

## **Georgia's Foreign Policy from A Geopolitical Perspective (2008-2018); based on the Grand Chess Board Doctrine by Brzezinski**

**Faezeh Ghasemi** \* - Graduated with a Master's degree in Regional Studies, Central Asia and the South Caucasus. ECO College of Insurance affiliated with ECO Organization and Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran.

**Hamid Hakim** – PhD, Professor of International Relations, Faculty of Law and Political Sciences, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran.

**Mandana Tishehyar**- PhD, Professor of Regional Studies, ECO College of Insurance; Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran.

Received: 25/01/2022

Accepted: 06/04/2023

<https://doi.org/10.22034/igq.2023.169310>

### **Abstract**

The Russo-Georgia war in 2008 interrupted Georgia's membership in NATO and the EU. After the collapse of the USSR in 1991, Georgia was a proper destination for the western countries due to its geopolitical superiority, located between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea. Georgia's goal also was to obtain the conditions of the EU and NATO to achieve the membership of these two organizations as an Eastern European State. With the occurrence of war in 2008, Georgia's Geopolitical situation changed. The research hypothesis is, by losing 20% of Georgia's territory in that war, one of the main conditions for joining NATO and the EU which is the territorial integrity, was suspended. This research is based on the Grand Chessboard Doctrine by Brzezinski, marking the geopolitical factors of Georgia and the great powers' interests in this territory. The main question of the article is "What are the main features of Georgia's Foreign Policy from the Geopolitical perspective from 2008 to 2018?" the hypothesis is, "Geopolitically, Georgia's neighborhood with Russia and the August war in 2008 resulted the occupation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia by Russia, delayed the Georgia's membership to EU and NATO and Georgia tilted toward the West since it needed to counterbalance its foreign policy with strong powers against Russia." Therefore, despite the fact Russia tried to show the war was just an ethnic conflict, it was further than that, and Russia's southern border security with a logical distance from NATO was the main reason for war.

**Keywords:** Georgia, Foreign Policy, Geopolitics. Brzezinski, EU, NATO, War 2008, Energy Project.

---

\* E-mail: faezehghasemi682@gmail.com

## **1.Introduction**

Georgia, with the area of 69,700 km<sup>2</sup> is located at a strategically important crossroads in the South Caucasus, between Russia and Turkey, the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea. Over the centuries, Georgia had been part of Turkey, Iran and Russia. Since the independency from the USSR, Georgia's geopolitics had been noticed. Today, this country is gaining more attention in terms of energy security for the Europe and the West, and she is playing an active role due to its strategic geographical location, because during the USSR the west were concerned to have a secure communication by the sea and air to the east, and to deny the surveillance of the area and its resources by the Communist power (Zakariah,2022:3).

From this regard, a key aspect of Georgia's strategic and political formulation was the development of the Eurasian Corridor, which connects Europe and the east and, in turn, increases the chances of integration in the west (Utiashvili,2014). Georgia plays a major role in transit routes. The only country in the South Caucasus that has access to open waters with navigable, therefore she can transfer energy and cargo from the Central Asia and Caspian Sea to the Europe through Turkey and the Black Sea. (Since the Armenia the other country of the south Caucasus is boycotted by Turkey and Azerbaijan) It is the Georgia's geopolitical advantages that differentiate it in the region, give it a new identity, and, consequently, a new foreign policy, because throughout the history, from ancient times to recent years, the territory of Georgia was often part of a powerful empire and was not an independent state (Премьер-министр Армении,2008). So, this was an opportunity for Georgia to define herself. Under this review, recognition of Georgia's foreign policy can explicit its image in the region and as one of the Iran neighbors (Irna,2012). The necessity of this research is based on the post-Soviet norms and the concentration on investments and massive projects in the South Caucasus region, the new ways Georgia cooperates through the world under the new definitions and outlines. Undoubtedly, her geopolitics influences on foreign policy decisions and her foreign relations with Iran, Russia, and the west, as well (Rezaee and Koolae,2018).

From the academic viewpoint this case study evaluates the efforts Georgia made to counterbalance her geopolitics and her foreign policy, for the most desirable outcome. Also, the politics Georgia applied to make a balance between the West and Russia, especially, after the war in 2008 is noticeable.

The focus of this subject is a country's foreign policy that passing through the geopolitical attentions, nowadays Georgia's foreign policy does not dependent on survival issues anymore, but how a small state can have a prominent role in the Caucasus region and determines her future by herself, what criteria gives her power? This period of time (2008-2018) also had been chosen to exposure the subject narratively.

