II. OTHER ARTICLES

Mariami GACHECHILADZE OZCAN[1]
Turkey

THE IMPACTS OF THE RISE OF SECESSIONIST MOVEMENTS ON THE WESTPHALIAN STATE ORDER: CASE STUDY OF ABKHAZIAN AND SAMACHABLO'S SECESSIONIST MOVEMENTS WITHIN GEORGIA

Abstract: This study encounters the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia and the secessionism from the single perspective. Westphalian principles of non-intervention and state sovereignty collide with the newly emerged secessionism which relies on the once promoted right to self-determination (by Woodrow Wilson). The study aims to find the answer to the following question: how do secessionist movements affect the regional order? It is observed that the secessionist movements driven by the principle of self-determination, cause the changes in the regional order. The case study to answer this question are secessionist movements of Abkhazia and Samachablo (so-called 'South Ossetia'). As a result of the case study analysis, it turns out that when people unite under the umbrella of self-determination and hits the road to secessionism, the shift within the regional order becomes inevitable to avoid.

Keywords: non-intervention, state sovereignty, Westphalia, regional order, secessionism, Abkhazia, Samachablo-South Ossetia.

Introduction

The history of humankind counts number of cases of emerging and falling nations and political units. Natural disasters, foreign interventions, political turmoil and wars have contributed in shifting the global political order. However, it was 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, which established new pattern in

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[1] Mariami Gachechiladze Ozcan, MA, Istanbul University (Turkey). Email: mi.gachechiladze@gmail.com

the international relations. The Treaty marks the most important development in the modern history as it introduces two basic principles of state sovereignty and non-intervention.

This work addresses to the principles of state sovereignty and non-intervention from the loops of secessionism. It is argued that the Westphalian principles of non-intervention and state sovereignty are guarantee of *status quo*. Therefore, any possible outside intervention is believed to trigger the changes within the established regional order.

Historically, the phenomenon of secessionism takes roots from the concept of the right to self-determination. *Self-determination* that was coined at the end of the World War I by the President of the United States of America, Woodrow Wilson, is observed to be an important trigger of the decolonization process starting from 1960s. However, it was not until 1990s when Cold War ended and the right to self-determination has re-shaped the regional order in an advanced way. This study observes the secessionist movements driven by the principle of self-determination, as main cause of the changes in the regional order. The secessionist movements of Abkhazia and Samachablo (so called 'South Ossetia') constitute the case studies of this article. Apparently, both of the regions exhibit the heterogenous nature of Georgia, which for some has become the primary reason of outside intervention during the conflicts in the beginning of 1990s and 2008.

Considering the definitions of the Westphalian state sovereignty and non-intervention, on the one hand, and secessionism on the other, the study aims to reach to the correlation of the above-mentioned variables by answering the following question: *how do secessionist movements affect the regional order?*

In answering the question introduced above, the study proposes the hypothesis - Secessionist movement is an independent variable that affect the regional order – dependent variable of the study, and causes changes. The researcher finds the primary aspects of the Treaty of Westphalia, and its principles, followed by explaining the background the emergence of the right to *self-determination* and the multiple ways of its consideration. After finding adequate definition of the principles above, the study applies deductive reasoning, according to which the existing theory is consecutively applied on the subject of observation – secessionist movements. Starting with the outside layer of the theoretical explanation of the *order,* the study initiates conceptualization of the world order, and then, narrows down the scope by drawing the attention to the regional order concept.

Meanwhile, the secondary sources will be used for defining the principles as to build the links of correlation between the variables. The secondary sources are not used to understand the semantics of the concepts, but to understand the historical background the regional order, formation of the political units and their status within the Caucasus and precisely, Georgia. In the process of

sampling, the researcher referred to the most preferable cases within Georgia. 'The most-similar design' (method of difference) describes how the cases are interconnected with each other and on what circumstances are they brought together to find the adequate answer to the main question of the study.

As a result of multiple considerations of the concepts and their practices, testing the hypothesis turns out to be adequate to applicable. Therefore, secessionism and regional order are two interlinked variables that prove to go hand in hand in the case of Abkhazian and Samachablo's secessionist movements. Both of the cases, exemplify that once a group of people unite under the umbrella of self-determination and hits the road to secessionism, the outcome, whatever it should be – an establishment of the new state, or new political status, within the state, becomes an inevitable cause of the change within the regional order. The latter can be observed from the perspective of political (new status), geographical (new borders), and/or economic (new economic regimes) changes. Whatever the outcome is, it puts an important mark on the history of regional order.

