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RUSSIA-OSCE RELATIONS:
A BALANCE BETWEEN NATIONAL INTERESTS AND THE OSCE SECURITY COMMITMENTS.

Master Dissertation

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**Annotation**

The dissertation deals with the state of the relations between the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Russian Federation. The main questions to be addressed are: “Has the Russian attitude towards the OSCE changed? How has Russia dealt with the OSCE in the last years? Do the OSCE security commitments play any role in the formation of the Russian foreign policy?” To answer these questions different approaches from international relations theories have been used, but especially, those that better reflect the importance of national constrains in foreign affairs. The formation of national interests is therefore, a key element to understand and assess the evolution of the Russian foreign policy and, subsequently, the evolution of the OSCE-Russia relations. A case of study is included to show better how Russian policies upon the OSCE have evolved from a positive engagement towards scepticism about the future of Russia within the Organisation.

**Keywords**

European security, national interests, Russian identity, Georgia, frozen conflicts, near abroad.
Statement:

This statement is to confirm that this paper is a product of my own work and also to confirm that I used the listed sources in producing it.

I agree that the paper can be checked for research and studying purposes.
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Introduction:

Russia has entered into the twenty first century with a renovated idea of itself, demanding the place at the international arena that it lost with the fall of the Soviet Union.

For scholars and specialists interested in Russian foreign policy it is always difficult to describe briefly the main aspects that may have an impact in the formation and implementation of those policies, not to mention the possibility of foreseeing them. Yet it is possible to find regular links between the domestic situation of Russia and the course of its foreign policy. To achieve that goal, I decided to focus on one aspect of the Russian foreign policy -security issues- and concretely in the role played by the Russian Federation within/towards the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, formerly CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe).

The full integration of Russia in the OSCE has meant a difficult balance between Russia’s national interests and its foreign policies. The concept of near abroad or strategic interests in the former Soviet space have represented an issue of dispute between the Russian Federation and its western allies.

In this situation the then Russian president Boris El’tsin had tried to bring closer Russia and the West by engaging Russian policies in different international organisations. As will be explained later, that period of the Russian foreign policy coincided essentially with the liberal thinking that dominated Russian domestic policies. In the realm of international organizations, from the beginning Russia showed her preference for the then Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

With Putin, Russia reached a better position to set up new conceptions regarding European security, acquiring a stronger relevance within the OSCE and in its international relations in general.
The relationships with Georgia, a former Soviet Republic that is still seen within the previously mentioned Russia’s near abroad, have played an important role at the time to understand and analyse Russian attitude toward the OSCE and the acceptance of its mechanisms for peaceful conflict resolution and post-conflict management. The conflict in South Ossetia showed during years after the break of the Soviet Union this difficult engagement. Eventually, the situation derived in August 2008 into an open conflict between Russia and Georgia.

Therefore, we can see that by analysing Russian policies within the OSCE, its declarations and actions we will understand better what does Russia really want. The war in Georgia in 2008 meant a point of no return, both for Russia and the OSCE. The mission in Georgia was closed in 2009 and the status quo of the region changed dramatically when Russia recognised South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states.

It was clear then that Russia would not accept any “external” intervention in the region and even less any attempt of NATO enlargement to its near abroad.

To understand Russian logic within the OSCE and its changes during the last years is the main goal. Therefore, provide answers to such questions as: Has the Russian attitude towards the OSCE changed? How has Russia dealt with the OSCE in the last years? Do the OSCE security commitments play any role in the formation of the Russian foreign policy? Will the OSCE –from Russia- have a second opportunity as forum for dialogue and security in the Euro-Atlantic space?

To answer these questions I decided to focus my analysis in the work of the Organisation in Georgia and concretely in the conflict of South Ossetia for different reasons.

First, because the OSCE mission in Georgia corresponds with concrete and recognisable periods of the Russian foreign policy in its relations towards the Organization, and
especially the significant changes that occurred after Vladimir Putin became president of the Russian Federation in 2000.1

Second, South Ossetia and Georgia as a whole, represent a place where Russian aspirations of control over the Caucasus have a direct impact on Russia’s inner security and Russia’s work within the OSCE. Thus, we find out a difficult balance between national interests and international credibility.

Third, Georgia and the conflict on South Ossetia because is a conflict that the OSCE was dealing with since the creation of the mission in Georgia in 1993, spending not only important financial capital, but also a huge human investment that has not been always recognised.

Finally, because assessing OSCE-Russia relations and the last conflict over South Ossetia in 2008 I try to get to the core of Russian policy within the OSCE by following the path of a concrete conflict and not only declarations, underlining Russian aspirations to become a super power in a world that has forgotten the commitments arranged in the nineties regarding security and global governance.

The chapter one opens a general introduction to the current development of international relations. Here are presented analyses from the different realist schools – realist, neorealist and neoclassical realist- conceptions of balance of power and international relations and those derived from constructivist approaches.

The chapter two clarifies the formation of the Russian national interests, the impact of domestic constrains and theories on them, and the outcome that is a defined behaviour of Russian foreign policy. Chapter three looks at concrete facts, at the shifts in the Russian behaviour toward the OSCE from the beginning of the nineties. The case of

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1 The OSCE Mission to Georgia was established in December 1992 and lasted until June 2009, when it had to cease its works due to the lack of support by the Russian Federation during the talks in December 2008 to extend its activities for more time.
study on the South Ossetian conflict at the end serves as a deeper analysis of a concrete period in a more concrete scenario, where the Russia-OSCE and Russo-Georgian relations and the idea of national interests of Russia confront each other.

My analysis has been enhanced by my studies in Slavic Philology that provided me with a fluency in Russian and put me in contact with the Russian society. This way I was able to get documents in Russian original and those that are not translated into English. An extraordinary source to improve my knowledge about the conflict in South Ossetia and a better understanding of OSCE mechanisms was my stay at the OSCE Prague Secretariat of the Organisation. As researcher in that centre, I got a lot of information and help not only from the archives, but also from the staff working there.

All transliterations from Russian have been made using the SEER modified system of the Library of Congress.
Chapter One: Main Theories of International Relations after the Demise of the Soviet Union.

Nearly three decades ago, the world was undergoing a period of changes which in the majority of cases could not be predicted by any scholar or social scientist. Even politicians from both sides -the western world and the socialist block- could hardly envisage the final outcome of events that rapidly evolved to the end of the confrontation between the West and the Soviets and, eventually, implied the fall of the Berlin wall and the Soviet Union with it.

All those events had a direct impact on the structure of the European security institutions and especially on the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) that was the catalytic converter that embodied all changes happening in the Euro-Atlantic space, from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

It was in this period when the “end of history” was stated by Francis Fukuyama, underlining that there was not only the end of the Cold War, but also -and consequently- the victory of the western values, that is: liberal democracy and free market2. His optimistic insights were at the same time opposite to those appeared in Huntington’s “Clash of Civilisations”. Samuel Huntington predicted a world of confrontation and instability due to the differences among opposite identities, religions and cultures in general. Both authors represent very well the state of the situation at the end of the Cold War regarding theories and “intellectual approaches” to the situation at the beginning of the nineties.

Realists and neo-realists did not see in the events that produced the demise of the Soviet Union anything that could not be explained by their analytical insights. Quite the

2 In the same work, Fukuyama announced the expansion of the “western model of liberal democracy as the final form of human government”. Francis Fukuyama, The End of the History and the Last Man, New York, Avon books, 1992.
opposite, most authors as Paul Kennedy, Wholforth or Waltz saw Gorbachev’s *New Thinking* as a logic result of a retrenchment policy initiated to response intern economic problems and at the same time maintain Soviet great power rhetoric.

On the other side constructivist perspectives helped to understand better the impact of social factors and constructions in inter-states relations. This view gained prominence in the nineties, when both realism and liberal-institutionalism paradigms failed to explain the dramatic changes that were taken place in this period.

1.1.- Realism / Classical realism / Neocalssical-realism.

Traditional (or classical) realist theories were the central framework to understand the world during the years of competition between the Soviet Union and the United States. It was a fight where international institutions had little to say. The struggle that the United States and the Soviet Union maintained during the Cold War showed some of the classical aspects stated by realists: possess of military capability, armament races, uncertainty about the intentions of other states, mistrust, insecurity and self-survival as the main goal for sovereign states.

In an article appeared in 1994, John J. Mearsheimer described the main points of the realistic theories by opposing them to those of the multilateralism. He came to the conclusion that there was no future for those theories that advocated for global government or aspire to see international organizations as the main actors in the international relations. From his analysis and the classic realistic paradigm it is clear that anarchy in foreign policy is a key element when depicting international relations. The international system is understood as ‘a brutal arena where states look for opportunities to take advantage of each other, and therefore have little reason to trust
Each other. ³ This means that cooperation will be only carried out in concrete issues, especially in the economic scope. Cooperation can hardly occur because countries think ‘in terms of absolute gains’, to quote Mearsheimer.

Those areas related with security issues have to be understood primarily through the prism of competition. States will do their utmost to maintain security for their national interests regardless the impact it can provoke on the security of other states. That is why the security of one state cannot depend on other states. It does not mean that conflict is always present, but is latent in the development of the states’ policies. It is seen by realists as an ordering principle, therefore, cannot be an exogenous authority - international institution or organization- that could influence or undermine the state’s sovereignty and independence. Yet there can be organizations and institutions to settle some common rules. These institutions, however, will merely mirror the ideas and division of power defended by the states.

The aforementioned characteristics of realism make clear why international relations could be generally explained in terms of competitive behaviour, in order to maximize power and security, in both directions, internal and external.

Thus, Soviet behaviour had nothing different to that of the United States. At the core of their relations competition was the main idea. Even at the last years of the Cold War, when various arm control agreements were signed, distrust paved the way for “cooperation”. In the same way, as Mearsheimer points out, cooperation between European great powers in the forty years before the World War I, […] “did not stop them from going to war in 1914”. ⁴

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However, this could not explain the Soviet behaviour from 1985 on. Despite some realists insisted in the capacity of realism and neo-realism to explain it, there were some doubts. For realists the Soviet retrenchment in mid eighties and till the end of the USSR was consistent in with realism. The unification of Germany or agreements on arms control were part of a general retrenchment policy. However, others as Lebow underlined that such concessions were made in Moscow’s crucial area of interests, rather than in its periphery. Thus, realism could hardly explain these changes.

An adaptation of the classical realism and neo-realism has been the so-called neoclassical realism. This way, if the neo-realism of Kenneth Waltz does not conceive importance of domestic policies on foreign issues, neoclassical realism, though keeping the main ideas of realism, seeks to explain the international response of the states as a matter where to a dependent variable –states’ foreign policy- and to an independent variable –relative power distribution-, a new one is added, described as *intervening variable*. It includes the domestic constrains and elite perceptions. Therefore, to a great extent, states’ behaviour must be understood in relation to their domestic components.

Benjamin O. Fordham as other critics of neoclassical realism observes however, that 

the nature of international threats is determined to a great extend by the interests of the domestic coalition that governs the state, and domestic political and economic interests are affected by international circumstances. Therefore, it makes little sense to treat domestic and international variables in an additive manner, by assuming an objective set of national interests and seeing how domestic political actors respond to them.5

1.2.- Constructivism:

The optimism unleashed during the first years after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist countries in Eastern Europe, made think that a new stage in the way of how

international relations should be guided and analysed, was coming up. Although the theory already existed in the past, it was now when advocates of institutionalism or multilateralism appeared to have stronger grounds to defend their views.

Karl Deustch and David J Singer presented at the end of the sixties a paper where they saw multipolarity as a tool to achieve international stability, which was described as “the probability that the system retains all of its essential characteristics; that no single nation becomes dominant; that most of its members continue to survive; and that large-scale war does not occur.” This was the explanation from a systemic or broader view as they wrote, because there is also an interpretation of stability from the perspective of the states, more individual. Underlining that, what I want to show is that multilateralism does not deny the role of states in international affairs as sometimes is presented, but conversely to realism, it does recognize international organizations and institutions as important actors in the international arena.

As in the case of realism, some variants of multilateralism have appeared in the last year under different denominations. Some are focused more on economic issues and liberal doctrines where other see in global governance the key to achieve world stability, providing less pragmatic and useful tools to frame current policies. Neo-liberal institutionalism, for instance, stresses the importance of engagement of states in international organizations in different dimensions. In the case of constructivism however, there are specific means to understand better states’ international behavior. Its analysis includes the historical

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8 We cannot, however, understand multilateralism as a monolithic theory. Although most of scholars agree that multi-polarity is the base for stability, others as Kenneth A. Oye argued that the prospect for cooperation diminished as the number of actors increased. Kenneth A. Oye, ’Explaining Cooperation under Anarchy: Hypotheses and Strategies’, *World Politics*, 8, October 1985, 1, p 1-14.
development of the state’s identity, its conceptions and worldviews. In contrast to realist theories, the identity of the state is not something given for granted, is not an universal that seeks power and security, but a variable dependent by historical, cultural and political context. And this context is sometimes penetrated by foreign vectors that together with the domestic imaginary will determine the reaction from the state. Thus, the identity of the state is key concept, how does it evolve and define itself is crucial to understand both inner and international behavior. Which form will this identity take is a question of empirical observation. In this case, Russia from a constructivist perspective, has always sought to identify itself in a form that could be perceived by others in terms of equality if not superiority. This way, the end of the Soviet Union meant a disruption in this attempt, when the great power rhetoric was unsustainable due to the deep economic and social crisis. But Russia’s identity is also constrained by its national interests and those of the elites, which not always are the same.