## **2. Methodology**

The methodology applied in this research is descriptive method based on interviewing, books, articles and reliable news agencies. The author tried to use credible sources and up-to-date data. The required research data were derived from the interviews from the academics and people who are living in the North Ossetia, Alanya, Russia, the people who are living in the South Ossetia. Since the researcher wanted to gathering the opinions from the eastern intellectuals toward the issue, people who are neighbors with Georgia but their thoughts are against the Georgian decision makers. Also, the interviews from the academics in Iran who are the specialists in the South Caucasus and Russia, are included. The data were analyzed qualitatively.

## **3. Literature Review**

Right after the collapse the West had this bargaining power to seek the energy routes passing through not only Russia but also the South Caucasus and Turkey as well. In the early post-Soviet period, Georgia faced serious internal and external issues that threatened its sovereignty. She sought to establish itself as a modern, democratic, independent state, although she was suffering from dysfunctional central administrative power (Utiashvili,2014). During the years from 1991 to 2001, Georgia was struggling with her internal crisis; poverty, kidnapping, mafia, ethnic diversity problems, nationalism rhetoric, economic infrastructures, money laundries, corruptions in any aspects of the society, two separatist provinces and etc. from 2001 to 2003 Georgia tried to fight with corruption and institutionalized the democracy.

The "color revolution" is symbolically named a series of peaceful Uprisings in the former Soviet Union that have been resembling. in Georgia "Rose" 2003, Ukraine "orange" 2004, and Kyrgyzstan "Tulip" 2005 popular are uprising against entrenched leaders brought to power reform-minded

politicians, who pledged to transform post-soviet dens of corruption into modern States (Hafeznia and et al,2013).

The movements sprouted in Georgia and Ukraine in 2003 and 2004 followed by massive street-protests followed disputed elections or demands for fair elections. They led to the resignation or overthrow of leaders (Hafeznia and Afshordi,2005).

The Rose Revolution was a turning point in democracy dialogue in 2003. In March 2003 parliamentary elections in Georgia are being held in a chaotic voting process. Georgia's opposition, led by Mikhail Saakashvili, has taken control of the government and parliament after three weeks of widespread protests against election fraud (Rose Revolution). President Shevardnadze has resigned amid widespread opposition protests and Saakashvili took the office, in what became known as the Rose Revolution (Civil.ge,2003).

Saakashvili's slogan was to fight against corruptions. He did a successful job and after the Rose Revolution, Georgia regained its position in Europe and integrates membership in NATO and the EU as its main foreign policy goals. The Rose Revolution was interpreted as "the masses who uphold Georgia's national dignity and democratic values," which means re-entering Europe (Beacháin and Coene,2014:930). In fact, in some areas, politically and economically, as well as democratization, Georgia has significantly outperformed its post-Soviet counterparts, especially in terms of reducing corruption and becoming one of the countries with rapid growth in the Southeast Europe (Cornell,2007; Fairbanks,2004; Jawad,2006; Mitchell, 2004,2006; Wheatley,2006; Kakachia and Minesashvili,2015). during Saakashvili Georgia and Russia relations cooled down, and the tensions increased day by day such as; North Ossetia pipeline explosion, Russia banned Georgian wine and mineral waters imports and also Russia has announced the suspension of air, sea, and railway and land traffic with Georgia in 2006 (Rferl,2006). Also in 2006, the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline that passes through Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey becoming operational which was another significant matter in this year and had positive effect on Georgia's economy (Sentryo,2017).

The crisis in relations with Russia was deepening when a Russian fighter drops a Georgian unarmed drone over Abkhazia. Therefore, Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili's attempt to take control over South Ossetia using military means, he started the war. Georgia attacked the breakaway

region of South Ossetia and started the war with Russia, as Russia intervened in support of separatists in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. This war started at August 8th, 2008, and it took for 5 days. Two provinces of Georgia, the South Ossetia and Abkhazia recognized themselves as the independent states, Russia supported this decision and recognized this independency ( Panjikidze,2013). Since Georgia herself was started the war due to miscalculations and unrealistic visions, Saakashvili was in charge and delinquent in this regard (The Georgian Times,2008).