This study is a review of the secessionist movements with the different scope of understanding. Considering the most important principles of Treaty of Westphalia of 1648, the study refers to the *non-intervention* and *state sovereignty* phenomena as the guarantors to the regional order. Therefore, it claims that once above-mentioned principles are challenged, it becomes less likely to maintain *status quo*, the regional order faces threats to be shifted politically, economically and/or geographically. With regard to the right to self-determination driven secessionist movements in the cases of Abkhazia and Samachablo, the study, finds out that the movements have put an irreversible mark on the political order of the region of Caucasus.

Conceptual and Theoretical Background of Westphalia, State Sovereignty and Regional Order

Communication was one of the most important skills our ancestors managed to developed in the very early period of the history of humankind. It was only through this skill that thousands of lives were protected and the people managed to attain the basic need of survival. However, history has not always been kind to the ones mastered in this skill, not everybody could rely on communication as a possible source of establishing peace. Thousands of the written sources in the archives all over the world keep the records and/or analysis of the most vivid written cases that managed to survive from the fires, natural disasters and/or intentional turmoil. Among many others, Treaty of Westphalia is a modern version and a bright example to how successfully adequate communication skills might result in.

It dates back to 1648, when a great European turmoil of more than three decades finalised by the Treaty of Westphalia, which is considered to be the most tremendous binding source even among the 'not signatories'[2],. The reason of its universality lies in the fact that the Treaty was signed against very significant concerns, that challenged the whole Europe for a long time. It is argued that the conflict started among the Catholics and Protestants estates, however, in a short period of time it widespread all over the Europe[3]. It has become obvious that the roots of the conflict were entangled with each other, as the peace talks started in 1642 and lasted for four years[4]. Counting the diplomatic representatives of 96 different political and non-political units, the negotiations were held in two different cities of Osnabrück and Münster[5]. Therefore, the Treaty of Westphalia is essentially a treaty signed in two different cities with two separate groups of the negotiators – the Catholic estates met in Münster, while the Protestants came together at Osnabrück[6]. Bobbitt argued that the representatives attending the Osnabrück and Münster negotiations had common goal of taking everything slowly, and not to rush for any kind of agreement[7]. However, the long process of negotiations reached its end, and it has become obvious that the outcomes of these negotiations inevitably affected the whole Europe and beyond.

In fact, Westphalia peace is considered to be a turning point in the studies of *international relations* (IR)[8]. Indeed, the Treaty played an essential role in establishing the 'modern European state' on the basis of the international law[9] and principles never heard before. The field of IR faced an implicit and explicit evaporation of the existing understanding of its concepts and practices. Thus, the new era of the IR, international politics and world order started shaping.

The Peace Treaty contributed a lot in establishing new order among the IR units. However, few developments became the most important source of future of the European states. One of the most vivid developments of the Treaty was

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[2] P. M. Scharf, *The ICC's Jurisdiction Over the Nationals of Non-Party State: A Critique of the U.S. Position*, ″Faculty Publication″, 2001, vol. 64, No 1, pp. 68-117.

[3] P. Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace, and the Course of History*, New York: Anchor Books, 2003.

[4] S. Patton, *The Peace of Westphalia and it Affects on International Relations, Diplomacy and Foreign Policy*, ″The Histories″, 2019, vol. 2010, pp. 91-99.

[5] J. A. Nathan, S*oldiers, Statecraft, and History: Coercive Diplomacy and International Order*, Westport CT: Praeger Publishers, 2002.

[6] P. Bobbitt, *op. cit.*

[7] *Ibidem.*

[8] A. Osiander, *Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth,* ″International Organization″, 2001, vol. 25, No 2, pp. 251-287.

[9] M. Zreik, *The Westphalia Peace and its Impact of the Modern European State*, ″Quantum Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities″, 2021, vol. 2, No 1, pp. 1-16.

about the religious tolerance vis-à-vis Lutherans as well as Calvinists[10]. This was the first time in the history of humankind when the written document reflected the position of the signatories on the freedom of the religious rights and practices.

Another important development associated with the successful end of negotiations lies in abandoning the classical understanding of the states as bad and good. Before, IR used to define self as good and the other as bad. The latter posed that constant capability of being engaged in any kind of conflict on the basis protecting the 'self'- the good[11]. This dichotomic definition of the international system was refuted and substituted with completely different, but IR related concept of state sovereignty (and non-intervention) – 'a political fact of supreme power over a certain territory'[12]. In another words, the Treaty initiated 'a new order' of the sovereign states within Europe[13]. Therefore, the Treaty of Westphalia sought *raison d'état* – the reason of state, which for Kissinger comprehended the 'national interest' – 'not an exaltation of power, but an attempt to rationalize and limit its use'[14].