Last developments in international relations, marked by a great level of uncertainty have lead to new theoretical frameworks that try to explain and discover general paths by combining aspects of realist and constructivist approaches. That is the case of Emanuel Adler and Patricia Greve who see overlapping mechanisms of security governance that may include different orders –based on balance of power or security community-. This theory states that security communities –as the case of the OSCE- “rely not only on shared identity, but also on power, albeit defined much differently than in the case of the balance of power.”

Chapter Two: Russia’s national interests and the making of the Russian foreign policy.

The analysis of the Russian foreign policy has been always a difficult task to carry out. Even more today, with the demise of the Soviet Union, this analysis has become harder. During the period of existence of the Soviet power, as motioned before, there was certain room for advocates of realism to find a path for the behaviour of the Soviet foreign policy. They claimed that realist insights explained that behaviour, that is: Soviet policies acted in the anarchic world, balancing and fighting the power of the United States. Nevertheless, though they provided a solid theory for explaining some attitudes in the Soviet foreign policy, realism failed to explain many situations in which Soviet behaviour did not act according to the realistic premises, especially during Gorbachev’s years.

As it was seen in the previous chapter, in their attempt to provide a general framework for the description of Soviet policy making machine, realist scholars often forget about the domestic situation in the Soviet Union, the role of leaders and the communist apparatus.

These gaps in realist theory have been later saved by the neoclassical realist views, which include a new variable that may affect the course of the states’ behaviour in the world of foreign affairs. This variable includes not only group of interests or the role of strong/weak leaders, but also the own constituency of the state, its structures and grade of development. It might be said that this modification in the realm of realist theories has given a response to the current situation in world politics. Yet in its core, the international sphere and foreign affairs remain mainly dictated by the old realistic vision of power balancing game.

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11 There are, however, explanations from the realism perspective affirming that even this period might be understood in realistic terms. Russia had to recognise its defeat in the Cold War and sought just to survive, which is one of the first realistic premises regarding state’s behaviour.
Concretely, in the Russian case, neoclassical realism could help us to understand the development of the Russian foreign policy during the years with Putin as president, where a more pragmatic tendency guided Russian international relations. Yet, there are still those who defend a constructivist path to explain not only this phase, but the whole behaviour of Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. This is so, because of the great instability that habited Russia during the nineties, provoked an internal debate about Russian identity that is still going on\(^\text{12}\). This struggle to define what does Russia mean, where does Russia belong, and what is Russia national identity, has meant radical changes in some cases from El’tsin’s to Putin’s policies.

Identity, its definition and defence has currently a direct impact on Russian foreign policy and this is not always acknowledged by western specialists that only look at the surface of Russian history and development to explain the result of this struggle around identity. To understand this evolution is vital because the answer to what does identity actually mean, will give us the answer to what do national interests are, therefore, their place in the discourse of Russian foreign policy and the way to interpret them in a concrete context. Furthermore, the identity problem that the Russian state faces today has also deep roots. Russia is still regarded as an empire. Tsars and their governments, especially during the nineteenth century, tried to carry out a policy of *russification*, to create a Russian nation within the borders of the empire, but it did not success\(^\text{13}\). Indeed, in many peripheries, such as the Caucasus and Central Asia, integration succeeded only

\(^{12}\) Vera Tolz offers us with an interesting classification of three groups with distinctive, when not opposing ideas about Russian identity and statehood. The first for those with nationalistic views that defend the restoration of the empire. Other group that pursues the union only with other Slavic nations as Belarusians and Ukrainians, and finally those that advocate for the creation of one Russian republic, with some degree of autonomy for the non-Russian population.

\(^{13}\) This idea is explained by Ronald Grigor Suny in “Living in the Hood: Russia, Empire and Old and New Neighbors”. He speaks about the dilemma of a nationalizing empire and the tsars’ failure not only in the efforts to Russify non-Russians, but even to lunch an ethnic nation-making project among Russians. p. 45.
with the elites. Therefore, the problem of the Russian national idea keeps its vigorous relevance in Russia’s actual politic scenario.

Thus, there is necessary a work of deconstruction, as Derrida would say, in order to discharge our vision of the Russian foreign policy from stereotypes and taken for granted assumptions.

As indicated in the first chapter, the form that the Russian identity will eventually take, from a constructivism perspective, will vary attending to different aspects, but essentially to the ability of the state to mirror national interests will be fundamental for the course of the Russian foreign policy.

2.1 Russia’s foreign policy behaviour: Westernists, Statists and Civilizationists.

As has been already stated above, Russia’s current behaviour abroad and at home has deep roots in the past. To some extent, the mess of the nineteen might be explained in the failure to accommodate old thoughts with the more liberal ones that prevailed at the end of the Soviet Union. Economic devastation added a vector that fuelled constant changes in the state administration, beginning with the formation of new “Russian” institutions and ending with instability within the own state with several replacements in key political and military instances\textsuperscript{14}. Today too is unthinkable not to link the situation of the Russian economy with the policy making process. Economic stability provides a strong support for the development of concrete policies.

Focusing on the Russian identity now, I will try to give shape to some concrete aspects that still today are prevalent and survive in the Russian imaginary and have a relation with the developments of Russian foreign issues. To start we should speak about the two main different visions within and upon Russia that in past sought to give answers to

\textsuperscript{14} As an example of that, during the economic crisis in 1998 Russia had four different primer-ministers: Victor Chernomyrdin, Sergei Kirienko, again Chernomyrdin and Yevgeni Primakov.
the question where does Russia belong. These were the groups formed by the so called Slavophiles and the Westernisnts. The latter saw Russia as belonging to Europe and put accent in the advancement of liberal institutions that should bring closer Russia and the Old continent. Quite the opposite, Slavophiles -though among them they were more or less radical views- understood the special geographical position of Russia between Europe and Asia as a reason to promote a separate civilisation based on the prominence of the Russian Orthodox Church. During the nineteen century these two groups forged what latter became a ground not only for cultural discussions but also for irreconcilable political discourses. The three main streams or schools of thought that emerged from this struggle, and following the classification of Andrei P. Tsygankov, are: Westernist, Statist and Civilizationist.

2.1.1.- Westernists:

In the modern sense, they are primarily identified with liberal movements and those that seek to promote Russia’s political and economic progress in accordance with western standards of democracy and free market. In the past, they too, intended to endorse a liberal agenda in the tsarist Russia, with some success during Alexander II reign. In the Soviet system there was little room for this tradition until the arrival of Gorbachev in the eighteens. With the advent of the new Russia at the beginning of the nineties, liberals took key positions in the administration and the economy and were a fundamental support for the fulfilment of El’tsin’s reforms. In aspects of foreign affairs westernists seek to embrace western organisations and become a natural partner, even renouncing to some traditional areas of interests for Russia, as it is the case of the newly independent former Soviet republics. Thus, the idea of national interest and the own idea of Russia experienced a dramatic change, not only because of the end of seventy
years of socialist regime, but also the end of hundreds of years of autocracy and a policy of distance towards the West, broke down only in counted occasions.

The assumptions of westernists over the idea of Russia and its national character are similarly if not innovative, singular. Russia in the context of western values has to understand its multinational structure, thus, maintain respect and promotion towards minorities, underlining the non-denominational character of the state and avoid dreams of imperial reconstruction upon the former Soviet republics of the Caucasus or Central Asia. Therefore, the concept of near abroad is here an alien one, though there is no a negation of the importance to maintain secure borders and enhance the situation in those territories only via economic cooperation in the framework of international organisations. Indeed, the near abroad has been traditionally seen by westernists as a burden rather than an area of interest.

2.1.2 Statists:

If in the previous case, western values were at the paramount, statists will seek to protect the sovereignty and independence of the Russian state. Nevertheless, some liberal principles have place here, yet they might be scarified in the name of stability and security. These two concepts are of critical importance, and somehow, condense the long history of Russia as a border state-empire, carrying out a policy of expansion that paradoxically meant more vulnerability. This logic prevented the Russian state in the past to become a modern state in the sense of European standards, but at the same time has saved Russia to peril in the hands of other more powerful regimes. Statists, when affirming the necessity to underline security and stability have in mind these premises. Somehow this view shares a great deal with defensive realism and securitisation theories. Anything that happens in the frame of the state is analysed through the prism
of the national security. Therefore, control over all state institutions and economy is just a necessity to bear in mind if one looks for the state’s success in the international arena. Resources and possibilities must fit to each other in order to accomplish the necessities of the national interests.

National interests, thus, should serve to strength the state. The Russia of the nineties, in its vulnerability did not achieve this goal and this meant a painful crash for the Russian society accustomed to the Soviet great power rhetoric. Statists sought to restore the glorious of the past, and with some intern divergences, came back to have a look on Russia’s back courtyard, the so called near abroad. Why? It is not difficult to give an answer to this question since, as was stated before, security and stability are two critical points of statists. Security of Russian borders and its internal stability cannot be guaranteed without security and stability in the former Soviet republics that so long were first part of the Russian Empire, and later of the Soviet Union. From this conception of near abroad will raise the main troubles and headaches for the relations between Russia and western countries.

Nation and identity are also important here. Russia is recognised as multi-national, but the Russians (russkie)\textsuperscript{15} are somehow called to lead the rest of peoples and its culture and language would serve as an instrument of internal cohesion. At this respect, the defence of Russian citizens abroad was a matter of concern for statists and was soon captured in the first foreign policy concepts of the Russian Federation.

2.1.3.- Civilizationists:

\textsuperscript{15} There are two different adjectives in the Russian language for the English “Russian”: “rossisky” and “russky”. The first refers to all nationalities or cultures living within the Russian Federation, whereas the adjective “russky” refers only to those that are ethnically Russians of Slavonic origin. There have been during the last years an incensement of nationalist views over the predominant role of the “Russian Nation” (Russkaya nacija), blaming other nationalities for the bad situation and problems of the country. The establishment in 2005 of the 4\textsuperscript{th} of November “National Unity Day” as national holiday has only fuel the tensions between Rossiane and Russkie.
Finally, civilizationists have always appealed for a distinct and sometimes opposite path towards the West, for the defence, promotion and development of the Russian identity and national interests. Although, as in the case of statists, they do exist differences between those civilizationists that can be directly labelled as extreme-nationalist or those that just advocate the presence of the “Euroasian” identity as a singular civilization at the core of the Russian soul, civilizationists in general have pursued a more aggressive policy towards the West and the non-Russian world. To some extent, they are actual representatives of the Slavophiles from the nineteenth century.

In the realm of the new Russia, this school of thought had an incontestable impact on both domestic and foreign policies in mid nineties, when radical nationalistic views and populism dominated the political discourse of the opposition and gained majority of seats in the parliamentarian elections of 1993.

The national interest is, thus, forged around the idea of Russia’s expansion and maintenance of its sphere of influence, beyond its borders. The goal is not only to provide security inside, but to widespread Russian lands and culture as the best means of preserving Russia’s superiority over Western states.

Civilizationists played an important role in some stages of the Soviet policy development. For instance, Tsygankov assumes that the Lenin-Trotsky concept of world revolution was in part based on civilizationist beliefs. In the current situation of the Russian inner and foreign affairs we can find vague traces of this doctrine, especially in military statements. The conceptions of this school of thought found fertile ground in many Russians during the nineties, when they saw their country begging for international aid and incapable of guarantee minimal conditions of inner security and stability. The resurgence of the Russian Orthodox Church is another element that shows
the actuality of civilizationists, if not in foreign affairs at least in Russians’ way of thinking.

2.2.- Westernists, Statists and Civilizationists and key official documents.

The school of thoughts presented above have indeed an evident influence upon the Russian political environment, which is shaped by a high degree of centralisation. Therefore these conflicting ideas obtain support within the policy making process, try to last as long as possible and take advantage over rivals, but at the same time they use to change with the political elite.

One field where it is possible to identify such changes deriving from conceptual variations in the policy making, is the realm of official documents, concretely those regarding national security and the principles of the foreign policy. Yet there are some cautions needed to be taken into account when analysing official documents.

First, is the question of reliability of those documents, which sometimes are either only partially published or not at all. Yeltsin’s mandate is in this regard a grey zone, with a lack of primary sources. The second aspect when making an effort to interpret and construct an analysis from this kind of documents is the language, understood as the implicit discourse within the document. This is aggravated because these documents are the result of compromise among diverse players –military, secret services, ministry of foreign affairs, presidential staff, just to mention a few- what should make us aware of possible changes when the discourse is put into practise. Last but not least, is the gap that might be found between official declarations and the realisation of them, and the Russian policy documents of the nineties are rich in this respect. In this sense, Lawrence T. Caldwell points out that ‘the art of construction national security policy is the art of
matching external ambitions to domestic resources. Precisely, the failure to accomplish this axiom in concrete situations—for instance the first Chechen war between 1996 and 1999—has had for Russia harmful consequences.