Russia's president in the meantime called him crazy due to his insane attack on South Ossetia, and Medvedev also sanctioned Georgia at the time (Fedorov,2009). At that time Georgia was at the height of her Western Orientation approach and it was intended to make her divergence with Russia deeper right after the recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The possibility of any cooperation between Russia and Georgia was prone to zero during the Saakashvili presidency. The rage was very intense, especially the time when Russia structured her bases in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and transferred this threat to Tbilisi, to take care (Bzarov,2019).

After the war in 2008, Georgia got closer to the west, and ignored Russia completely, this aggressive behavior had side effects for Georgia, at the same time US military was in Georgia to train the Georgian Army, and nowadays they have several bases in this country as well, at the contrary Russian army which had several military bases, maritime bases, and air bases, in different spots of the Georgia's territory since the USSR, refused to evacuate them after the Georgia's independency, especially when Georgia showed her willingness toward integration with the Western powers, because it would be an obvious threat for Russia ( Chedia,2019).

In 2010 the Georgia government tried to expand her cooperation with those separated regions, which Abkhazia reject the request and the South Ossetia didn't respond (Civil.ge,2010). NATO leaders at the Lisbon summit reiterate the declaration of the 2008 Bucharest Summit that Georgia will become the Alliance member once it meets criteria. US President Barack Obama hold his first bilateral meeting with President Saakashvili on the sidelines of the summit. In a speech to the European Parliament, President Saakashvili said he was ready to hold a wide-ranging political dialogue with a Russian counterpart, and that Georgia was committed to not using force

unless attacked (Nato.int,2008). The European Union and Georgia successfully finalized negotiations for a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), as part of the Association Agreement between them. (European Commission, 2013) In 2014 Russia signs a strategic partnership agreement with Georgia's breakaway region of Abkhazia, to protests from the Georgian government (BBC News,2019). In 2013 the new president came to power.. Margvelashvili didn't took an extreme approach toward the West or Russia, he was a moderate politician and kept the country in a balance and improvement atmosphere. During his presidency the Karasin-Abashidze Dialouge started in several rounds of meeting for years. These dialouge meant to improve and normalize the relations between Georgia and Russia. Zurab Abashidze, Georgian Prime Minister's special representative for Russia, and Russia's former Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin met in Prague on November 28, 2012, as part of the informal direct bilateral dialogue, for the first time (Civil.ge,2019).

One of the obvious outcomes of the war in 2008, was the failure of western intervention in the Georgian conflict, reducing the prospect of strong western action to strengthen and expand the East-West energy transport corridor throughout the South Caucasus. Thus, by controlling Georgia, Russia could cut off resources from Central Asia and the Caspian Sea. So, this is about a significant change in energy policy and a significant change in geopolitics based on this energy policy and Russia's energy monopoly (Ismailzade,2008). This war also highlighted the need for broader security guarantees for a region vital to energy security in Europe and the world. However, during Margvelashvili presidency, he criticized Saakashvili's consequences, and because of Georgia's foreign policy, which is undoubtedly prone to the west, as the country needs to ensure her security and prosperity in good growth and a viable international position. Admittedly, he did his best to be rational in order to arouse Russia's sensitivities and resolve the crises in Georgia during his presidency. As a result, most international projects came to an end, several new projects were launched, and Georgia's situation on the international stage evolved.

#### **4. Theoretical Framework**

##### **4-1.Geopolitics**

According to one of the Iranian Geopolitical theorists, Hafeznia, the theory that explains power related to a space or geography can be considered as a

geopolitical theory, which based on this assumption, these theories try to predict the process of international evolutions (Torkmeh and et al,2020:7). At the level of international relations, geopolitics is a way of studying foreign policy to understand, explain and predict international political behavior through geographical variables. Geopolitics focuses on political power related to geographical space. In particular, the territorial waters and the land are associated with diplomatic history. Geopolitical issues include the relationship between the interests of international political actors and the interests concentrated in a region, a space or a geographical element. The relationships that a geopolitical system creates (Toncea,2006).

Geopolitics considered as the "knowledge of gaining power. According to this geopolitical view, it examines and proposes solutions for gaining power in governments and political institutions at the national, transnational and global levels (O Tuathail and et al,1998:28,52,188). Geopolitics is; the realities of the geographical environment to gain power, so that one can enter the global game at the highest level and maintain national interests and national survival (Ezzati,2000:112). According to Cohen, geopolitics is defined as the analysis of the interaction between, on the one hand, geographical settings and perspectives and, on the other hand, political processes. Both geographical settings and political processes are dynamic, and each influence and is influenced by the other. Geopolitics addresses the consequences of this interaction (Cohen,2003:12).