The latter argument provided by Kissinger is assumed to be interlinked with another great success of the Treaty – diplomacy. The fact that, tens of representatives gathered and started a long process of negotiation highlights the role of diplomacy. However, not only the process of negotiations played important role, but the principle of non-intervention. The latter, has always been a matter of violations by many different nations. Thus, introducing the principle of non-intervention was believed to keep the others whether they were good or evils out the domestic playground.

The principle of non-intervention, in fact, emerged from the concept of *territorial integrity*, where the absolute monopoly of power was in the hands of the domestic authorities. Another important concept is *legal equality* which is highly expected to be equally applicable for every citizen. And the last concept Westphalia shed light to is *balance of power* – a reference made to the chaotic international system – which has become the cornerstone for understanding the world and regional order.

The term *order* is relatively modern. In its association with international/global order the scored great interest in the field of IR. Hedley Bull's works shed the light to understand the global politics and balance of power by referring to: *international order, international (or state) system,*

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[10] P. Bobbitt, *op. cit.*
[11] J. A. Nathan, *op. cit.*
[12] H. Morgenthau, *The Problem of Sovereignty Reconsidered, ″*Columbia Law Review″, 1948, vol. 3, pp. 341-365.
[13] M. W. Janis, *Sovereignty and International Law: Hobbes and Grotius,* Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2008, p. 10.
[14] H. Kissinger, *World Order*, New York: Penguin Press, 2014.

international society[15] and *world order.* In the amidst of discussions about the international order, Bull suggested classification of states in three different groups: developed nations of postmodern states, 'modernizing' states and 'post-colonial states', or in other words 'the South'[16]. Sørensen himself put some judgements on this classification by claiming that, Bull proposed Ikenberry's type of the US-favoured judgment of the international system[17]. Both, Bull and Ikenberry, provided their assessments within which the unit of analysis was a state. Therefore, their state-centric definition of the international order leaned on the Hobbesian state of anarchy,[18] which suggested the international order as chaotic system of states with an explanation of the state of disorder. For Bull, any nation to survive should ensure the following criteria of security, promise and property[19]. Providing the secure environment to survive relies on the promises the state is expected to fulfil vis-à-vis her citizens, of whom the state is expected to guarantee the wealth, social status and freedom and rights of the citizens.

Despite lacking an adequate reference to the international regimes in Bull's work, it is still possible to understand how he related to individuals as part of the *world order*. The latter unlike, international order focuses on the people of the world, despite their origins and national, ethnic and religious belongings.

Gilpin is another name, who in his work proposed different argument on the basis of Bull's political realism. However, unlike Bull, Gilpin suggested the European balance of power system *sans* the US supremacy[20]. By neglecting the US as the hegemonic power, for Bull, and Europe as balancer of power, for Gilpin, they both provided the state-centric analysis of political realism, which is an association with the factors that led the Europe to the Treaty of Westphalia.

The end of Cold War and the glorious victory of liberalism, was the beginning of the new era. The world has entered into the new phase of cooperation, collaboration and communication. It has become obvious that after the collapse of the USSR, the post-Soviet regions and the nations newly announcing sovereignty, would become the apple of discord in various matters. The developments in the post-Cold War period resulted in the rapid and

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[15] While mentioning *international society,* Bull referred to the society of states the represent the primary actors of the international order.

[16] G. Sørensen, *What Kind of World Order? The International System of New Millennium*, ″Cooperation and Conflict″, 2006, vol. 41, No 4, pp. 343-363.

[17] *Ibidem.*

[18] H. Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A study or Order in World Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1977.

[19] *Ibidem.*

[20] R. Giplin, *The Global Political System in Order and Violance, Hedley Bull* [in:] J.D. Miller, R.J. Vincent, *International Relations,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990, pp. 112-131.

noticeable challenges and changes for the different regions. The Caucasus, was not an exception. Counting more than thousand years of history of statehood, Georgia, has faced dramatic and chaotic developments in her way to announcing independence and state sovereignty. Buzan and Little's understanding of the international society suggested timely analysis. The state-dominated approach to the Westphalian order was enriched by Buzan and Little's prioritization of the democratic principles and economic interaction[21]. International Organizations (IOs), Transnational Corporations (TNCs), multinational entities and regional organizations were assumed to play an important role in the process of redefining the essence of order and its actors. Buzan and Little still considered state 'as the ultimate source of political authority',[22] however, not the only actor *per se*. Emergence of non-state actors, international legal bodies (International Court of Justice, International Criminal Court, European Court of Human Rights etc.), international and/or regional economic regimes (EU, NAFTA etc.) and other groups, took credits of shaping the new regional and/or international order.