In general, despite the changes that may appear in concrete issues, these documents reflect real problems of the Russian state. An important place in all of them is devoted to the relations between Russia and the former Soviet republics, starting with the El’tsin’s Foreign Policy Concept that blessed the notion of “near abroad” and finishing with the concept of 2008 that states “the bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the CIS member states a priority area of Russia’s foreign policy”. Other issues that are addressed in these documents are the USA-Russia relations, NATO and its effects and impact upon Russian security; Russia’s role in the international and


17 The foreign policy concept of 1993 was never officially published, but the account by Vladislav Chernov “Russia’s national interests and threats to its security” is regarded among scholars as an authoritative source.

multilateral organisations and the way Russian military forces can serve broader geopolitical goals.

At first glance, the influence of *statists* ideas is clear, even more during Putin’s mandate, which paid especial attention to the recovery of the economy and the attempt to strengthen the state to achieve the proposed goals. Both, the Foreign Policy Concept of 2000 and the Security Concept of 2003 embody the securitisation path that for so many years guided the Soviet foreign policy. There are threats almost in all dimensions (economy, military, internal issues, external relations) and the paramount is to secure all this aspects of the Russian life.

The concepts of *near abroad*, Russia’s sphere of influence and Russia as great power are indeed regarded as an object of El’tsin’s legacy, when the CIS was used not only “as a means of coordination among its members, but also as mechanism for asserting Russian hegemony” over the other member states, as Donaldson points out¹⁹. Indeed, there is a difference on how are described the relations between Russia and other CIS countries if we look closer to the Foreign Policy Concept of 1993 and that of 2000 and 2008. In 1993 Russia was regarded as “guarantor” of stability in the region, whereas in the more recent documents relations are described as state-to-state ones, “on the basis of equality and mutual benefit”²⁰.

On the other hand, *westernists’* views are present constantly in the appeal for restoring an international system based on the international law and world institutions. The foreign concepts of 2000 and 2008 underline the danger of creating an “unipolar world system”. Concretely, the Foreign Policy Concept of 2000 warned about the “growing trend towards the establishment of a unipolar structure of the world with the economic

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<http://www.personal.utulsa.edu/~robert-donaldson/yeltsin.htm>

²⁰ *The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*, 28 June 2000, p. 8  
power and domination of the United States”21. In the 2008 version is underlined “the
cultural and civilizational diversity of the modern world”, and some reaction from the
West “in the continued political and psychological policy of `containing Russia´,
including the use of selective approach to history”22.

The second point, the invocation towards international institutions to maintain peace
and equality among nations, is a constant call to multilateralism, where the UN Security
Council appears as the main alternative to the above criticised unipolar world. The
Foreign Policy Concept of 2008 repeats this idea and it adds the necessity to adapt the
UN Security Council to new world, but at the same time it stresses “the role of
sovereign state as a fundamental element of international relations”.23

To sum up, what the more recent documents reveal is the Russian desire to maintain its
status as great power, but recognising its limitations and underlining the necessity to
strengthen national institutions and economy as the best way to achieve goals abroad; to
find common responses for new threats through international and multilateral
arrangements, yet, without lowering the status of the state as the main figure in
international relations.

In the nineties there was a failure to meet stated principles with the resources, what
undermined Russia’s credibility, but what really hindered the development of a
comprehensive Russian foreign agenda was the lack of internal consensus, the clashes
between liberals and nationalists, constant changes and in general, the absence of a
common national idea to gather all institutions and official bodies of the country.

Putin succeeded in this task. Therefore, he was able to establish a real plan of national
recovering with great consensus, not only for the economy and the status of Russia

21 Ibid, p. 2
22 The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, 12 July 2008, p. 2.
23 Ibid, p. 3
abroad, but also to restore the image of the state within its borders. Furthermore, the positive economic environment allowed him to find the way in which principles and deeds were any more irreconcilable.

The pragmatism operated by Putin in the international arena shares, as has been showed, some similarities with Westernists’ principles, but independence, security and the defence of the sovereignty of the Russian state are not negotiable, even regarding Russia’s commitments towards international organisations, as the example of the OSCE will show in the next chapter. It is not ambiguity, what might be extracted from official Russian documents, but rather a constant pragmatic -and some times realistic- view about Russia’s place in the world that takes into account the domestic context of foreign policy.

Chapter Three: Russia and the OSCE: cooperation in competitiveness.

3.1.- From a promising beginning towards desperation.

When the first consultations on a security agreement for Europe started in the seventies between the Soviet block and representatives from Western countries, many thought that this new framework could be later transformed into a means of the Soviet Union to consolidate its hegemony in Eastern and Central Europe. Especially, Americans looked with suspicion at this kind of engagement with their main rival and critics to call for a withdrawal of Americans from the negotiations did not stop. For this reason, although the then Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe is today a clear example of a multilateral framework for debate and cooperation -a security community in Adler’s words- its origins are in the Cold War, thus, being the product of realist policies of power balance.
The demise of the Soviet Union brought with it several changes in the European security architecture, as has been already stated, and one of them was the new orientation of the Russian policies towards the West\textsuperscript{24}. The question whether the Western countries have changed their views about Russia remains.

In domestic policies, Russia became an independent state just as the other former Soviet republics. Although there were initiatives to keep the new independent states under the umbrella of Moscow, and actually some of them looked for it, the deep economic disaster and the new more liberal-oriented rulers in the Kremlin did not see any advantage for taking such a burden. Russia had first to deal with its own affairs and only latter would pay attention to its “region of interest”.

In this situation the best way to maintain stability and save the great power status in some way, was to pursue an engagement with international institutions, seeking for being accepted as an equal and reliable partner to solve not only its economic problems, but also the armed conflicts that by that time hit Europe and the own Russian Federation.

El’tsin, and concretely, his minister of foreign affairs, Andrey Kozyrev represented the new path of the Russian foreign policy that promised rapprochement and collaboration with the West. From a neoclassical-realistic perspective this change can be explained as the necessity of Russia to survive in the new framework of world politics, due to its internal instability –both economic and political- and the necessity to maintain its role in foreign affairs.

\textsuperscript{24} This first period of Russian foreign policy is analysed according to Tsigankov in the context of the \textit{Westernist} vision of Russian identity, concretely, liberal-westernist idea. Its supporters -Kozyrev, Gennadi Burbulis or Viktor Gaidar- as Tsigankv points out- “advocated radical policies that they hoped would bring Russia in line with the politico-economic standards of Western countries within a limited period of time”. \textit{Russia’s Foreign Policy. Change and Continuity in National Identity}, Maryland: Rownman & Littlefield Publishers 2006, p 57.
The CSCE/OSCE was seen as the main structure that could provide the best framework for Russian aspirations regarding European security. First, because in this organisation Russia had the same rights as other members, and thus it could achieve its goals in a better position. Russian policy was that of supporting the Organisation initiatives as far as they did not directly oppose its strategic interests, and trying to get its blessing for activities to be carried by CIS peacekeeping troops25. And second, because by an active participation in the Organisation and promoting it as the ideal framework for European security, Russia thought that it could keep NATO out of the orbit of Eastern European countries. It cannot be denied at the same time, that part of the Russian elite in this period (1991-1993) sought a real involvement of the Organisation in the promotion of human rights and the resolution of conflicts in the former Soviet states. Thus they hoped to establish western values such as democracy and freedom at the paramount of Russian domestic and foreign policies26. However, both policies failed to bring any expected results from the Russian side as the eastward expansion of NATO put it clear, and the negative of OSCE and UN to recognise CIS peacekeeping troops as such, what would have meant recognition of that sphere of influence in the post Soviet space, that Russia sought to protect.

Therefore, the Russian hopes to enhance the CSCE to the level of the main guarantor of European security failed. Russia did not find enough support to achieve this goal. Yet it did not undermine Russian desire to participate in the negotiations and meetings, although some argue that “Russia often seemed to be absent from CSCE debate”27.

25 An interesting point to underline in the case of the CIS peacekeeping forces as those deployed in the Georgian conflict, is that they were mainly (if not only) constituted by Russian members, thus breaking the logic of multi-ethnic and independent contingents.

26 In 1991 at the Moscow Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE Sergey Kovalyev, co-head of the Soviet delegation proposed to use CSCE mechanisms to secure human rights in those regions of the Soviet Union affected by the national revival that was taking place in the Soviet Union.

27 Heather Hurlburt comments that during the Helsinki meeting in 1992, “the Russian delegation was primarily reactive to this conference, presenting very few original proposals and often seeming incidental...
The debate, however, was called to be present soon. And it was during the meeting of CSCE foreign minister held in Stockholm in December 1992. For some forty minutes, Kozyrev shocked the world in a speech that provoked alarm and surprise in equal parts. Among his words, recorded by the international media, he asserted that ‘our traditions are . . . in Asia and this sets limits to our rapprochement with Europe.’28 At the same time he accused Western countries of ominously ‘strengthening their military position in the Baltic States. . . .’ and underlining that ‘the Government of Serbia can count on the support of great Russia’29. Finally he described the territory of the former Soviet Union as ‘a post-imperial space where Russia has to defend its interests by all available means, including military and economic ones’30. Only later the foreign minister clarified that his speech was only a “joke” and an attempt to show the world what could happen to the Russian foreign policy if liberals lost the control.

But those statements that at the end of 1992 were merely a warning towards the world, turned into something concrete by the end of 1993. Again, the political situation of the country challenged the Russian desires to maintain pro-liberal policies abroad when the parliamentarian elections held in December made clear the lack of support of liberals among the Russian public31. The first domain to be affected was the foreign policy, which more visible showed the shift between liberals and those called statist, not to mention nationalist or communists. This change was fuelled by the NATO decision to enlarge eastward, thus, incorporating countries of the former Soviet block in Eastern

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29 Ibid.
31 These elections in 1993 gave as a result the entry into the parliament of anti-Western and nationalist parties, as the Zhirinovski’s LDPR (Liberal Democratic Party of Russia) which came in first position with almost 23% of the votes.
Europe. Nonetheless, it would be a misinterpretation to say that this revision of the Russian foreign policy was grounded as a response to the West for its lack of cooperation with Russia. As stated before, the roots of these changes must to be sought rather in the internal situation of the country, with a population that did not see any of the advantages that democracy and free market should bring, quite the opposite though. In this context the Russian policies towards the CSCE started to deteriorate. First by December 1993 Russia declined to grant free access of CSCE missions to Russian peacekeeping facilities in Moldova and Georgia. It was also in 1993 (November) when a new military doctrine was approved, proclaiming Russia’s peripheral area as issue of geopolitical interest. Only two years later, on 18 April 1995, Andrey Kozyrev warned that “there may be cases where direct military force will be needed to defend our compatriots abroad”\(^{32}\).

All this made clear that Russia was trying to take control over the situation in the former Soviet republics, especially, by appealing the protection of Russian citizens who from one day to another found themselves living in a “foreign country”. But having a deeper look into the evolution of these policies, what appears is a renewal of Russian aspirations to have a voice in the concert of world powers. Yet the economic situation and that of the military undermined these efforts.

3.2.- Great power rhetoric.

After 1993 the Russian policies in the OSCE showed a latent competition between the desires of Moscow of obtaining free hands in its proclaimed sphere of influence, and on the other hand, the necessity of assistance to deal with ethnic tensions and conflicts that overtook Russian possibilities of mediation.

\(^{32}\) Kozyrev warns on military action abroad: <http://www2.nupi.no/cgi-win//Russland/krono.exe?3355> [accessed 13 February 2010]
In the meantime the rhetoric of great power started to be a common element in every statement and public speech done by the then Russian president El’tsin or the foreign affairs ministry Andrey Kozyrev. Russia was not only searching its place in the world, but its own identity. It is in this period where a more conservative elite accessed to relevant institutions. Economic transformation was not in danger, as long as those that controlled the privatisation -or prikhvatisatsia- of the country supported El’tsin. However, the situation in the foreign policy was different and the reassignment of the pro-Western Kozyrev in December 1995 was supplied by Evgeni Primakov. He was considered to be a “pragmatic nationalist” or “eurasianist”, in Tsygankov’s wording he belongs to the statists. These advocated for a strong state and defence of national interests. As in the past, it is necessary to gather internal and external issues to understand this new evolution of the Russian foreign policy.

As main threats coming for abroad was the issue of NATO’s enlargement as the principal point undermining relations between Russia and the West. The conflicts in Yugoslavia and Russian position served as a new element of friction. The internal situation of Russia eroded as a result of the lack of politic support for El’tsin and the crisis in Chechnya. It is clearly an oversimplification of the facts that brought to and end the honey moon between Russia and West countries, but it shows again how important is to take into account both exogenous and indigenous variables.