**Table (1): Georgia's Geopolitical Features in General**

1	Position	42.3154 ° N, 43.3569 ° E	9	Trade Area	21,946 km <sup>2</sup>
		Caucasus region of Eurasia			
2	Area	69,700 km <sup>2</sup> Minus 20% of its land is located in two separatist provinces	10	Economic Advantage	Energy Corridor and Tourism
3	Autonomous Provinces	Abkhazia <b>since</b> 1993		Important harbors	Sukhumi in Abkhazia
		South Ossetia <b>since</b> 2008			Puti in Imereti
		Adjara <b>since</b> 1993 <b>till</b> 2003			Batumi in Adjara
4	Capital	Tbilisi	11	Coastline	210 km along the Black Sea

5	Borders	Russia: 894 km	12	Main Regional Projects	BTC oil pipeline	
		Azerbaijan: 428 km			BTE gas pipeline	
		Turkey: 273 km			BTK railway	
		Armenia: 219 km			BS oil pipeline	
6	Topography	<b>Shape:</b> parallelogram	13	Resources	timber, water supplies and mineral water, citrus and grapes, manganese reserves, iron alloys, copper and fertile soil,	
		<b>Roughness:</b> The Greater Caucasus and the Lesser Caucasus				
		<b>Highest point:</b> Shakhara Mountain 5193 m				
		<b>Lowest point:</b> 0 m above the Black Sea				
7	Population	3,997,000	14	Largest river	Kora River	
8	Ethnicity	Georgian 86.8%	Azeri 6.3%	15	Largest Lake	Paravani Lake
		Armenian 4.5%	Minorities 2.3%			
9	Religion	Orthodox 83.4%	Muslim 10.3%	16	Main Glacier	Abano and Adishi
		Armenian 2.9%	Other 1.7%			

**Georgia's Geopolitical Weaknesses:**

**Geography Shortage:** Pollution of rivers. Pollution of the Black Sea. Soil pollution due to harmful chemicals caused by the country's civil war. Biodiversity loss, The crisis of resource management in this country, Fossil Resources shortage,

**Political Issues:** Russia's neighborhood. Ethno-diversity like; Abkhazian, Georgia, Ossetian and etc. Little Area. Low Population. 20% breakaway region afterward the war in 2008. Security dilemma. Western Orientation Approach in her foreign policy despite her Eastern Existence. Imposed borders which separated the ethnicities like Ossetins (North Ossetia vs. South Ossetia)

**Figure (1): Autonomous Provinces in Georgia**



(Source: Wikimedia.org)



#### **4-2. Brzezinski Doctrine**

According to Brzezinski after the collapse of the USSR, the US was superior and was known as a world power. Militarily, the US was a pioneering power that no actor could match. Economically, she was yet the engine of global growth. In terms of technology, it was in the top ranks and culturally it had pervasive values (Brzezinski,1997:18). These values show the US prominence to be the candidate power for the Eurasia Black hole after the dissolution of the USSR. Awareness of the great powers' strategies can be effective in influencing the decisions of the regional powers, so the smaller powers can understand their position on the international platform and fully master it while influencing the international order.

The Brzezinski doctrine was a shift in the South Caucasus region. The essence of this doctrine was: The economic dependency growing among the nations make the political exploitation of economic blackmail less attractive. Thus, maneuvering diplomacy, coalition building, synergy, and the very deliberate deployment of individuals' political assets have become key elements of the successful operation of the Strategic Land Power on the Eurasian chessboard (Brzezinski,1997:20-21). According to him, Georgia is at the center of this chess board, same border with Russia as a great power, has a good access to open water routes, as well as good access to land roads and has significant condition for all players and alliances (US and EU vs. Russia and China). Therefore, Georgia is a good candidate to promote this doctrine for it.

Brzezinski believed that Soviet expansionism in the surrounding territories was a good platform for the United States to weaken Moscow's power. The secret of this paradox is, the Soviet presence on its satellites causes its power to be affected by the developments of these countries, thus creating instability in the Soviet satellites can cause instability at the core of the Soviet Union. To do so, he targeted nationalism on Soviet satellites, saying that we should provoke non-Russian nations against Moscow's influence in their countries. Therefore, Brzezinski tried to cope this idea in the Eurasia. Noticed that, for the first time in the history after the collapse of the Soviet Union, we saw a world in which the supreme international power is not from Eurasia.