The latter argument of Buzan and Little, as mentioned above, was truly timely in understanding the newly developing regional order of Caucasus, after the collapse of the USSR. Domestic challenges within the several days old states have become manageable through the international political and economic regimes. Together with the Buzan and Little, Krasner and Caporaso criticized the Westphalian understanding of state sovereignty and international order. Krasner refuted any possibility of principles of state sovereignty and territorial integrity to come true. He relied his argument on the fact the 'the golden age of Westphalia' has never been a part of the history,[23] therefore, an international order on the basis of Westphalian principles in nothing but an empty hole. Similar argument was suggested by Caporaso, who believed that the Westphalian state system and order has never been fully observed throughout the history[24]. Caporaso made his assertions on the basis of rise of nationalism, while Krasner stressed the importance of two characteristics of Westphalia state – territoriality and autonomy. Krasner claimed that 'autonomy can […] be […] transgressed by external actors, or if more powerful actors impose institutions, policies, or personnel on weaker states'[25]. As the quote

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[21] B. Buzan B., R. Little, *Beyond Westphalia? Capitalism after the 'Fall'*, ″Review of International Studies″, 1999, vol. 25, pp. 98-104.

[22] *Ibidem.*

[23] S. Krasner, *Comprising Westphalia*, ″International Security″, 1995-96, vol. 20(3), pp. 115-151.

[24] J. A. Caporaso, *Changes in the Westphalian Order: Territory, Public Authority and Sovereignty,* ″International Studies Review″, 2000, vol. 2, pp. 1-28.

[25] S. Krasner, *op. cit.*

implies, there is a possibility of new actors in the process of establishing the Westphalian state and thus, Westphalian order.

The number of the arguments highlighted above, suggest different judgments, comments, and criticism vis-à-vis the Treaty of Westphalia, which established new system and international order. It made different political and non-political units re-evaluate their position and role in the nation building process on the basis of principles like state sovereignty and non-intervention.

Secession and Its Roots

The last decade of bloody 20th century marked even bloodier for the nations like Georgia, who newly emerged out of ashes of the USSR. However, the turmoil did not start when the USSR collapsed, but even before. The last years of the *intra-polar* politics[26] within Soviet countries marked arousal of the similar movements. The nations eagerly quested to secede from the USSR. However, these movements were not only characterised by the quest for independence, but in some regions the internal clashes popped up on the basis of ethnic differences. The latter was the case in Georgia where the independence movement emerged. Soon they were followed by the secessionism movements within Georgia.

The concept of secession is defined many different ways. Wood argued that secessionism is 'more specific term, than separatism, referring to a demand for formal withdrawal from a central political authority by member units or units on the basis of a claim to independent sovereign status'[27]. Tir, on the other hand, argues that secessionism can only be 'an internally motivated division of a country's homeland territory that results in the creation of at least one new independent state'[28]. Tir believed that the secession is not an effective way of dealing with the domestic conflicts. In fact, it can be assumed to be the worst-case scenario, which can only be applied in case all the possible ways of maintaining the secessionist group, collapse.

Wood, suggested several preconditions on the basis of which it is expected to face to secessionism. First in Wood's list was *geographical preconditions*, which he believed, would make sense if the conflict emerges on the long distance or sharing border with the more preferable nation. The second condition worth-considering for Wood was the *social precondition*. It would

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[26] *intra-polar* politics is a term that defines the domestic politics of the two poles during the Cold War. The author coined this term to refer not to just any kind of domestic politics, but rather the politics within the USSR or the US related nations.

[27] J. R., Wood, *Secession: A comparative Analytical Framework*, ″Canadian Journal of Political Science″, vol. 14, issue 1, 1981, pp. 107-134.

[28] J. Tir, *Keeping the Peace after Secession: Terrirorial Conficts Between Rump and Secessionist States*, ″The Journal of Conflict Resolution″, 2005, vol. 49, No 5, pp. 713-741.

refer to the bonds between the social groups, their belongings and the communal values that would inevitably keep the group together. The forthcoming precondition was *economic precondition*, which prioritized the importance of the economic conditions of the more preferable group. Wood also mentioned *political precondition.* The political rights were expected to be ignored and a group of people was deprived from the right to express themselves. Lastly, Wood proposed the *psychological precondition* which would work perfectly while dealing with the masses of the people psychologically accepting their uniqueness on the basis of their ethnic, linguistic and/or religious peculiarities[29].

Secession or secessionism is considered to be a multi-disciplinary phenomenon of factual, moral and judicial bias. The concept itself is a non-legal issue, though. What makes secessionism a legal matter is actually, its implicit and explicit link with the right to *self-determination*. Despite the fact that the right to *self-determination* is Wilsonian concept of 20th century, according to some scholars the principle of self-determination dates back to the 18th century,[30] long before Woodrow Wilson made his well-known speech of 14 points. However, it was the first time in the history when a speech was addressed directly to the colonized nations as subjects to the right to 'self-governance'[31]. 'Self-governance' and 'self-determination' are interchangeable principles. They provide the recognition of the fact that the nations (in case of Wilsonian *self-determination* – 'colonized nations') must 'have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government'[32].