33 For instance, Yeltsin in a speech given on 26.9.1994 to the United Nations General Assembly: “Russia is undergoing change, it is regaining its identity, but in every respect it remains a great power”. Cited in Hurlburt, `Russia, the OSCE and European Security Architecture´, Helsinki Monitor, 5, 1995, pp. 5-20 (p. 9).
34 Prikhvatizatsija is an invented word in Russian that expresses what Russians understood as privatisation during the nineties: grabbing. It comes from the beginning of the word “privatizatsija” (pri-) and the ends with a part of the verb “khvatit’” –to snatch, to catch hold-.
During this period OSCE missions multiplied, in many cases dealing with conflicts in the post Soviet space such as South Ossetia in Georgia; Nagorno Karabakh and the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the opening of offices in central Asia. Russia was blamed for having pursued different policies in order to undermine or at least minimise the effectiveness of these missions. For instance, in the case of Nagorno Karabakh it is difficult to understand why Russia agreed to establish the Minsk Group for the settlement of the conflict, and at the same time, continuously maintained direct contacts with the parties involved in it. This issue has not only demonstrated the real Russian intentions, but it has also perturbed the work of the Organisation. As a result, it is not weird to think that Russia’s assessment of the Organisation’s work and missions in its near abroad is highly dependent of the definition of Russian national interests.

3.3.- Putin: Chechnya, elections and beyond.

The most relevant changes in Russian policies in/towards the OSCE came soon after Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin became president of the Russian Federation in March 2000. I argue that there was a change because the Russian attitude transformed itself for being critic but cooperative in some cases, to be openly critic and even “offensive” in some respects. If during the nineties Russia still viewed the OSCE as the valid framework for promoting its conceptions on European security, with Putin, Russia started to lose this interest and the events that followed the hard criticism over the Organisation just validate this point. This contradicts official statements that called, as in the past, for promoting the OSCE as the main alternative for European security\(^{36}\), but paradoxically also ratifies them as far as those documents stress strategic interests in Russia’s area of interest.

\(^{36}\) The Russian foreign policy concept of 2000 makes clear that “Russia will strongly oppose the narrowing down of the OSCE functions, specifically any attempts to redirect its specialized activities to the post-Soviet space and the Balkans.”
Putin’s policies during his presidency are today described as a combination of pragmatism and self-concentration, an ideology where the westernist and statist conceptions would have merged in order to guarantee external equidistance and internal stability. The latter was possible thanks to the high prices achieved by oil and gas after 1999, but also a compromise for reforms and modernization of the Russian industry. Democracy was put in a second plane. Russia had first to enhance its economic power to be able to defend its national interests both abroad and inside. This is fundamental change in the Russian policies if we compare them with those of the nineties. Putin realised that there could not be a rhetoric of great power without a great economy standing behind.\(^{37}\)

The situation in Chechnya and the terrorist attacks in the United States in 2001 guided the evolution of the relations between Russia and the Western countries in the sense that the proclaimed war on terror made for Russia possible to declare itself as a victim of this world terrorism in Chechnya, instead of recognising its fails and reconsider its policies towards the republic. Conversely, Russia accepted once again to deploy the OSCE Assistance Group to Chechnya which had been already working in the region between 1995 and 1998\(^{38}\).

As in the past, this decision enclosed hide intentions. Russia did agree under the pressure of other OSCE member states to facilitate the return of the Assistance Group. It could be an interpretation of the Russian desire to promote the Organization as a guarantor of European security and to show the world that Russia was ready to collaborate. Yet Russia criticised the involvement of the Group in the process of conflict resolution, what Russia understood as an inner political matter. By the end of

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\(^{37}\) The Russian foreign policy concept of 2000 states that “the main priority of Russia’s foreign policy in international economic relations is to promote the development of the national economy[…].”

\(^{38}\) The OSCE Assistance Group to Chechnya was established at the 16th of the Permanent Council, Vienna, (PC.DE/35) 11 April 1995.
2002 the mandate of the mission was not extended and eventually the Assistance group left Chechnya in March 2003. Russian position was clear at this respect as it was stated by the Russian permanent representative in Vienna: ‘As far as Chechnya itself is concerned, despite the shutting down of the OSCE field office we are counting on continued co-operation with the OSCE regarding the Chechen problem in the areas of interest to us’. 39

With such an explanation, any analysis is needless. Russia will cooperate with the OSCE in these cases where it can feel free to play its game. International pressure or criticism had then and now have a relative impact on Russian behaviour, at least when it comes to the OSCE. In the same statement the Russian position is crystal clear explained: ‘The question of Chechnya is for us so serious that we did not want to make it the subject of any diplomatic games or any political bargaining, and for that reason we immediately adopted as our approach to the matter a real position and not a negotiating one’. 40

But the Chechen issue was not the only one that provoked heated discussions and responses between Russia and other OSCE member states and even institutions. We can situate the Chechen question in the broader issue of the OSCE human dimension.

Russia has not been always content with the evolution of this dimension or basket of the OSCE. Several times during the nineties Russia was blamed for not fulfilling its commitments and agreements on the human rights or minorities protection. In the concrete case of Chechnya Russia alleged that in exceptional situations, exceptional measures were necessary.

The target of great part of the critics is the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). Among its activities: election monitoring, development of democratic institutions and civil society, and defence of human rights. Russia has traditionally showed its disagreement with the degree of autonomy that this OSCE body enjoys. But the main critics focus on the character of the missions carried out by the ODIHR and concretely in the geographical scope of them, almost always east of Vienna.

This conception that the OSCE institutions focus its activities mainly on Eastern Europe –accurately in the post-Soviet space- is to some extend true, but the response to that is that those situations that require OSCE involvement such as ethnic tensions that eventually broke into open conflicts; human rights protection, promotion and enhancement of democratic procedures and institutions; and finally post-conflict resolution, are objectively taking place in that region of Europe. Anyway, the majority of OSCE field missions during the nineties and early 2000s were located in the Balkans rather than in the territories of the former Soviet Union. Now with the closure in 2009\textsuperscript{41} of the OSCE mission in Georgia the presence of the OSCE in the region is limited to the existence of offices and projects in Baku, Tajikistan or Bishkek among others, but without field-missions operative.

Nonetheless, Russia once more tried to convince its western partners at the OSCE that its commitments with the Organization remained intact, and in 2003, after having refused the extension of the mandate for the Assistance Group to Chechnya it invited ODIHR experts to assess the preparations for the referendum on the new Chechen constitution.

\textsuperscript{41} The OSCE mission in Georgia that included the presence of monitoring forces in South Ossetia was closed due to the lack of consensus to extend its mandate in December 2008. The closure was completed in June 2009 when the mission stuff left the country.
However, only few months later the ODIHR refused to take part at the monitoring for the presidential elections. They argued lack of security, something that the Russians found “groundless” giving the presence of observers from the CIS and the Arab League.\(^4^2\) This incident could have been viewed as further step towards deterioration between Russia and the ODHIR –or the OSCE human dimension as a whole- but some years later it appears as a mistake done by the ODHIR that allowed the Russians increase its criticism on this institution. Why to monitor some elections and not others? The level of confrontation grew in the next years. The report produced by the ODIHR after the presidential elections in 2004 recorded several shortages and stated that ´While on a technical level the election was organized with professionalism [...] the process overall did not adequately reflect principles necessary for a healthy democratic election.´\(^4^3\)

The Russian side underlined the first part of the sentence, but did not want to recognise some of the appreciations done in the report\(^4^4\). At the same time Russian representatives in Vienna continued to divert the attention to other areas where according to them, the ODIHR should investigate the situation of human rights, for instance, in Guantanamo or Estonia\(^4^5\). The peak moment about the Human dimension and Russian criticism came in July 2004. The Russian delegation presented a declaration signed by some CIS countries that included Russia itself, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Moldova, Ukraine and Uzbekistan where they addressed the state of affairs within the OSCE.\(^4^6\) In this document the signatories included some of the Russian critics that were being a common commodity during the last meetings in the Permanent Council. Among these, they observed `a serious

\(^{42}\) Regarding the Results of the Presidential Elections in the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation, Vienna, (PC.DEL/1184/03) 10 October 2003.


\(^{44}\) Statement of the Russian Federation to the OSCE Permanent Council, Vienna (PC.DEL/205/04) 19 March 2004.

\(^{45}\) Statement by Mr. Alexander Alekseyev, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the OSCE, at the Meeting of the Permanent Council, Vienna (PC.DEL/63/04) 2 February 2004.

\(^{46}\) Statement by Mr. Alexander Alekseyev, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the OSCE, at the Meeting of the Permanent Council, Vienna (PC.DEL/630/04) 8 July 2004.
imbalance between the three security dimensions […] and (that) an obvious shifting of priorities can be observed in favour of the human dimension’.\footnote{Ibid.} The issue about the Organisation’s focus east of Vienna appeared too. To this point there was nothing new, but critics did not stop here. Finally all the bitterness accumulated against the ODIHR erupted: “(The) work of the ODIHR is frequently politicized and does not take into account the specific features of individual countries”\footnote{Ibid.}. Only few months later a similar statement reproduced part of this appraisal, but adding a constructive discourse for the reform of the OSCE \footnote{Statement by Mr. Alexei N. Borodavkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the OSCE, at the Meeting of the Permanent Council, Vienna. Appeal by the Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States to their OSCE partners, (PC.DEL/912/04) 23 September 2004.}. However, profound wounds and discrepancies did not allow place for optimism between the parties involved in this exchange of statements. In 2007 the ODIHR did not agree to monitor the parliamentary elections in the Russian Federation due to the exigencies that the Russian government demanded\footnote{In a press release the ODHIR stated that “the authorities of the Russian Federation remain unwilling to receive ODIHR observers in a timely and co-operative manner and co-operate fully with them”. ODIHR Press Release, <http://www.osce.org/item/27967.html> [accessed 12 January 2010]}. Subsequently, the same position was adopted for the presidential elections in 2008. The then president Putin did not spare words to refer to the ODIHR attitude during his annual meeting with journalists, in February 2008, when he concluded that ODIHR staff could better ‘teach their wives to cook shi’ than giving lessons about democracy in Russia\footnote{It was during his televised briefing with journalists when this sentence came at the end of Putin’s answer to a question about the ODIHR refuse for monitoring the presidential elections. (14.02.2008)}. Of course, such interventions did not help to restore understanding and trust between Russia and the OSCE.

3.4.- Military dimension: The never-ending story.

Traditionally, as Pál Dunay points out, the OSCE politico-military dimension includes disarmament, arms control, security-building and confidence measures together with
prevention and conflict management so as post conflict rehabilitation\textsuperscript{52}. Of course the impact of the terrorist attacks of 2001 in the United States had here a repercussion too. Terrorism prevention and its fight were included in the discussions. But what Russia has expected from this dimension is still being discussing: to transform it into an effective forum to discuss issues of European hard security with legal-binding resolutions, something in direct concern with the Russian aspirations of converting the OSCE itself into the principal security organisation in Europe, an illusion that today has almost disappeared from the perspective of any of its member states. NATO not only stopped its expansion eastward in 1999 when the first former socialist republics of Eastern Europe became members, but in 2004 NATO started to border Russian soil with the incorporation of the three Baltic republics. For Russia this represented a fracture within the Organization, and concretely, the fracture of the “indivisibility” of European security\textsuperscript{53}. On the other hand, the same argument could be stated against the Russian efforts of gaining a leader role within the Collective Security Treaty Organization that includes some of the members of the CIS (Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan). What really irritates Russia is its lack of control over policies that are settled some kilometres away in Washington or Brussels, but that may have consequences for its inner security, not to mention for the situation in Russia’s near abroad.

Nevertheless, Russia has sought to upgrade the profile of this dimension, which it considers to be undervalued in comparison to the human scope of the Organization. There are, as in the human dimension, some aspects that are of special concern for the Russian representation in Vienna. One of them is the Treaty on Conventional Armed


\textsuperscript{53} Statement by Mr. Anvar Azimov, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the OSCE Permanent Council, Vienna (PC.DEL/9/09) 15 January 2009.
Forces in Europe (CFE), more specifically, the Adaptation Agreement of CFE of 1999. Since then, the ratification of the Agreement by NATO member states was linked with the withdrawal of Russian military forces from Georgia, according to the agreement reached by Russia and Georgia during the OSCE Istanbul Summit in 1999. Russia, however, did not see any obligation on that and considered the same as a matter of bilateral relations and in no way a legal binding document that could stop the ratification of the Adapted CFE Treaty. By 2006 Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine had ratified the Agreement, but no single NATO member state. In 2007, eventually, the Russian Federation decided to suspend the operation of the CFE Treaty. In the meantime, the president Vladimir Putin, presented his famous speech during the Conference for Security in Munich that for many embodied the deterioration of relations between Russia and its Western allies. In that speech he pointed out that ‘the unipolar world that had been proposed after the Cold War did not take place’.

