop friendly relations with Russia in 2004 and made this an immediate priority. Putin expressed in response the hope of restoring "the traditions of friendship between our two countries" (Andrei Tsygankov & Matthew Tarver-Wahlquist, 2009, p.310).

This could be interpreted as perceived positive political action and verbal support. On the other hand, Melvin (2018) writes that Russia perceived the EU and NATO expansion into the post-Soviet region as a major threat to Russia's effort to regain a powerful position and become the regional hegemon. Georgia's western integration could be perceived by Russia as a negative political and diplomatic

action (-2), as they would move away from the Russian *sphere of influence*. Russia has therefore perceived Georgia's larger process of westernisation since the revolution as a *threat* for their national security and thus that their relationship as moving towards enmity. Georgia's western integration has become a *securitisation* matter, as it issues into Russia's perception of their national security. Russia does not want to lose their influence in the post-Soviet RSC. Georgia's western integration would diminish Georgia's and Russia's chances of rebuilding amity relations.

With Russia's endeavour towards maintaining their *sphere of influence* in mind, one could also argue that Russia's special interest in Russians outside their borders is based on senses of a common Russian ethnical identity. In this situation, the common denominator between Russians under foreign leadership is their feeling of being a particular type of person or having the qualities of a Russian. Russia is therefore not only a geographical idea but an ethnic based one (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). The *near abroad* concept was a way of concretising their foreign policy objective of protecting ethnic Russians abroad (Gayoso, 2009). Littlefield (2009) utilises the term *russkii* when referring to ethnic Russians in general and *rossiiskii* when referring to Russian citizens (in the administrative term). The *near abroad* has meant a protection of not only *rossiiskii* people, but also *russkii* co-ethnics in states other than Russia.

One could in a sense perceive the near abroad as a political schism and a socially constructed division between people, as by reasoning around what constitutes 'us' in the context Russia's identity perception of *russkii* people, could be seen as a further step towards separating 'us' from external *others*. Further contemplating Russia's perceived identity, Roberts (2019) holds that post-Soviet Russia defines itself in terms of its relations with the West. Therefore, as NATO continues to expand towards Russia's perceived culturally and ideationally important areas in the post-Soviet region, Russia perceives the NATO expansion as *threatening* (Roberts, 2019). Nuriyev (2015) explains that Russia's geopolitical strategies create dividing lines between the EU's integration policies and Russia's geopolitical strategies.

A way of thwarting EU or NATO candidature states' opportunities of maintaining national territorial order and integrity, Gayoso (2009) theorised, is for Russia to keep the secessionist movements strong in Georgia's breakaway provinces. Fahimeh Khansari Fard, Mohammad Ali Basiri and Enayatollah Yazdani (2019) writes that it was after the revolution that Saakashvili sought to reintegrate the 'lost' autonomous territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia into Georgian central control. However, Russia perceiving this as a *threat* to both their fellow *russkii* people in the breakaway territories and their national security, would find a counter-strategy. Littlefield (2009) explains that by perpetuating conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, in other words 'freezing' the conflicts instead of resolving them, Russia could stop Georgia from joining NATO. This is based on NATO's entry requirement of resolving "international, ethnic, and external territorial disputes by peaceful means" (Littlefield, 2009, p.1469).

Thus, *near abroad* has been a means for Russia's end of preventing Georgia from joining NATO and integrating into the West. Since Shevardnadze's verbal

proclamation to join NATO in 1999 and the revolution in 2003, Georgia's perception of Russia has shifted towards being an existential *threat* (German, 2015). Russia has obstructed Georgia from continuing their foreign policy path towards Western integration. Moreover, Russia has obstructed Georgia from stabilising their borders, which has led to a destabilising of Georgia's domestic territorial order. In Georgian eyes, the relationship has more or less moved from *amity* relations towards *enmity*. With the pre-revolution president Shevardnadze's aspirations towards NATO-membership in mind, German (2015) writes that Saakashvili's government sought to move away even further from Russia's *sphere of influence* by seeking western integration. The rose revolution became a symbol of a direction towards the West.

4.3 The energy crisis

On the early morning of the 22nd of January 2006, two explosions hit a natural gas pipeline located in the North Ossetia region, close to the Georgian border. The pipeline was the main one for natural gas imported to Georgia, this led to the Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili stating "we are out of gas" and "we don't even have a one-day supply" (CNN 2006). At that time, the majority of Georgian citizens had no access to gas (RFERL 2006).