Despite his endless effort to create the international standard on the basis of the right to *self-determination,* Woodrow Wilson could not succeed to include the right in the Covenant of the League of Nations. For some reasons, it was not accepted eligible law *qua* human rights. However, article 22 of the Covenant implied that on the basis of humanitarian purposes the principle of state sovereignty might be questioned.

It was not until the end of the World War II, when the United Nations (UN) was established on the basis of the Charter. Article 55 of the UN Charter exclaimed the common recognition of the principles upon which the party states agreed. The list of the principles was long and has even extended throughout the time, however, it was 1945, when the Charter advocated 'peace and friendly relations among nations' and the 'right to self-determination'.

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[29] J. R. Wood, *op. cit.*

[30] Z. A. Velasco, *Self-determination and Secession: Human Rights-Based Conflict*, ″International Community Law Review″, 2014, vol. 16, pp. 75-105.

[31] M. Pomerance, T*he United States and Self-determination: Perspectives on the Wilsonian Conception*, ″American Journal of International Law″, vol. 70, issue 1, 1976, pp. 1-27.

[32] *President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points*, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/ wilson14.asp (15.12.2023).

Velasco argued that one of the guarantors of the international peace and security have become 'the right of self-determination of peoples'[33].

The process of forming the principle of *self-determination* as part of the international legal regime took longer than expected. Number of UN Resolutions were dedicated to the right. However, the cases that urged reference to the right to self-determination were depicted to be complex in nature. Therefore, a single article has become an apple of discord among the nations, those struggling against the self-determination caused secessionist movements.

A 1960s were the most important turning point in the studies of the right to *self-determination.* However, the history marks 1990s, when the principle has faced wider range of global challenge. On the hand the, the newly emerged states started to emerge, on the other hand the, new political units appeared asking for independence on the similar basis. The latter problem has burdened the path to the independence an international recognition. The local turmoil appeared in different parts of the world, the Caucasus and the Balkans were the victims of these arousals. Civil wars of *bellum omnium contra omnes* have become the standard the newly established central governments hardly dealt with. As a result of bloody confrontation among the citizens of same countries, it has become necessary to re-shape the political map and either provide the rising groups political advantage, or accepting the failure and seek for de-escalation of the conflict, even if the results were complete secession, or political isolation. One way or another, the stalemate became the characteristic of the conflicts in Georgia in the beginning of the 1990s.

Threats to the Regional order:
The Case of Abkhazian and Samachablo's
Secessionist Movements Analysis

The collapse of the USSR was the last drop in the glass of the 20th century, when the humankind realised how much the world is capable of fitting with. However, what followed the fall of Soviets, was much more dramatic. The sparks of fire spread everywhere the Soviets ever passed through. As a result, it became incredibly challenging to describe the outcomes of the collapse of the USSR, as they were visible elsewhere.

Materials and Methods

This research examines the concepts of secessionism and the regional order as two variables. Both of the concepts were defined in the sections above. Therefore,

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[33] Z. A. Velasco, *op. cit.*

the initial conceptualisation of the variables is completed. Two variables, that study leans on, are defined on the basis of the secondary sources. The secondary sources were academic articles (with regard to the discussions about *order*) and recorder speeches (with regard to the right to *self-determination*).

This research is an explanatory study with small-N analysis. The two cases of the secessionist movements within Georgia were deliberately selected as case study on the basis of the accessibility to the necessary materials in the various languages (including Georgian, English and Russian). As the study is limited with the two cases, its results lack the chance of generalization. However, the study is a deductive, hence, it manages to deal with the theories related with the Westphalian order, state sovereignty and secessionism, first. As a result of the theoretical guidance the process of analysis start from the outside layer and narrows down to the specific cases of Abkhazia and Samachablo, as the case studies.

The materials most frequently used during the process of the research are books and journal articles. The secondary materials were used for the literature review on the concepts, as well as reference to the discussion in the field. In addition to this, the secondary sources constituted an important part of the analysis of the results about the secessionism in Abkhazia and Samachablo. In analysing the two cases of secessionism, the study used the comparative analysis on the basis of the *most-similar design* (method of difference)[34].