He criticised unilateralism and the tentative of introducing that conception of unipolar world into the international affairs.

The crisis in Georgia in 2008 just put to an end, according to many Russian experts, any possibility of relive the CFE Treaty. Yet it does not mean that Russia has ceased to collaborate within the OSCE in this respect, but it remains more sceptical than anytime before about the possibility of reaching an agreement to give to the politico-military dimension a high profile to deal with European security issues. As Tat’ana Parkhalina

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56 During a conference held in Moscow in February 2010, with NATO member representatives and Russian analysts, the latter side underlined in several occasion their doubts about the future of CFE Treaty.
points out, ‘Russia’s problem is […] that the current (security) system, in general and mainly, suits all countries except Russia, other way countries from the post-socialist block would no seek with such persistence for NATO and EU integration as they do’. The rest of critics from Russia have been pointing out the lack of adaptation of the politico-military dimension to the actual situation of European security. According to this view, the OSCE is not prepared to deal with conflicts and prevent them in the light of some cases occurred in the last years. Actually, the politic-military dimension accounts with several documents and procedures, with instruments to be used in such situation, but the decision mechanisms –in Russia’s understanding- do not provide effectiveness. Certainly, ‘the OSCE has neither the military clout of NATO nor the economic magnetic attraction of the European Union’ in order to provide a better response to current security challenges.

The OSCE for its part undertook an ambitious agenda to react to those challenges and conflicts of the twenty first century where strategies and plans should be discussed on the basis of concrete resources and real limitations to better fulfil the mandate of the missions.

However, these advances were seen as insufficient by the Kremlin and in 2008, with Medved already as president, a proposal for a new European security treaty was presented.

3.5.- Russia’s bid for European Security. The end of the OSCE?

In a speech delivered in Berlin in June 2008, President Dmitri Medveded called for a new comprehensive security structure for Europe. At the time, less attention was paid to this proposal in the United States and Europe, the most they only expressed scepticism.

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57 Tat’ana Parkhalina, ‘Perspektivy dogovora o evropeiskoi bezopasnosti’, Evropeiskaja Bezopasnost’: sobytija, otsenki, prognozy, 16, 2009, 32, pp. 6-12 (p. 9).
over the idea. According to Medvedev, “an organisation such as the OSCE could, it would seem, embody European civilisation’s newfound unity, but it is prevented from doing so, prevented from becoming a full-fledged general regional organisation”\(^59\). He paid attention to the consequences that the isolation and marginalisation of countries could have to the security situation in Europe, offering a new deal in the architecture of European security. In the light that those changes Russia was waiting for within the OSCE did not occur, the proposal should start an active discussion and conclude into concrete results. The first reactions were not only of indifference, but also of some concern about the implications that such an agreement could have on the USA- Europe relations. If during the first years after the Cold War Russia sought to promote the OSCE as a counterweight to NATO superiority in the European security architecture, with this proposal one can see a parallelism and affirm that it could imply not only the transformation of the OSCE, but the creation of a new and competing body, since it would have legal binding provisions.

One of the main ideas of the treaty is that of “strengthen the pan-European commitments and principles in the area of “hard security” by transforming them from political to legal commitments, as the joint statement of the CSTO members underlined during the meeting of the OSCE Forum for Security and Cooperation\(^60\).

In the course of the OSCE Athens Ministerial Council in 1\(^{st}\) December 2009, the Russian minister of foreign affairs Sergey Lavrov presented a draft of the Treaty that was distributed to the delegations. In his statement he again appealed for “radical changes in the politico-military sphere”\(^61\). The next day, the Greek Chairmanship launched the so called “Corfu Process”, an open discussion that includes not only the

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59 Speech at Meeting with German Political, Parliamentary and Civic Leaders, 5 June 2008. [http://eng.kremlin.ru/text/speeches/2008/06/05/2203_type82912type82914type84779_202153.shtml](http://eng.kremlin.ru/text/speeches/2008/06/05/2203_type82912type82914type84779_202153.shtml) [accessed 23 January 2010]


61 Statement by Mr. Sergei Lavrov, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation at the Seventeenth Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, Athens (MC.DEL/19/09) 1 December 2009.
reform of the politico-military dimension, but also the rest of issues that constitute the OSCE all-encompassing conception of security.

Russia’s Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Grushko stated that “Russia’s "Western partners" had nothing to fear from Medvedev’s offer. "There is neither a false bottom, nor a hidden agenda in the Russian proposal”. However, especially after the conflict in Georgia, some points of the proposal are seen as a Russia’s Trojan horse within the Euro-Atlantic space. There are even those, who claim that the Russian treaty would mean the “burying Helsinki” and see in it an “anti-OSCE focus”. For others, Medvedev’s fundamental diagnosis of the status of the European security was to some extent correct: the goals of the Charter of Paris have not been achieved completely and that Europe suffers from security deficits. Certainly, having a look to the European security situation one cannot deny that crisis and conflicts (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Georgia just to mention some of them) that have took place during the last two decades, have put into question the security framework in Europe inherited from the Cold War.

Taking into account diverse statements of the Russian representatives in Vienna, it does not seem that Russia will marginalise the OSCE as a forum for discussing Medvedev’s proposition. Last but not least, Russia does not want either to reduce the discussion of its proposal to the OSCE framework.

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64 Margarete Klein, "Russia’s Plan for a New Pan-European Security Regime: A Serious Proposal or An Attempt at Division?", Russian Analytical Digest, 55, 2009, pp. 6-9, (p. 6).

65 PC.DEL/9/09 (15 January 2009)
The first references to the Russian treaty initiative in the framework of the OSCE appeared already during the Helsinki Ministerial Council in December 2008⁶⁶, with the sounds of the Georgian war still present. Apparently the “spirit of Helsinki” had revitalised the OSCE, but not concrete measures were achieved. Eventually, the "Corfu Process" was launched in June 2009 during an informal meeting of OSCE foreign ministers on the Greek island of Corfu, as a response, in part, to the Russian demands in order to restore confidence between member states and take forward dialogue on “wider European security”. Later, the OSCE Ministerial declaration of the 2nd December 2009 officially meant the beginning of the process⁶⁷. Recognising that some of the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and OSCE commitments were not fully respected and accomplished, it stated that dialogue within the Corfu Process should be based in the OSCE and ‘in the principles of equality, partnership, co-operation, inclusiveness and transparency’⁶⁸. The official statement affirmed that ‘it will aim at addressing disagreements openly, honestly and in an unbiased manner, acknowledging our diversities and concerns, in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding’⁶⁹. Three basic guidelines were pointed out in the same document:

(a) Adherence to the concept of comprehensive, co-operative and indivisible security, as enshrined in the OSCE fundamental documents;

(b) Compliance with OSCE norms, principles and commitments in all three OSCE dimensions, in full and in good faith, and in a consistent manner by all;

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⁶⁹ Ibid.
(c) Determination to strengthen partnership and co-operation in the OSCE area, as well as to enhance the effectiveness of the OSCE and its contribution to security in our common space.\textsuperscript{70}

These premises cleared up any doubts and concerns that some member states could have cherished. However, if it is certain that Russia is pleased with the Corfu Process, it has also showed that the OSCE is not the only or natural anchor for its treaty initiative. Despite the OSCE Kazakhstan Chairmanship efforts to held a summit (the last dates from 1999 in Istanbul), what could bring more visibility to the Russian bid for the European security; many state members have disagreed to please Russian ally. This lack of interest has been summing up to other internal disagreements and continuous critics, especially from the Russian Federation and other CIS countries. There is, yet, a possibility for transforming those critics into constructive efforts to reshape the OSCE. It is not only Russia to blame for its decrease of interest to the organisation. The United States, the other big player, has similarly guided itself in the last years by a path of unilateralism that has eroded the OSCE visibility and capacities to deal with hard security. Some of the Russian critics at this respect are quite correct, in form but not in contain though.

In this situation it is not strange to find here and there articles that call for the Russian retirement from the Organisation, or at least analyse the consequences that such a movement may have for the state of the European security and for Russia itself\textsuperscript{71}.

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\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
Chapter Four: Case of Study: the OSCE Mission to Georgia (1992-2008).

4.1.-Introduction:
Conflict and the Caucasus have been a recurrent issue for the Russian history since more than two hundred years. Nowadays the Caucasus has became a matter of primary interest not only for Russia but also for the rest of Europe and its security organisations, where the OSCE is included and indeed has played an active role since the collapse of the soviet Union.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Caucasus was in different periods a matter of some concern for the Eastern strategies of Britain, France or even Germany, for a long time, probably too much, the Caucasus remained as something far and a troublesome region where Western powers did not get deeply involved. For centuries the battle for its strategic control was played by the Russian, Ottoman and Persian empires, eventually resulting/turning the Russian Empire as the hegemonic power in this region.

Since the beginning of the Russian conquer of the Caucasus in the eighteenth century, (although Muscovites reached the Caspian sea in 1556 during the conquest of the khanate of Astrakhan) the Caucasus has been regarded in Russia as its Orient, a space of mystery, the homeland of both savages and proud highlanders who heroically resisted the invasion of foreign invaders. This picture was reinforced in the accounts of Russian writers who sometimes fuelled either a romantic vision – as in the case of Pushkin- or a repulsive one –the works of Turgenev and Tolstoy are an example- about the battles that took place between the Russian imperial forces and peoples from the Caucasus. Only by the 1860 could Russia establish nominal sovereignty over these lands, yet with continuous uprisings and temporal clashes that hindered any attempt to have a real control of the situation:
“The general scheme of “government” could be simply put as follow: the Russian commander addressed the local peoples and promised them protection and commercial advantages in return for their loyalty and peaceful behaviour. An “accord” was signed with the potentates and elders, but sooner or later it was violated and, as a result of a raid, large numbers of people were killed and taken into captivity. A punitive expedition was organized and the cycle started all over again. Address, “treaty”, raid, punitive expedition”.72

It seems that the end of the twentieth century and the demise of the Soviet Union brought back some ghosts of the past. The independent states of the south –Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan- are in better or worse position dealing with economic, ethnic and social and territorial tensions. The situation in the Russian republics of the north is not better though. The name of Chechnya will still for a long period be associated with unrest and conflicts, which now are expanding throughout other republics such as Dagestan, North Ossetia or Kabardino-Balkaria. To complete the picture, non recognised political entities –Nagorno Karabakh, South Ossetia and Abkhazia- claim for their independence in a context of permanent tension with their respective neighbours. With this situation the then Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe had to deal at the beginning of the nineties, when other conflict was bleeding the heart of Europe in the Balkans. It is not strange, thus, that in this situation Russia took the decision to intervene, even though its own political and social situation did not advise to do so. Already the Soviet Union in its last years had failed to give an answer to its own

ethno-federal construction in the Caucasus, and the consequences did not take long to come.

Western countries, as in the past, showed little desire to take part in the settlement of these conflicts about which they knew even less. Therefore, the Russian involvement in the region has been since the nineties not only the logic response from Russia’s elite and foreign policy trends, but the result of the lack of interest from the western community. Now when Georgia decided to organise its domestic situation and has appealed to become a member of the European family of nations, Russia and the West have found themselves in a crossroad of interests regarding not only the stability and security of the continent –not to mention the own future of the OSCE- but also interests to control a key region for access to the reach in natural resources area of the Caspian sea basin.

The members of the OSCE Mission to Georgia that arrived in December 1992, probably never thought that the conflict between the breakout regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia could some day provoke so heated discussions as they caused even after the closure of the mission in 2009.

On the other hand, Russian policy makers that in 1992 achieved the first agreements between the Georgian government and the South Ossetia and Abkhazia rebel forces, did not think that some twenty years later they would vote for the independence of these entities.

Probably the OSCE Mission to Georgia represents as no other issue regarding Russia’s involvement within the OSCE, the hardship to meet OSCE security commitments –in all dimensions- and Russia’s national interests and security goals. This case of study analyses this problem taking into account Russia’s school of thoughts, Russia’s behaviour towards the OSCE exposed in the last chapter, Georgia’s behaviour and the

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73 The 6th of November of 1992 the Committee of Senior Official mandates the Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office to establish the Mission to Georgia. (17-CSO/Journal 2, Annex 2)
work of the OSCE in a context of continuous tension and political bargaining between all the sides involved.

4.2.-Background: Georgian independence.

Before talking about the establishment of the OSCE Mission to Georgia it is necessary to look at the past and understand the origins of a conflict that eventually lead to a new status quo in the region, with the implication of the Russian Federation, the authorities from the secessionist regions, the CSCE and the Georgian Government.

We could go even in eighteenth century and have a better insight of the current situation in the modern Georgia, talk about the Russian conquer and annexation of what today is known as Georgia, but that then was an even more highly divided society among politic, religious and ethnic lines. Only for a short period –May 1918 until February 1921- enjoyed Georgia independency. The history of the Georgian state in the twenty century was mainly the history of the Georgian Soviet Republic within the Soviet Union. Yet, Georgia preserved during all this period a high national consciousness that, despite the Soviet policy of creating a Soviet nation, was never erased. For instance, in 1978 a large demonstration took place in Tbilisi when was know a proposal to give the Russian language a status similar to that of Georgian in the education system and the administration. Eventually, the plan was withdrawn and Georgia –together with Armenia- remained the only soviet republic with its local language as the only official.