The immediate reactions to this crisis were accusatory. According to Radio Free Europe, Saakashvili accused Russia of organising the explosions, suggesting that it was blackmail and an example of a Russian energy strategy in order to impose political influence on its ex-Soviet neighbours (RFERL 2006). Speaking to CNN, the Georgian president was more careful and instead questioned the timing of the explosions: referring to the particularly cold weather, the Ukraine gas crisis earlier that month and finally that Russia had made veiled threats in the past (CNN 2006). These insinuations and accusations were met with anger in Russia; the Foreign Ministry called the remarks "hysterical" and claimed that the Georgian government was intentionally trying to derail the relationship between them. Dmitri Peskov, a spokesperson for President Vladimir Putin, said that the situation had nothing to do with 'politics' or 'pressure' and added that the idea of Russia sabotaging its own infrastructure did not even deserve a comment (Chivers 2006). Perhaps implying that it was a ridiculous accusation.

In order to analyse the dynamics we start off with a constructivist part of the RSCT. Buzan and Wæver argued that the patterns of amity and enmity usually were affected by background factors such as history, culture, religion and geography. In Saakashvili's interviews with CNN and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, it is safe to say that he was, at the very least, insinuating or raising suspicion around Russian involvement: mentioning veiled threats in the past and that it was a deliberate strategy. It should be noted that whether these threats actually 'happened' or not is not important. The key thing here is that Georgia interpreted it as threats: the perception and the interpretation of the action is most important, not a 'factual' truth. This is in turn influenced by background factors. These veiled threats should

be seen as a historical background aspect which helps construct the Georgian perception of Russia, and hence how Russian actions will be interpreted. Saakashvili was using previous actions in order to interpret the recent events.

Using our scale of amity and enmity we can start to categorise the actions. Through the eyes of Georgia, the comments made by President Saakashvili could be interpreted as that Georgia believes that it was a Russian action, partially motivated by a Russian strategy. This leads us to believe that Georgia considers the explosions a part of the category -2, perceived negative political action.

Russia on the other hand makes a different interpretation. Judging from the comments by the Foreign ministry and Peskov, Russia was outraged by the Georgian insinuations and accusations. This makes it possible to classify the Georgian president's comments as -1, perceived verbal hostility. While not a threat or an instillation of fear, we argue that the feeling of being accused should be counted as a 'negative' emotion. In this case Russia felt accused by Georgia, which it did not appreciate.

As already noted, Russia and Georgia are part of the same post-Soviet RSC along with other ex-Soviet states. This RSC is centred around Russia, the sole *great power* in the region; it is therefore a unipolar RSC (Buzan & Wæver 2003, p. 398). As this event is closely linked to energy security we start with a description of the materialistic situation regarding energy and then how it shapes the relationship of the two countries. According to Bernard A. Gelb's report to the US congress (2007, p. 1,), Russia was in 2006 "the dominant natural gas supplier" to Europe and ex-Soviet states. In 2004 some of the ex-Soviet states were entirely dependent on Russian natural gas: ranging between 98-100% of their total domestic consumption. Georgia, Moldova and Belarus are three countries within the RSC with such high dependency on Russia in the energy sector (Gelb 2007). While perhaps not enough evidence to warrant a Russian hegemony in terms of energy, it does however show a part of the regional power distribution in which Georgia is vastly inferior to Russia, in fact totally dependent upon. Furthermore, a defence analysis made by Robert L. Larsson at the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI), suggests that Russia has securitised "energy issues" and therefore is able to use "exceptional means" to "tackle perceived problems and threats" (Larsson 2006, p. 6). This, in the eyes of the RTSC, means that the energy sector is of great importance for Russia and is also a matter of national security.