The independent variable of this research is secessionism, and the dependent variable is – regional order. Secessionism is a versatile concept, which in this study is assisted by another co-variable, domestic instability. In case the domestic instability is not contained timely, it most likely triggers the secessionist movements to flare up. The secessionist movements intentionally and/or in an uncontrolled way are dragged to the wider complication – change in status quo. The change of the domestic and regional order becomes inevitable when secessionists seek for fulfilment of their quests. The latter claim will be illustrated in the following section, where the turmoil of Abkhazia and Samachablo started (in separate times) but in the exactly the same scenario, the outcomes were observed to be worse than expected. The system and/or order existed before the conflict was completely vanished and the region faced newly emerging political units asking for recognition.

Brief history of Georgia

Georgia is a relative new state with more than a thousand-years of history. It is the one of the hubs of the Silk Road, a trade route that connected the far East to the central Europe and Mediterranean. Georgia is bordered by the

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[34] B. Ebbinghaus, W*hen Less is More: Selection Problems in Large-N and Small-N Cross-National Comparisons*, ″International Sociology″, 2005, vol. 20, issue 2, pp. 133-152.

Eastern coast of Black Sea on her West, the Caucasus in the North, Armenia in the South, Türkiye in the South-West and Azerbaijan in the South-East. The population of Georgia according to the 2024 statistics is 3 million 694.6 thousand people[35]. 83.8% of the population is Georgian, 6.5% consists - Azerbaijanians, 5.7% are Armenians, 1.5% Russians, 0.9% Ossetians and 0.8% are the others, including the Greeks, Ukrainians, Abkhazians and Jews. However, as a result of the recent War in Ukraine the number of Ukrainians and Russians leaving their homeland for Georgia has drastically increase.

Appearance of political entities on the territory of Georgia was found to be 4th – 3rd centuries B.C. under the name of Kingdom of Kartli (Kingdom of Georgian). Christianity became an official religious mainstream in the 4th century A.D. And, in the 8th - 9th centuries Georgia was united by one king – King Bagrat III. Following ages have been quite challenging. The developments during the following centuries included sometimes cooperation on the basis of national interest, while in different cases constant conflict with the neighbouring political units.

Despite countless important dates throughout the history of Georgia, 1783 marks the most important date, as it is deeply embedded reason why the 1990s and 2008 were the harshest years of the history of Georgian statehood. 1783 was the day when the Treaty of Georgievsk was signed by the representatives of the then King Erekle II and Russian Tsar. This treaty has become a green light to Russian Empire to interfere in the domestic decision-making process of Georgia, in case the nation was under the threat of the foreign intervention. As a result, the Kingdom of Georgia became completely subordinated to the Russian Empire[36].

In 1917, when the Bolshevik Revolution happened in Russia, Georgian intellectuals and majority of the wealthy class of the society started preparations for the announcing independence. On May 26, 1918 National Board (that time Parliament of Georgia) announced Independence. Despite Russian recognition of the independent Georgia, newly established government and its Red Army intervened into the territory of Georgia and occupied it on February 23, 1921. For the following 70 years of Georgian history counts number of rebellions, clashes and attempts to revolution, which resulted in the bloody punishment.

It was 31st March, 1991 when the Referendum was held among the Georgians who voted for secession from Russia and independence. Zviad Gamsakhurdia won the first democratically held elections of May 26. However, the elections and establishment of statehood did not guarantee political stability

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[35] *Population,* https://www.geostat.ge/en/modules/categories/41/population (15.12.2023).
[36] *History. Government of Georgia,* https://www.gov.ge/index.php?lang _id = geo&sec_id=193 (15.12.2023).

in the region, as the civil war broke. The tensions between different groups did not deescalate, Gamsakhurdia escaped and the newly established country left leaderless. The peace talks during the 1990s turmoil were supported by the so called 'neutral' representation of Russia, and Georgian officials.

In 1995 Eduard Shevardnadze became the second president of independent Georgia, followed by Saakashvili, who led the 2003 Rose Revolution against Shevardnadze's regime. The latter was ousted from power. Saakashvili became the next president of Georgia in 2004 elections. The Saakashvili and his party lost the elections in 2012, and since then Georgia is ruled by the Georgian Dream party with the Prime Minister as the head of the Government.

The Turmoil in Abkhazia and Samachablo Regions and the Aattempt to Secede

The political turmoil that started in Abkhazia in 1989 takes roots in the period further back than the end of 20th century. Therefore, the movement that emerged on the territory of Abkhazia, aimed more than the regional autonomy, as suggested in the section about secession. In the end of 1970s, the manipulation on the constant threat of the ethnic degradation of the Abkhazians started[37]. However, no tangible evidence could prove the source of an increasing threat. In fact, Tagliavini reports that as a result of the 1989 census held in Abkhazia, 93.267 thousand Abkhasians lived on the Abkhazian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (AASR), while ethnic Georgians were almost three times in number – 239.872 people[38]. Some scholars argue that in order to maintain the balance of distribution of power among Georgian and Abkhazian citizens the decision-making positions were occupied by the Abkhazians, while Georgians (even though they constituted the majority over the territory) were made to leave their jobs[39].