This strong national consciousness was essential in the construction of the new independent republic after 1991 when the Georgian Supreme Soviet declared its independence from Moscow74. By that date armed conflicts had already erupted within

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74 In 1990 the Georgian Supreme Soviet declared “the May 21, 1921, Treaty of workers’ and peasants’ alliance between the Georgian republic and the Russian republic and the March 12, 1922, Treaty of Alliance forming the Federated Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of Transcaucasia, illegal and invalid.
Georgia, the first over the Autonomous Oblast’ of South Ossetia. It began in November 1989 with interrupted fighting between January 1991 and June 1992 when the Sochi agreement was signed. South Ossetia, fearing to lose its status as autonomous province within the new independent Georgia, made an appeal to become part of the Soviet Union or merge with its north neighbour, the Republic of North Ossetia. Tbilisi could not allow such an attempt and the new president Gamsakhurdia ordered the National Guard to move into the region. As a result, Georgian forces met a strong opposition and were repelled. From this moment South Ossetia became the first headache for Tbilisi in its path toward the building of the new Georgian statehood.

But problems came not only from breakaway regions. At the end of 1991 political rivalry among Georgian leaders turned into a civil war that devastated the foundations of the state and put Georgia in a weak position and highly unstable situation. This weakness was seen as an opportunity in the Autonomous Socialist Republic of Abkhazia, which had sought since Georgia’s independence declaration to join the Soviet Union upgrading its state to that of Sovereign Republic - the higher administrative unity within the complex formulation of the Soviet system.75

The tensions between the Abkhazian authorities and the Georgian forces increased and in 1993 as a result of Georgia’s defeat against the Abkhazians, more than 200,000 people of mainly Georgian ethnicity had to leave the Abkhazian Republic.

Moreover, it condemned “the occupation and the facto annexation of Georgia by Soviet Russia as an international crime”. The Current Digest of the Soviet Press. 42, April 11, 10, 1990, p. 9.

75 The system that the Soviet Union displayed to keep different regions and former imperial domains under Moscow’s control is called Soviet “ethno-federalism”. It consisted of a hierarchic structure of administrative divisions, where the main political power in each division was given to the so-called “titular nationalities”. Georgia inherited this system that privileged autonomous entities within its territory. Political elites from titular nationalities thus enjoyed institutional recognition and enough resources to promote their goals, what clashed with Georgian aspirations of unite state. See: Monica Duffy Toft, ‘Multinationality, regional institutions, state building, and the failed transition in Georgia’, in Hughes and Gwendolyn Sasse, Ethnicity and territory in the former Soviet Union. Regions in conflict. New York: Frank Cass Publishers, 2005. pp. 123-142.
The internal situation of Georgia, whose political elite was guided by nationalistic and some times chauvinism ideas did not offer a proper framework for agreement between all the parties involved in all this conflicts. Fragmentation and dark interests, as the control over smuggling activities hampered the peaceful settlement of the problems\textsuperscript{76}. In the meanwhile, Russia was struggling with its own disputes, and even though Russia’s assistance to the breakaway regions could have its importance, the first phase of these conflicts was a matter of intra-Georgian political struggle rather than a question of geopolitics between Russia and the Republic of Georgia. However, other authors interpret that ‘overall, the post-Soviet order in the Caucasus was not the natural outcome of individual nations striving for the independence but rather a reflection of the internal community’s capacity to tolerate one kind of secessionists -Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia- but not another –those of the unrecognised regimes of Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia-.’\textsuperscript{77}

4.3.-The OSCE Mission to Georgia.

In November 1992, taking into account the situation created in the Caucasus after the dissolution of the Soviet Union that unleashed ethnic conflicts within the borders of the newly independent Republic of Georgia, the then CSCE Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) -now known as the OSCE Permanent Council- took the first steps towards the deployment of a mission that should guarantee the stability in the region. The scope of the OSCE Mission to Georgia –the Mission- covered in a broad sense all the issues regarding security and stability, in accordance with the OSCE encompassing approach to security. Thus, in the first statement the CSO already put the accent in military, social

\textsuperscript{76} Ethnicity was of course another factor, but it cannot be concluded that it was the origin of disputes. It became later a new card to be played by the parties to pursue their claims.

and economic aspects, calling for a broader political framework that could bring all the parties of the conflict under a single negotiation process. It made clear the necessity “to initiate a visible presence of the CSCE in the region.”78

Soon after the activation of the Mission and the deployment of its first member in December 1992, the conflict of South Ossetia and its peaceful resolution centered great part of the Organisation’s involvement in Georgia. Nevertheless, after 1992 the scope of the Mission included several goals that were proposed in a wide-range of projects through the country from environmental protection towards human rights promotion or reconstruction of key infrastructures.

So, in 1993 the Head of the Mission signed a memorandum with the Georgian government to include the presence of the CSCE in the region in order to identify and eliminate sources of tension. Further, in 1994 the Mission expanded its influence and means all over the Georgian territory being added the human rights and democratisation components.79 But the cornerstone of the OSCE Mission to Georgia remained the resolution of the conflict in South Ossetia.

The character of this conflict, which is labelled in the frame of frozen conflicts80, is an issue of study that has lead to some discussions about its origins, nature and development; but principally, to the question of why such a conflict remained unresolved and eventually it defrosted and turned into a new war. To what extend the

80 There is a huge bibliography on the so called “frozen conflicts” and monographies about these conflicts in the Caucasus. Although they are multiple descriptions a general one might be that given by S. Neil MacFarlane. He describes a frozen conflict as a conflict situation in which, after an armed confrontation – and despite punctual escalations of hostilities- the parties have agreed in a cease-fire situation and accord a political resolution that, however, never comes. S. Neil MacFarlane, ‘Eingefrorene Konflikte in der ehemaligen Sowjetunion- der Fall Georgia/Südossetien’, OSCE Yearbook, 2009, Baden Baden, Nomos 2009, pp. 23-36 (p 23). To this, Victor-Yves Ghébali adds that [the] “military demarcation line established by a cease-fire becomes a de facto border”. Victor-Yves Ghébali, ‘The OSCE Mission to Georgia (1992-2004):The failing art of half-hearted measures’, Helsinki Monitor, 14, 2004, 4, pp. 280-292 (p. 285).
implication of the parties did facilitate or made more difficult the settlement of the conflict? And finally, how was the Russian behaviour regarding a possible solution in the frame of the OSCE and Russia’s behaviour impact on this regard?

All these questions seem to be quite logical and even easier to answer once the escalation of the conflict erupted into the August war in 2008, but for a long period, at least until 2004 when the situation aggravated dramatically, there was a perception that a peaceful result could be achieved.

4.3.2.- The parties.

In these conflicts where both sides –those who claim for independence and those who want to defend national integrity- have a lot to loose or gain, a simple answer based on geopolitical views might mean an oversimplification and do not allow to investigate hide –or not so hide- interests that actually play a fundamental role in the continuation and prolongation of frozen conflicts. In the case of South Ossetia, the compositions of its authorities and its legitimacy have been constantly questioned. The legal limbo that persisted in the region facilitated the apparition of black markets and underground economy, what to many would have clearly beneficiated local authorities in South Ossetia\(^\text{81}\).

How to deal with such authorities and set them together at the same table with the Georgian authorities that referred to South Ossetia in the best case as “the Tsikhinvali region”, was one of the major concerns of the OSCE at the beginning. It had to guarantee Georgian territorial integrity and simultaneously accept the involvement of South Ossetian representatives in the process. The Joint Control Commission (JCC) that was established in Sochi Agreements 1992 to deal with conflict resolution served to the

\(^{81}\) It is not unusual to read how the Georgian Government in some statements refers to the Tsikhinvali authorities as “bandits and thieves”. In an interview in 2010 Saakvashvili refers to Kokoity as a “bandit and protégé of the Russian Secret Service” (FSB). Vlast’, 862, March 2010, 8, pp. 12-17 (p.16).
OSCE as the main political tool to get involved. But the JCC not only lacked real
determination from its representatives – Russians, North Ossetians, South Ossetians,
Georgians- but also, the role of the OSCE within this framework remained in best case
as one of observer part\(^{82}\). Indeed, the October 1994 agreement between the JCC parties
only stated that “the CSCE Mission to Georgia will take part in the work of the JCC”,
without any concrete responsibilities or competences\(^{83}\).

Therefore, discussions ended up with vague declarations and protocols that rarely were
observed. Another OSCE instrument for the settlement of the conflict was the meetings
around the Experts’ group to provide a document of minimal joint points to be accepted
by the parties. Yet, as those drawn up within the JCC, though welcomed the biggest
achievement was an “intermediary document”\(^{84}\) -quoting Marietta König- that
recognised four points which later worked as basis for the so called Baden Document of

Finally, visits from the Head of the Mission and some OSCE ambassadors from Vienna
together with propositions for peaceful settlement of the conflict served also as political
tools that the OSCE offered for the conflict resolution, or at least, to give visibility to
the Mission. Yet it does not mean that the work of the OSCE regarding the South
Ossetian conflict was irrelevant. At least from 1994 –it was in May of this year when
for first time representatives from the Georgian and Ossetian parties met no negotiate
under the OSCE umbrella- multiple solutions where drafted and proposed to the parties

\(^{82}\) In October 1994 an agreement between the four parties within the Joint Control Commission fostered
by the Russian delegation was signed. It expanded the responsibilities of the JCC to include all aspects of
conflict-resolution, including political facilitation in full scale. Georgian and Ossetian sides insisted that
an active presence of the OSCE Mission to Georgia had to be included in the new agreement. Russians
agreed to enhance OSCE presence in the JCC, but further efforts to include the OSCE within the JCC for
political settlement were in vain.

\(^{83}\) See: “Soglashenie o dal’neishem razvitii protsessa mirnogo uregulirovania gruzino-osetinskogo
31%20Agreement%20on%20JCC%20Terms%20of%20Reference_Rus_Eng.pdf> [accessed 12 January
2010]

and some times discussed at the JCC\textsuperscript{85}. However, at the final stage the parties saw their particular interests above any political engagement that could mean a loss of legitimacy within their respective social realities, thus, fearing to give up any power.

Other important issue that must be taken into account are the changes that occurred at the political level. In both sides important facts took place: the replacement of Liudbig Khidirov by Eduard Kokoity at the de-fact presidency –the last a Russian businessman being considered “hard liner”- in 2001 in South Ossetia and the new period started by Mikhail Saakashvili after years of Shevardnadze’s patrimonial rule translated soon into the ground. Positions –for independency in the Ossetian side, and for territorial integrity in the Georgian one- remained unalterable or even were strengthened. From the Georgian side, president Saakvashili made clear that one of his goals was the restoration of Georgian integrity, while offering a broad autonomy to both Tsikhinvali and Sukhumi. Indeed, for first time South Ossetia was addressed as such (“South Ossetia region” instead “Tsikhinvali area”). Unfortunately, that was seen by Kokoity as an attempt to undermine South Ossetia’s interests and right to self-determination.

Notwithstanding the new political milieu the OSCE continued to promote political dialogue that however, became almost impossible in 2004 when hostilities and further escalation in the conflict turned into a new armed confrontation in the summer. Changes in the parties directly involved were not the only source of animosities. This escalation and deterioration might be explained in great deal with reference to the change in Russia’s behaviour.

\textsuperscript{85} From 1994 and until 2004 there were initiatives to find a solution for the conflict and to establish a new political framework for the relations between the Georgian state and South Ossetia. For instance the negotiations in March 1994 held in Vladikavkaz; in March 1995 another proposal came from the Russian foreign Ministry; 1996,1997 and 1998 followed a series of contacts between South Ossetian leader Ludvig Tchibirov and Shevardnadze in a general bettering of the situation. The result was the Baden Document signed in 2000.
4.3.3-Russian attitude in the no-solution of the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict.

Russo-Georgian relations undoubtedly marked the ups and downs of the Mission until its final withdrawal in 2009, not only in the Vienna’s OSCE offices, but also in the implementation of the projects in the field. Thus, Russia opposed any attempt within the Mission that could diminish the rights of Russian peacekeeping forces in South Ossetia, but at the same time did not hesitate to defend Georgia’s territorial integrity and underlined the Mission’s importance in the region –at least until 2004-. On the other hand, Georgia, that at the beginning in the nineties found itself alone in a catastrophic situation, needed from Russian assistance to seize the power first in Tbilisi and then to arrange agreements with the breakaway regions. A situation that evolved dramatically after the 1999 Istanbul joint statement on the withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgian soil, and especially, after the so called Rose Revolution in 2003.