To continue this situation, the US must establish and maintain its front line as close as possible to the borders of rival powers and not allow any of the

Eurasian powers, including China, Russia, India, Iran, etc., to step in it. He believed that the US must undermine the Russia's power by creating instability by inciting national movements and destabilizing the territory of this rival power. This is the pattern by which the waves of nationalism formed in the Russian satellite countries and eventually led to the collapse of the USSR, beside the other reasons. The color revolutions scenario in this region also originated from the heart of this doctrine (Brzezinski,1988:680-699). This containment policy toward Russia was so popular even after the dissolution of USSR, especially after the Georgia-Russo war in 2008, and Ukraine- Russia conflict in 2014. During the Trump administration, the U.S. was investing in the defense of Eastern Europe from the Baltic countries to Romania, as part of its strategy to contain Russia. Therefore, the Eastern European countries and the South Caucasus Region benefits from this new US policy towards the region (Sharma,2022:18) form the other side, Moscow depends on the Black Sea for access to the Mediterranean and beyond, both for military operations outside its neighborhood and for exports of Russia's hydrocarbons. Moscow sees the Mediterranean as largely NATO-dominated, but it plans to spot opportunities to make political, economic, and military inroads with key regional state (Hafeznia, 2022).

Brzezinski also emphasizes that Washington should not threaten or force the vital interests of the Eurasian powers to react, to reduce the cost of his proposed policy, instead, he proposes to support the enlargement of the EU members in order to increase the diversity of states in this organization (Tocci and et al, 2008:6-14-15).

According to this doctrine, Georgia separated from the USSR due to national movements, and two provinces in her territory were seeking to be independent by Russia's support. During the USSR and after that, Russia tried to control the South Caucasus by helping the minorities who are living in the region. At the beginning of independency, they wanted to remain with Russia, and after a while, they were provoked to get independent from Georgia. In 1991 Abkhazia and Adjara got independent (in 2004 Adjara reunited with Georgia again), and in 2008 the South Ossetia separated, all of these ethnicity movements happened during the devastating wars by Russia's intervention. Therefore, the US by supporting Georgia tried to change the balance of power at the backdoor of Russia. Russia instead took

Abkhazia and the South Ossetia to keep this balance fair and send this message to the West that her "Near Abroad" is her red line.

### **5. Georgia's Foreign Policy Approach**

One of the main achievements of a Modern Government<sup>1</sup> after Westphalian<sup>2</sup>, was the foreign policy upheaval which determined the quantity and quality of the states' interactions. From this approach the regional integrations and the international system shaped. After the collapse of the USSR, one of the major questions was how Russia would define her foreign policy afterward? Many Russian and Non-Russian scholars believed, the answer is, by Russia's geopolitical characteristics (Koolae, 2018:4). From this viewpoint the Russia's "Near Abroad" is included in its Geopolitics as well. According to the analyzes Russia tries to protect the USSR territory as well, although these states are independent now. The reason is, this approach roots in Russia's security (Koolae,2018:13).

Scholars also questioned how Russia and its former satellites would define their identities? According to the Soviet era the identity definition among these states were vary, but it was based on their desires rooted in their lacks and threats. In this regard, Georgia's pro-Western foreign policy orientation caused by not only ideas and identity, but also from materialist and systemic factors too. To Georgia Europeanization was an alteration which its government could experience evolutions both in the internal structures and the foreign policy orientations (Shokoohi and et al,2021:5). As Georgia strives to build a collective international identity, its commitment to the idea of Europeanization and Atlantic integration as a "sacred destiny" among its elites has significant foreign policy implications (Kakachia and Minesashvili,2015:171-180). Georgia's geographical distance from Europe and its exposure to Russia make this a difficult prospect. Georgia's two autonomous states question her integrity and unity. Several countries around the world recognize them as one country, and at the top of the list is Russia,

---

1.A type of government that was formed in the system of European governments from the sixteenth century onwards. This concept refers to a kind of legal or institutionalized impersonal and privileged institution that has the ability to govern and control a certain territory.

2.A series of treaties made the Peace of Westphalia, which is considered by scholars to be the beginning of the modern international system, in which external powers should avoid interfering in another country's domestic affairs.

a major and decisive power in the region, Eurasia (Frederick Starr and Cornell,2014:72).