On March 18, 1989, Likhna meeting was held. Abkhazian national movement – Aigdilara – criticised the mistake made in 1931, when Abkhazia instead of independent region was accepted to the USSR as the AASR, an autonomous region within Georgia. In order to correct the mistake, the participants of the meeting made a decision to secede from Georgia. The decision constantly neglected the majority of the population on the territory of Abkhazia.

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[37] 1. Bakradze A., *Apkhazta sak'itkhi, Iberia gushin, dghes, khval*, 1978, https://iberiana.wordpress.com/afxazeti/afxazta-sakitxi/ (15.12.2023).

[38] H. Tagliavini, *Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia,* Council of the European Union, Tbilisi 2009.

[39] Z. Papaskiri, *Da aghmotsisk'rda Sakartvelo Nik'opsiidan Darubandamde*, Tbilisi 2009.

In March 1990, Abkhazians conducted referendum on secession from the USSR. Despite the fact that Georgian living in Abkhazia neglected to participate the referendum, 52% of the population (including ethnic Abkhazians and Russians) participated and accepted the secession from the USSR. Later, on August 25, 1990 the Supreme Council of Abkhazia adopted the Declaration on State Sovereignty of Abkhazian Soviet Socialist Republic[40].

Newly elected President of Georgia, Gamsakhurdia, faced a dilemma on whether to increase the level of authority to the Abkhazians or find other ways. Gamsakhurdia's government rejected the decision of 1990 Supreme Council of Abkhazia, never letting the separatist and/or secessionist movements to dominate the domestic politics. However, the tensions were increasing to a wider-range armed conflict in August 14, 1992. Despite three-party peace talks proposed by the Russian Delegation in the end of 1992, the clashes continued. It only came to an end when on July 27, 1993 – United Nations Security Council appointed the Monitoring Mission under the name of UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) providing 88 observer army servants.

The tensions increased in September 1993, when Abkhazian forces and the supporters of the president Gamsakhurdia fought on the territory of Samegrelo. Next year, in May, the third ceasefire agreement was signed. As a result of the agreement, 136 UNOMIG representatives were distributed as the international observers.

The conflict that took more than two years, resulted in territorial confusion (new checkpoints appeared to control the possible re-escalation of the conflict, by illegal transportation of weapons and necessary items) thousands of internally displaced people (IDPs), international observers and invisible of guarantor of peace and stability in the region – Russia.

It was on 16 April, 2008, when the President of Russia decided to denounce the 1996 document, where the Russian side recognized militarily guilty Abkhazians[41]. The latter development was a very important message of new turmoil to start. Truly it happened. However, it happened on the other ethnically heterogenous territory of Georgia – Samachablo, so called South Ossetia.

Conflict over Samachablo started in 1989 when the South Ossetia Regional Council of Georgia suggested an official request to become an Autonomous Region of Georgia. However, their request was rejected. When the elections were held and Gamsakhurdia became the President of Georgia, the Autonomous status of Samachablo – South Ossetia was completely abolished.

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[40] H. Tagliavini, *op. cit.*

[41] J. Gamakharia, *Apkhazeti XIX s. Dasats'q'isshi da XX s. 20-30-ian ts'lebshi, Iberia gushin, dghes, khval,* 2014.

As a response, Samachablo – South Ossetian region declared its independence on May 29, 1992, which was rejected by Russia.

The 1992 Sochi Agreement, involved the representatives from the Georgian, Russian and North Ossetian sides to provide ceasefire and peace between the conflicting parties. The peace agreement was perfectly protected for sixteen years of period. Between 1992 and 2008, the parties gathered for several times. The talks were of a peaceful character, South Ossetia still did not accept to recognize the territorial integrity of Georgia, though. According to Tagliavini, the relations between the central government of Georgia, and the representatives of the Samachablo - South Ossetia authority was 'undefined' and 'unstructured'[42]. however, both sides managed to keep the stalemate at its peak of peace and regional stability.

In 2007, the Parliament of Georgia decided to appoint temporary administrative unit led by Dimitri Sanakoev. This step was assumed as an assault of the *de facto* leader of South Ossetia – Eduard Kokoit, who eventually decided to bring the process of the negotiation to the end. The conflict emerged on between the Georgian, Ossetian and Russian forces in August 2008. Russian and Georgian sides both were engaged in the military actions. The War ended in eight days. However, its outcomes still challenge the population of Georgia not only in so called South Ossetia, but elsewhere. Eight Day War became the symbol of the secessionist movements in Georgia.