The explosions did not change the 'actual' distribution of power (the dependence remains the same, although the gas was interrupted for a while), but perhaps they strengthened the trend of Georgian desire to keep distancing itself from Russian influence. Saakashvili called Russia an "unreliable neighbour" and said that Georgia has worked on becoming less dependent on Russian gas (CNN 2006). Additionally, the Georgian foreign policy between 2006-2009 stated that "diversification of energy sources... is a priority" and also that it aims to work together with the EU to ensure "stability" and "prosperity" in Georgia (and other transit countries) in order to end Europe's reliance on one single provider - Russia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006). Georgia clearly wants to help the EU, and itself, in order to weaken Russia's influence. A result of that might be the weakening of Russia's strong position as an energy provider. The explosions may well have added

fuel to the fire and further enticed Georgia to continue the trend of breaking free from Russian influence.

4.4 Georgia's approach towards NATO

Georgian relations with NATO - while old - still have not resulted in a Georgian membership. In 1994 Georgia joined NATO's Partnership for Peace program which was the formal start of relations. However, the road to a potential NATO-membership first started to get traction at the NATO summit in November 2002 when Georgia announced its desire to become a member and sought a deepened relationship through an Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP). After the Rose Revolution, with a new pro-western government, integration into the European Union (EU) and NATO became a top priority for the country. In 2004, Georgia reached an agreement with NATO regarding an IPAP which allowed NATO to help with domestic reforms, military and political, with the intention of preparing Georgia to become on par with the standards outlined for a membership (Nichol 2009).

The Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs set goals between 2006-2009 to "establish Georgia's place in the common European family by deepening integration with the EU and joining NATO". One of the actions to be taken was that the ministry was going to work on getting support for a Membership Action Plan (MAP) amongst NATO members (Foreign Ministry 2006). A MAP could be considered the final hurdle, acquiring it and then fulfilling it. At the NATO summit in Bucharest 2008 the alliance pledged that Georgia would eventually become a member and supported Georgia's application for a MAP (NATO 2008). But still to this day, 13 years later, a MAP is nowhere to be seen (Maisuradze - Paul 2021).

According to the Georgian Foreign Ministry, joining NATO has and still is important because NATO's capabilities would ensure the "stability" and "security" of Georgia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014). German (2015) argued that Georgia sees Russia as an existential threat. This coupled with the fact that Russia is vastly superior in terms of military strength, being the sole *great power* in the region as well as making threats in the past makes a compelling argument that Georgia's NATO aspirations is a measure to ensure its survival as a state - Russia being a potential aggressor. It also seems to be a *securitised* issue, given the existential threat aspect and the notion that NATO *will* ensure national security.

Thus, it appears that Georgia is seeking to balance against Russia. Using the neorealist balance-of-power logic adopted by the RSCT, this would mean that Georgia seeks alliance with others in order to protect itself. In this case, Georgia is not seeking to balance together with actors within its RSC, but rather seeking 'external' help. Since the RSCT claims that *penetration* is done by *superpowers* or *great powers* from other RSCs, NATO would have to be considered as one of these powers or undoubtedly a part of one. Otherwise, the theory lacks the means to properly explain this case.

To begin with, Buzan and Wæver (2003) do not list NATO as either a superpower or great power, it is merely a security alliance. So, one cannot say that NATO is 'penetrating' the post-Soviet RSC. Nor is it as simple as saying that it is the US or the EU that is 'penetrating' the RSC. An EU membership or a military alliance only with the EU would be a clear example of penetration, since the EU and Georgia would then be dealing *directly* with each other. In addition, NATO is more complicated; it is not run by the EU or the US, but rather by 'consensus' which means that all NATO members have a say in the policy making. There is however an overlap between some EU and NATO members, add to that Canada and the US and you undoubtedly get a western-oriented alliance (NATO 2006). One that Russia is not very fond of.

While the RSCT does not entirely explain NATO's part in terms of penetration, the NATO issue still affected Russia. A NATO-membership would mean that the Russian military hegemony in the post-Soviet RSC could come into question. The status quo of the regional balance of power would have been challenged by western influence, hence Russia would get less influence in its *near abroad*. The mere thought of Georgia joining NATO in 2008 (by first securing a MAP), was not acceptable for Russia. Sergei Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister, asserted that Russia will do "all we can to prevent Ukraine's and Georgia's accession into NATO". The reason being that it would pose a threat to Russia's security and disturb the "fragile balance of forces in Europe". General Yuri Baluyevsky claimed that Russia would take "not only military steps" to protect its interests along the border if the countries became members (Deutsche Welle 2008).