As in the general description of Russian-OSCE relations in chapter three, the Russian attitude towards the Mission in Georgia shifted according to national security perceptions, rather than to international pressures –that anyway, if they played any role in this case, it was that of complacency towards Russia-. Last but not least, the evolution of bilateral relations between Georgia and Russia was another issue that eventually ended in tragedy.

Russia from the beginning of the conflict took advantage of its privileged position both as a mediator and a as an interested part in the conflict. Initially, Moscow provided and backed the Sochi agreement signed the 24 of June of 1992 by South Ossetia and Georgia to stop the military confrontation. However, to reach this point, Russian Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev had to deal with the frontal opposition of the South

86 In exchange of it, Russia obtained the Georgian commitment to join the Commonwealth of Independent States, an institution that Georgia –together with the Baltic countries- refused to join in 1991.
Ossetian leader Alan Chochiiev who stated that “Russia helped us until a pro-Russian government came to power in Georgia”\(^{88}\). Shevardnadze commented that the Russian attitude was positive and soon bilateral relations improved.

This first stage of the conflict inscribes itself in the more multilateralist/westernist trend of Russian foreign policy, when negotiation and the role of international organisations were appreciated. Yet, the specific situation of Georgia and the volatility of the Caucasus made Russia to have a more pragmatic view upon the Ossetian conflict. It is argued that to this case a statist approach can explain better the Russian management of the disputes between Georgia and South Ossetia in this period. Conversely, Russia sought international blessing for its CIS peacekeeping forces in the region –mainly through the UN- but it was not achieved. So the CSCE and the deployment of one field mission was other way to show the world the Russian commitment towards peace and stability in the frame of international cooperation. But at the same time, as was seen before, Russia wanted to remain as an active player while keeping the CSCE and the Mission to Georgia as a mere observer or “reporter” of events that were taking place.

The self composition of the “collective peacekeeping forces” established by the Sochi Agreement, was a kind of peacekeeping “po ruski”\(^{89}\), being formed by the parties in conflict –Georgians, North Ossetians (Russians) and South Ossetians plus a Russian contingent- what represented itself, as Yves Ghébali points out, an aberration of the concept of peacekeeping forces\(^{90}\).

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\(^{88}\) South Ossetia: ‘ “No compromises with Georgia”- This is the desire of Alan Chochiiev’, The current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press, 44, May 1992, 15, p. 21. Cited in “Countdown to war in Georgia”, Eastview, p. 35.


This *disbalance* between the role played by the OSCE in the field and the prominent position Russian negotiators at the JCC was somehow corrected in 1995, but still the movements of the OSCE to have a transcendent involvement were interpreted by Moscow as an attempt to interfere in her back yard. Russia, while allowing subsequent extensions and even expansions of the tasks to be carried by Mission, did not refuse not solve the problems in its own terms.

For instance, in 1999 the mandate of the Mission was strengthened with the approval of the Border Monitoring Operation.\footnote{262nd Plenary Meeting, Decision No. 334 of the OSCE Permanent Council, Vienna (PC.DEC/334) 15 December 1999.} The resolution came after Russian accusations asserting that the Chechen-Georgian border was a shelter for terrorists –even those with links with Al-Qaeda- and that the Georgian government was quite aware of the situation\footnote{For instance, one statement at the Permanent Council by Russian representative affirmed that “with the acquiescence of the Georgian authorities large bandit formations and groups of terrorists are in fact operating freely along the border”. Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation at the Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council, Vienna (PC.DEL/733/02) 27 September, 2002.} The BMO did not find facts that could back up Russian complaints. Its mandate was extended in consecutive years also to the Ingush and Dagestan segments of the Georgian-Russian border\footnote{Permanent Council decision 406, ‘Extension of the BMO to Georgia’, Vienna (PC.DEC/406) 29 March 2001. Permanent Council decision 450, ‘Geographical Expansion of the BMO to Georgia’, Vienna (PC.DEC/450) 13 December 2001.}. In 2004 the Russian Federation understood that the BMO was not more necessary, and despite that the Georgian government expressed its interest to maintain it, eventually Russia prevented the extension of the mandate for 2005.

Despite multiple critics from different delegations, especially from the United States and some European countries, the Border Monitoring Operation passed to be history. And it was not casual that it closure took placed in 2004. This year Mikhail Saakvashvili, new elected president of Georgia after the Rose Revolution, clearly stated his interest to shift Georgian policies towards the West, with or without Moscow’s
complacency. As an example, collaboration between the Georgian government and the Bush’s administration, which started in 2002 from a US initiative to train and equip Georgian battalions for security operations, was enhanced. Due to the international context of war on terror, Russia had allowed or tolerated US troops in central Asia, but the movements in Georgia where seen from a different perspective, as the then Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov pointed out: ‘The Caucasus is an area of special interest as far as Russian national interests are concerned, so any activities in the region cannot pass unnoticed by Russia’.

Bilateral relations started dramatically to worse between Russia and Georgia and they influenced the way Russians began to behave within and towards the OSCE. In the meanwhile, Russian domestic policies upon the northern Caucasus resulted in an untenable situation as the Beslan massacre showed.

The victory of president Vladimir Putin in Russian March elections that endorsed his policies with more than seventy per cent of the votes was a clear sing that Russia wanted an authoritative (if not authoritarian) character. That year terrorist acts had spread terror not only in the Caucasus—with the assassination in of the Chechen president or the aforementioned Beslan massacre—but in Russia’s heart as well—Moscow—with the bombs at the underground, without forgetting the two planes from Moscow blown in the air when flying to Volgograd and Rostov respectively. Russian reaction consisted into an aggressive campaign to fight and “destroy”—in Putin’s words—terrorists, but at the same time the Kremlin noticed that something was necessary to change, as the “chechenisation” policy in Chechnya later underlined.

94 Collaboration between the US and Georgia in military issues dates from the nineties, but it has been during Saakashvili’s mandate when Georgian armed forces have received a strong support in both equipments and training, becoming in 2007 the third contributor to the US leading multi-national force in Iraq.
This melange of national security and regional instability, with a new pro-Western government in Georgia came out in a clearer Russian criticism towards the OSCE, and concretely towards the Mission in Georgia, underlining in some cases that the mandate of the Mission was not properly interpreted and, therefore, the results did not bring any amelioration of the situation in South Ossetian.

Any possibility the Mission might have had to success was lost due to the state of Russo-Georgian relations. Following the election of Saakashvili in the circumstances that it took place, Russia did not wait to criticise the involvement and patronage of the United States in the Georgian elections. The Georgian delegation at the OSCE pointed out that “Georgia is open for partnership and full cooperation with Russia. But let not this create an impression that Georgia will ever compromise its political stand, sovereignty and independence”\(^95\), what gave a clear signal to Moscow on how was the Georgian government to develop its policies.

Finally, the extern vectors that were mentioned in the Chapter four, especially NATO enlargement and Kosovo air campaign followed by the West answer to the Kosovo self-determination added an assertive response from the Russian side, translated later in the events of August 2008.

4.3.4.- Conflict escalation:

From 2004 onward the situation in South Ossetia deteriorated dangerously with mutual accusations of cease-fire violations, not only between Ossetians and Georgians, but also with the participation of Russian forces. Indeed, there were accusations of using the Joint Peace Keeping Forces (JPKF) in the exchange of fire. Furthermore, the Georgian government decided to deploy military forces near the administrative border of South Ossetia and establish check-points and control black trade, which in May of the same

year already suffered from the elimination of the famous Egneti market where all sorts of goods were trade. On August 4, a Russian delegation headed by Andrei A. Kokoshin, Chairman of the State Duma Committee for the Affairs of the CIS and Ties with Compatriots, came under fire near the village of Sarabuki. In an official statement at the OSCE Permanent Council the Georgia delegation cleared up that “in the face of such a volatile situation, any visitor to the conflict zone, including the high ranking Russian representatives have to inform the Georgian side about their route and movement in the conflict zone in order to rule out any misunderstanding” and adding that “the Georgian side was not informed about Mr. Kokoshin’s route prior to his visit to the Tskhinvali region and cannot take the responsibility for this incident”.96

The escalation of hostilities reached its pick in the night of 18 August 2004, when ten Georgian troops were killed. During two days the situation was for all practical purposes of full-scale war. In this context, the Georgian parliament adopted a special statement in which it accused Russia of siding with South Ossetia and called for the withdrawal of the Russian peacekeepers from the conflict zone: “The Russian Federation is not a peacekeeper mediator, but one of the parties to the conflict. This peacekeeping mission cannot be entrusted to a country whose political interests are at variance with a just settlement of the conflict”. A month later Russia declared a transportation blockade of Georgia, closing any transportation links between Russia and Georgia as well as the Russian airspace to Georgian airlines.

Russia’s behaviour in this stage showed a shift toward hard statist assumptions. Internally Putin decided to abolish gubernatorial elections as a response to the Beslan terrorist attack. It was a sign to eliminate any possibility of regional rivalry. The system of administrative divisions was also changed. The situation in Abkhazia and South

Ossetia and the hostile regime of Saakashvili revived in the Russian imaginary a hard line, where control and security of the country’s space is more important than its democracy. This idea is a corestone in statists’ thoughts. For Georgia it was a new colonialist attempt that made clear Russia’s real ambitions. However, as Dmitry Oreshkin points out, “this is not colonialism, where a mother country appropriates the resources of its colonies. Nor is it neo-colonialism, where the leader country buys up resources at monopoly prices. It is the territorial mania of Stalinism, which, with no concern for the costs, flung the imperial centre further and further out to the periphery, building up new defensive zones on increasingly distant approaches”.  

Obviously this line marked by president Putin had its consequences regarding the Russian relations with the OSCE. It was showed in Chapter three how the critics upon the Human dimension of the Organisation and the lack of advance in the Military dimension started also in this period to be a constant issue. Dealing with the South Ossetia conflict and the Mission to Georgia as a whole, the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna transformed itself into a “ring” of statements and declarations, and responses to them between the Russian Federation and Georgia. The Russian representative accused the Georgian side for its lack of observance towards the cease-fire agreements in this way: ‘if one of the parties wishes to pull out of the agreements, that is their right. However, should this happen, everyone must realize that a tearing up of the agreements is fraught with the risk of a renewed conflict’. But actually, it was Russia that did not fulfil some of her commitments regarding the conflict in South Ossetia, as it was stated in some reports that included clear probes of Russian violations of the Georgian air space.


98 Statement by Mr. Alexey Borodavkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, at the Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council, Vienna (PC.DEL/684/04) 22 July 2004.
After 2004 the meetings of the JCC took place under the OSCE pressure upon the parties, what tells a lot about the state of the conflict. From June 2006 the JCC was unable even to agree on a common agenda and the last meeting took place in 2007 without any concrete results. In the meanwhile, Russia took further actions against Georgia in the form of economic sanctions alleging health irregularities. So came the ban over the import of Georgian wine and mineral water, two of the main goods exported to the Russian market. In the diplomatic aspect, the only positive new for Georgia was the final withdrawal of the Russian military bases at the end of 2007.

Georgia gained the support within the OSCE, especially from the United States, for the so-called Saakashvili’s plan for settling the conflict in South Ossetia. It included: recognising South Ossetia's autonomous status (abolished in 1991); guaranteeing political representation for South Ossetian officials; guaranteeing education in the Ossetian language; and securing the region's cultural autonomy. Koity refused the plan and proposed its own. In response, Saakashvili launched a parallel South Ossetian administration whose visible head was Dmitri Sanakoev, the former defence and primer minister of the breakaway region. With this action, Tbilisi sought to provide legitimacy to its plan and at the same time undermined any that Kokoity’s regime could have. Translated into the situation of the conflict, this might have meant a lack of legitimacy of all structures that had been working for the settling of the conflict, especially the Joint Control Commission. Tbilisi did not hide its wish to change this format that it found as a mere tool for Russian interference. The plan, however, was blessed by the United States and the European Union.

99 South Ossetia Conflict Resolution Plan (PC.DEL/1060/05) 27 October 2005.
The question of Russian peacekeepers troops was another issue that the Georgia parliament addressed constantly, calling for the withdrawal of Russian peacekeeping battalions.

Russia, on its side warned about the continuing political games surrounding the “Abkhazian government in exile” and “South Ossetian president” Dmitry Sanakoev. The attempt to undermine the legitimacy of the South Ossetian authorities by Georgia was seen not only as a provocation towards them, but also towards Russia and the OSCE as the guarantor of the peaceful settlement of the conflict. Western countries while not openly criticising Georgia, underlined the necessity of Russia’s participation in the negotiations. The OSCE made clear that such attempts to create parallel institutions did not contribute to stability in the region.

4.3.5.- A road paved to war.