Results

The analysis of the secessionist movements of Abkhazia and Samachablo, so called South Ossetia reveal important similarities with each other. The both cases took place on the same geographies (Georgia), both cases are related to the single central authority (Georgian). And both cases evolve under the similar historical span.

Georgia, a newly-announced independent country, came across with the biggest challenge to the nation that has claims on the territorial integrity. In fact, one of the criteria to establish a state is territory. Therefore, when any political unit faces challenge on the basis of the territorial dispute, there will always rise a risk of the fall of that political unit. Georgia's newly established government attempted to apply different ways to maintain the political unity and territorial integrity. Any response made vis-à-vis the secessionists is gambling. The odds of losing the game surpasses the chances of winning it.

Georgia's gambling started when Gamsakhurdia followed the path of nationalist aspirations to the secessionist movements. He aimed to awaken the nationalist feelings of the secessionists to convince them to give up and stay as

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[42] H. Tagliavini, *op. cit.*

a part of the united Georgia. His attempts led to the split of Georgian territory. Abkhazia, which once was an autonomous region within Georgia became a region hardly visited by Georgian citizens. Furthermore, the territory of Abkhazia became *de facto* independent. As a result of which free movement of goods and people was suspended for a long time. As for today, it is a trap to for the Georgian citizens to freely travel to and back Abkhazia, once mainly populated by Georgians.

The situation with Samachablo secession illustrates the similar case with the one of Abkhazia. Samachablo, or so-called South Ossetia, has played a role of corridor to transport the goods from and to the North Caucasus and beyond. In addition to this, this region maintained the part of Georgia for longer than the USSR lived. However, it turned out that the ethnic belonging or interest of specific groups turned the trade and political order upside down. By creating the checkpoints and artificial borders the region of South Ossetia is getting wider day by day. Apparently, the so-called border police or some responsible authorities shift the borders deeper and deeper to the centre of Georgia.

The results of the study suggests that both of the cases were primary causes of the changes in the regional order. Each and every government since 1990s have been observed to follow certain strategy. Gasakhurdia's – nationalist claims resulted in increasing checkpoints and burdened passage of the visitors to and from Abkhazia. Shevardnadze's – internationalism resulted in Georgia's integration in the international regimes, regional and/or international political, educational, health, economic organizations. Saakashvili's Western path made Georgia as more favourable place to be part of, however, it was Saakashvili's ambitions that flared up the conflict again in 2008. As a result of which, the territorial conflict froze for a long future. The Georgian Dream (current party with majority in the Parliament) practices strategy, which lacks an adequate response to the recent development by the so called 'borderlines' in Tskhinvali, capital city of South Ossetia. The so-called borderline is very close the populated area, where people used to cultivate their fields. Recently, farmers and locals are kidnapped on the basis of illegal trespassing to the territory of *de facto* independent South Ossetia, officials of which are expected to protect the order by capturing the Georgian villagers.

It turned out that the results of the secessionist movements are even more devastating than expected. They not only change the regional order politically (by establishing new political units), economically (limiting or stopping economic activities), socially (abstaining people from communication), and psychologically (thousands of people, whose metal health are affected because they lost everything and became internally displaced), but they also shape the future expectations of the people sharing the same faith with the secessionist or abandoned ones.

Conclusion

This study aimed to bring two important concepts from the Treaty of Westphalia – state sovereignty and non-intervention. Both of the concepts played an intangible role during the process of new establishment within the European continent. These two concepts played increasingly important role in understanding the modern international relations, as well. However, according to some claims, these concepts were never observed and/or never flourish enough. Therefore, they provided no adequate explanation of the international system. By referring to the international system, the author of the study suggested the concepts like international, global and regional order, together with the system of states and the world society. Majority of these concepts were defined by referring to Hedley Bull, who combined the Hobbesian realism and political realism and offered new approach to the concept of *order*.

The conceptual background was also enriched by the concept of secessionism legal background of which was – the right to *self-determination*. So called Wilsonian concept of self-determination became the tigger of the majority of the secessions and secession attempts since 1960s. However, 1990s scored the highest rate of secessionist arousal. Majority of the movements were detected to pop up in the post-Soviet territories and the Balkans.

This study suggested the cases of Abkhazian and Samachablo's so called South Ossetian secessions as the primary source to test the hypothesis that the secessionist movements challenge the Westphalian state order, they affect the regional order and reshape the existing standards and even actors. According to the cases of the study, it turned out the any strategic approach that was practices vis-à-vis the secessionist movements from time to time, led to various changes that have not only questioned the state sovereignty and territorial integrity, but also invited the new actor's interference of whom would implicitly and explicitly challenge the principle of state sovereignty.

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