Through the eyes of Georgia this could be seen as two instances of -1, negative verbal action. Both quotes may be interpreted as threats towards Georgia. These quotes came in the days following the Bucharest NATO summit in 2008 - where Georgia was denied a MAP - but received a promise to become a member, so it was definitely related to the summit. Russia on the other hand sees a Georgian membership as -2, negative political/diplomatic action, and a direct threat to its security and to the balance of power. Since the NATO 'issue' is of great importance for Russian interests, we argue that it is reasonable to assume that every Georgian action taken towards a membership should be seen as -2. This suggests that the announcement of the intention of joining NATO, the IPAP as well as the application for a MAP all classify as -2 (diplomatic) actions according to Russia. The Partnership for Peace, however, does not qualify as -2 because Russia itself is also an IPAP partner, implying that it is acceptable.

5 Conclusions

The research question was:

- *How did the dynamics of key events help shape the relationship between Russia and Georgia before the war in 2008?*

The paper's purpose was to deepen the knowledge about how different perceptions of security could affect the countries' relationship and to bring light to the dynamics of different security sectors. We examined how the Russo-Georgian relationship was shaped by four events in the period between the fall of the Soviet Union up until the war in 2008.

Russia has sought to undermine Georgia's independence and territorial integrity by supporting separatists in the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Russia has perceived the disorder in these regions as a *threat* to their national security. To become recognised as a *great power* by the external *Others* (the West), Russia has through the creation of CIS and the *near abroad* objective sought to regain their influence in the post-Soviet RSC. Georgia has perceived Russian military action in the breakaway regions as the most serious *threat* to their national sovereignty. Since Georgia's independence, the relationship between Russia and Georgia has gone towards enmity.

Georgia, perceiving themselves as a European state rather than post-Soviet, perceived their closer approach to NATO and EU during the Rose revolution as a move in the right direction. Russia however, perceived the NATO expansion into Eastern Europe as a *threat*. Despite verbal expressions, from both sides, of seeking friendly relations in 2004, Georgia's westernisation was perceived by Russia as a matter of national *security*. In an effort of *securitising* their sphere of influence in the post-Soviet region, Russia has hindered Georgia from gaining NATO membership by freezing the conflicts in the breakaway regions. Georgia's perception of Russia has shifted towards being an existential *threat*, as they have obstructed Georgia from joining the EU and NATO. Georgia's attempt of western integration and perception of Russia as constituting *otherness* has led the relationship towards enmity.

Regarding the energy crisis, the dynamics were focused on energy security, background factors and the words exchanged between representatives. Firstly, the energy security, with Russian dominance over the gas supply, the explosions showed that reliance on one single provider was problematic both in terms of reliability and susceptibility for foreign influence. Therefore, this dynamic probably reinforced Georgia's desire to reduce its dependency on Russian gas and thereby limit the potential Russian influence. Secondly, the background factor of (perceived) veiled threats in the past affected Saakashvili's interpretation of the

explosions; suggesting Russian involvement based on the threats and the possibility of it being a deliberate strategy. Lastly, the explosions led to harsh words between representatives, causing a souring of the relationship. The accusations - affected by the first two dynamics - led to the perceptions of the representatives which then resulted in the two -1 actions and the -2 action. All in all, the dynamics in the energy crisis caused enmity and shaped the relationship 'negatively'.

On the topic of NATO, the dynamics concerned national security, balance of power and western influence. Since 2002, Georgia has undoubtedly wanted to join NATO because it feels threatened by Russia, the military hegemon of the RSC. Georgia, fearing for its existence - and led by a pro-western government - sought to balance against Russia using external help. In doing so, Georgia aggravated Russia who in turn feared for their own national security and the current balance of power considering that NATO would interfere with both. Additionally, Russia seemingly securitised the NATO 'issue', further supporting the notion of Russian dissatisfaction with a Georgian NATO-membership. In regard to the western influence, which is related to the previous dynamics, the question of *penetration* is relevant. NATO is evidently tied to the West, however the RSCT in its current form cannot explain this as a *penetration* since NATO is not a *power*. We suggest that this needs further development so that *penetration* can include borderline cases, like NATO.

In conclusion, these dynamics led to Georgia feeling threatened (-1) twice, and Russia seeing three instances of -2 regarding Georgia's NATO ambitions. Thus, this event, like all others, affected the relationship negatively.

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