The situation only could but deteriorate in the following months. From the OSCE calls to retake the Baden Agreements or possible further meetings within the framework of the JCC were hampering by the course of the events in the field. Any incidents that occurred in the area of conflict were denounced as provocations by the opposite side. That way arose the incident with a missile that occurred not far from the Georgian city of Gori on 6 August 2007. Georgian authorities blamed the Russian army for it. Russia, however, tried to clarify that the incident was a movement from the Georgian side to destabilise the situation and strength its critics over Russia’s involvement in the resolution of the conflict. Moreover, the incident took place only three days before the JCC meeting that should take place in Tbilisi. In the same month two North-Ossetian servicemen of the Joint Peacekeeping Forces were arrested and imprisoned by Georgian authorities. The Georgian side gave a different version of the events that were taking
place: “We need to consider seriously that the Russian side nowadays seems increasingly unhappy with clear positive developments in the conflict resolution process in the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia. Certain circles tend to seek military scenarios, since they can not keep up with new developments, which provide the “WIN-WIN” conditions for all stakeholders.”

However, the idea of win-win solution was an alien for the rhetoric of great power that began to sound louder and louder in Russia. The defence of national interests at any cost in an unfriendly environment in which Russia saw itself isolated fuelled nationalistic discourse in the Russian Federation. The famous Putin’s Munich speech in 2007, already mentioned, meant a peak of this renovated consciousness of greatness. For first time in many years –the last time in 1990-, the Day of the Victory that commemorates the Nazi defeat under the Soviet Union, was the scenario of a hardware military parade where “topol” missiles shared space with veterans.

Probably this was merely a “gift” for the internal consumption and the more radical military elite, but many abroad interpreted this act as warning signal from Moscow, saying that Russian military power was back. And the situation in the Caucasus confirmed that a straight line was already demarcated by the Kremlin. By no means could Russia allow itself any interference of foreign powers, and hence, the conflicts over South Ossetia and Abkhazia were the place to show Russia’s determination.

The OSCE that had meant so much for Russia in the past transformed itself for Russian politics into a Western instrument for undermining Russia’s control over its sphere of influence. Therefore the Mission to Georgia and part of their members were target of Russian accusations too, blaming them for biased reports and extension of their duties beyond the accorded for the Mission’s mandate.

Georgia did simply not accept further accusations on the events that moth after month took place in the region and elevated its claims accusing Russia directly of creating the conditions for an unavoidable military confrontation102. Internally, Saakashvili’s reputation as democrat was partly eroded by accusations of corruption that brought to the streets of Tbilisi thousands of demonstrators. Russia’s hand was seen behind these rallies103, but the certain point is that Saakashvili had to agree to announce anticipated presidential elections for January 2008.

4.3.6.- The war and the role of the OSCE:

What happened in August 2008 was not a sudden implosion of casual factors but the result of years of frustrating negotiations, lack of political willingness from the parties to solve the problem peacefully, Russia’s hysteric reaction for having lost influence in the region and the inability of the OSCE to clearly guide the political solution instead of being a mere observer and reporter under the pressure of the parties involved.

The so-called preventive diplomacy that was one of the main instruments to avoid the confrontation, although appeared almost in all statements from the Russian and Georgian delegation was actually absent in the field. Harsh critics and unilateral movements made dialogue impossible. The situation in the breakaway territories dramatically deteriorated. Kosovo’s independence, described as unilateral and unlawful by Russia and supported by some Western countries in February 2008 added bitterness to the already strained atmosphere within the OSCE, putting Russia again in a difficult and almost solitary position. Russia showed its total opposition towards this measure.


103 This opinion seems however to have weak fundaments, since the opponents of Saakashvili were led by Irakly Okruashvili, whose approach to Moscow was in nothing less negative than Shaakashvili’s.
that to a large extent had an impact on the formulation of the Russian Foreign Policy Concept of 2008, where special attention was devoted on the role of the international law and international institutions. Russia showed its concern in numerous statements and public speeches\textsuperscript{104}. For Russia the fireworks of Kosovo’s independence could soon turn into fires of a new war, not only in the Balkans, but elsewhere where secessionist movements sought the right to self-determination.

The political settlement of the conflict appeared for this and other reasons more complicated than ever before. The Joint Control Commission was put under question and new propositions to create a renovated framework for dialogue, in which South Ossetia, Georgia, Russia, the OSCE and the EU could be included, did not achieve enough support.

As was stated before, there were unilateral movements what guided the evolution in the months before the war. This way, 21\textsuperscript{st} of March 2008 the Russian Duma issued a statement on “the Russian Federation’s Policy with respect to Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transdniestria”. In the same, deputies called on the Government of the Russian Federation ‘to consider the possibility of reinforcing the potential of peacekeeping forces in the Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-Ossetian conflict zones and to take into account other measures aimed at ensuring peace and security in this region’.\textsuperscript{105} It was how Russia’s parliamentarians understood the best option to protect Russian citizens living in those areas. The policy of “passportisation” that granted with Russian citizenship residents in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, was the basis to claim for such

\textsuperscript{104} Statement by the Russian Delegation, Vienna (SEC.DEL/29/08) 20 February 2008.

protection. The Georgian Foreign Ministry stressed that the State Duma statement was “an attempt to interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign Georgia”\(^\text{106}\).

But Russia started to interfere in the internal affairs time ago. Now it was a question of time that the deteriorated situation led to a further step, in which many saw the complete Russian recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states.

During the months right before the war different OSCE mechanisms to restore the situation and avoid armed conflict showed how a misusing of them could transform the OSCE into an ineffective tool\(^\text{107}\). The Chapter III of the Vienna document that encloses risk reduction measures was in this case the mechanism that Georgia triggered to clarify the shot down of an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) over Abkhazia and the Russian military movements near the zone of conflict\(^\text{108}\). Russia responded by asking the Georgia delegation for clarifications and subsequently, on May 30 requested for launching the same mechanism to obtain clarifications from the Georgian side.

However, not having getting the expected explanations Russia called for an additional meeting at the OSCE Forum for Security and Cooperation, urging “[our] Georgian partners to be consistent and, in the interests of defusing tension, normalizing the situation and creating more favourable conditions for seeking a political settlement”.\(^\text{109}\)

For Russia it was Georgia the party that violated the Sochi Agreements and constantly put the region at the edge of an open armed conflict.

These mechanisms did not avoid further incidents that eventually broke up into the Georgian military operation to restore “constitutional order” in South Ossetia on 7 August 2008. Russian response came immediately in the form of a forceful armed

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\(^{106}\) Nezavisimaia Gazeta’, Moscow, 26 March 2008,( p. 11) in Countdown to War in in Georgia, p 330.


\(^{108}\) FSC/JOUR 554 of 28 May 2008.

\(^{109}\) FSC.PC/JOUR/20/Corr.*1 of 11 June 2008.
deployment not only over South Ossetia but also over Abkhazia and Georgia’s inner land.

Condemnations from almost all OSCE member states blaming Russia for a “disproportionate” use of the military force against Georgia sounded to Russia as a new demonstration of western cynicism and biased analysis of the conflict. Russia reminded its colleagues the NATO air-strike campaign against Serbia in 1999 and the war in Iraq. Once more Russia saw itself in war in the Caucasus, now against a former Soviet republic that demonstrated its will to be accepted as an equal, but at the same time did not take into account the strategic and historic interests of Russia in the region. Georgia deciding to act by military means to resolve the conflict with South Ossetia lost probably forever any possibility to restore its territorial integrity.

Russia on its side did not doubt to impose its security and national interest over those dictated by international organisations, in this case the OSCE, or even the logic of the economy. During the days of the conflict the Russian stock markets and the Russian rouble suffered from the distrust of foreign investors.

But those that really suffered were the victims of this new war. They found themselves abandoned again by international institutions or governments, they did not understand about risk prevention measures or joint commissions. Those that perished during this conflict did not understand why one more time politics, countries and institutions allowed such an outcome after almost 18 years of negotiations.

4.3.7.- The aftermath of the war.

The war meant not only the closure of the OSCE Mission to Georgia but changed dramatically the status-quo in the region, when Russia “considering the freely expressed will of the Ossetian and Abkhaz peoples and being guided by the provisions of the UN
Charter, the 1970 Declaration on the Principles of International Law Governing Friendly Relations Between States, the CSCE Helsinki Final Act of 1975 and other fundamental international instruments” decided to recognise the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The conclusion of the war was fostered not by the OSCE but by the European Union under the French presidency. The agreement of cease-fire contained six basic points: do not resort the use of force; the absolute cessation of all hostilities; free access to humanitarian assistance; withdrawal of Georgian armed forces to their permanent positions; the withdrawal of Russian armed forces to the line where they were stationed prior to the beginning of the conflict and finally, to launch an international debate on the future status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Violations were reported by the Russian and Georgian side and the situation remained strained with punctual incidents.

Ambassador Terhi Hakala, who was by that time Head of the OSCE Mission to Georgia tried until the last time to bring the parties together and get the Russian support for the continuation and extension of the mandate. It was not only the work of the Organisation in South Ossetia what was in danger, but the whole frame of activities that the Mission was carrying out in the territory of Georgia. The Mission was aware that the new status-quo backed by Russia might have disastrous consequences.

Russia, while showing an interest in maintaining and even enhance the number of OSCE observers within the mandate of the Mission to Georgia, made clear that the OSCE had to accept the new “reality” created after the Georgian “adventure”, something in completely opposition with the OSCE commitments to maintain the territorial integrity of Georgia.

111 SEC.DEL/175/08 of 13 August 2008.
Not having reached any deal, Russia called for the closure of the Mission in late December what put an end in the complicate history of one of the more durable and largest OSCE missions. The EU took over the situation in Georgia inaugurating the European Union Monitoring Mission, a sort of replacement of the OSCE Mission to Georgia with a more focused and narrow scope, that has to deal with the impediment of getting access to the breakaway regions.

**Conclusion:**

The relations between the OSCE and Russia as have been explained have undergone different periods and stages. The importance for the European security of these relations was clear when in August 2008 the failure of the OSCE to settle the conflict over South Ossetia in Georgia warned European countries about the necessity to renew the spirit of mutual understanding surged during Gorbachev’s years. Russia instead of taking advantage of its privileged condition within the OSCE, as one of its main members, to acquire and respect OSCE commitments -what could have meant a revalorisation of the Organisation- pursued soon a policy based on its own interests –its national interests- and has being blocked decisions when they have not meet those parameters stated in Russian security documents. Especially, the question of the “near abroad” and its “area of interests” has been a major issue of dispute between Russia and other OSCE member states. The point is that Russia has not yet understood that it cannot have an area of interest if there is no interest in that area towards Russia. And here we see the importance of understand Russia’s behaviour, Russia’s image of itself. It is not that Russia sees an enemy in the OSCE, is not about a relation between two opposite sides, rather, it is how Russia recognises itself within its border in relation to that image exported abroad. Hence the importance of the former Soviet republics as
the closest space, a portion of Russian identity that not long ago was part of its own reality. Therefore, the OSCE itself is not an Organisation that comes to undermine Russia’s control over the post-Soviet space. However, the change in the Russian Foreign policy under the pressure of *statists* views has provoked a shift towards maximum securitisation, where OSCE missions, procedures and commitments have surged in some cases as dangerous sources that could undermine not only the Russian control over strategic places in the near abroad, but also could imply a change in the self identity of Russia, a change that nowadays Russia is not ready to accept.

Nevertheless, the work of the OSCE in the post-Soviet space and in Russia itself can be recognised in multiple commitments and advances that Russia has undertaken making its institutions and society more accessible and transparent. Russia has demonstrated a sharp eye in some discussions and to great extend the ongoing Corfu Process is the result of Russian petitions to the transformation and actualisation of the OSCE to the new European security situation. The problem was, has been and is that the impact of Russia national interests and domestic constrains have eroded constantly in the praxis achievements that do not have legal binding.

The crisis on South Ossetia made clear that for Russia, its internal stability and prestigious counted more than the OSCE security commitments. It was an act of force, a demonstration towards foreign intervention in Russia’s backyard, but above all, it served as a means to reconstruct Russia’s greatness within its borders. On the other hand, the failure of the OSCE to the settlement of this conflict cannot be solely explained by the Russian behaviour upon it. It made clear that political tools on the ground were not enough, that by only reports and infrastructure reparation or election monitoring a politic dispute cannot be solved. And in this case the OSCE clearly failed to become a part involved in the political settlement of the conflict.
The future development of the work of Russia within the OSCE will be very important to understand where Russia wants to focus on its security priorities. From this work, we can assume that although the Corfu Process has meant to some extent a great achievement towards the OSCE renovation, it will be not enough if Russia does not see its interests recognised and protected, if it does not recognised itself as a major player in the new European security architecture. Paradoxically, this is nothing new. The origins of the OSCE –then CSCE- were more or less based on the same principle: recognition of the USSR sphere of influence and borders surged after the Second World War. However, the reality in 2010 is quite different to that of 1975 when the Helsinki Final Act was signed. And this is what OSCE member states try to make Russia to understand. In this task unilateral decisions by other powers as the war in Irak or the independency of Kosovo do not help to maintain a spirit of cooperation and reciprocal trust. Despite this, the OSCE is the unique forum for debate at regional level that can provide a specific framework for solve and discuss issues in all aspects of security. And this is a value that OSCE member states and Russia itself –notwithstanding critics- acknowledge.
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