Although Georgia's foreign policy is seen as pro-Western and multifaceted, it is not always practical on the basis of expediency. It may seem that the country's foreign policy priorities are based on identity (Determination to join the West, the European Union, NATO, etc.) and, unlike its neighbors, on realistic patterns such as national interests, pragmatism, balance of power, and so on. It must note, Georgia's ambition to join the Western organization and Western coalitions is not due to identity as the main reason, but its behavior is based on realist approaches and the balance of power and security. She needs the support of the great powers to confront Russia as her neighbor and to present herself as a civilized nation at the international level. Under the international projects in the region, and because she lost part of her territory to Russia, there is a great hope for the country to join the EU, under the Eastern Partnership Project, and under the development packages of the EU. Georgia is committed by EU to being updated every year, it can successfully develop democracy at home and in its relations with its international partners. Because of her successes in the NATO missions, and based on all her victories abroad, and upgrading of her armaments with the help of the US, plus all the years she was promised by the NATO, the EU and the US leaders, she will join them sooner or later (Torabi,2013).

## **6.Findings**

In 2007 Georgia was ready to join to the EU, but in this case the balance of power in the South Caucasus would suspend, therefore Russia by occupying parts of Georgia's territory kept this balance. it means when parts of a territory occupied or separated by other country, it is impossible to join to the EU and the NATO as a permanent member. So, EU's borders couldn't reach to southern borders of Russia so far. The balance of power is no aggregate of individual actions, but an autonomous system, indeed, 'since the goal is stability plus the preservation of all elements of the system, the equilibrium must aim at preventing any element from gaining ascendancy over the other' (Morgenthau and Thompson,1948).

Georgia's foreign policy also stems from the geopolitical reality of the region, this debate has two perspectives. According to the interview with Vali Kaleji, the scholar in Central Asia and the South Caucasus, due to the

conflict and hostility in 2008 in Georgia, she lost 20% of her territory. This new geopolitical fact caused a great deal of controversy in Georgia's foreign policy. If Georgia was very cautious in her behavior toward the West, to not provoke Russia's sensitivity, to be able to continue and complete her economical projects in transportation such as energy and cargo, this behavior is fully explained by the Brzezinski Doctrine as well, but after that war in 2008, there were no fears of action for Georgia anymore (Kaleji, 2020 ). This Circumstance had consequences for Georgia:

#### **6-1. The negative Impacts of 2008 Hostility**

During the interview with Alexy Chibirov, the son of the former president in the South Ossetia, and the head of Iranian Studies, Georgia's popularity as an apt country for investment and expand the infrastructures for this aim duo to the free market, went under question. Is this country safe anymore? How can anybody guarantee the security? How could be able to counterbalance Russia's interventions and Russia's threat in this country? How shall we face the future hostilities and incidents such as the 2008 invasion? They were the questions European asked. For Georgia herself, it was a hesitant position, on the one side Russia's invasion, the country which is her neighbor geographically, and geopolitically the largest country in the world which has deep influence in the region since the USSR era, despite the fact that Georgia started the war and it was an internal war inside Georgia, between the central government in Tbilisi and the South Ossetia, and it was a tension which was ignited month ago before that incident on August 8th, 2008, but Russia intervened in this hostility and sent his troops into the region, and Russia was the side who continued the war. So, this attitude made Russia more unreliable and hostile partner and neighbor to Georgia. This was one of the great reasons for the divergence between these two neighbors, and cleared the importance of the Western existence in this country (Chibirov, 2019).

On the other side, Georgia who was count on the support and backup from the EU and US failed in this regard, Kaleji insisted. maybe the EU and US promised Georgia in the way that, you go forward and combat and if this confrontation was in your favor, then we will back you and we will there for you, maybe they were calculated on the preemptive reactions of Russia and they were waited to see how it will face this internal conflict in Georgia and then take their stance toward that prediction, and since this reaction was so

harsh, they took neutrality all the way long and put this war on Georgia and Russia themselves (Chibirov,2019). They found out Russia's traditional behavior doesn't change, and her traditional scope of influence is still the same as the Cold War, It was very likely that if they intervened in this regional war and the war went within the borders of the European Union, and it would not be acceptable at all. Therefore, despite Georgia that almost all the scholars believe her action was very idealistic, emotional, and over-calculated, based on her capabilities and her status in the region and in the world, the EU and the US were realistic in this regard and didn't affect by Saakashvili's bad decision (Europe Briefing,2008).

#### **6-2. Afterwards the Hostility in 2008, the Decisions Georgia Made**

Nodar Nogayev the history and political studies lecturer at NOSU believes, in this situation the necessity for Georgia to integrate with stronger powers was inevitable, and due to the Balance of Power theory, counterbalance with your enemy's enemy, is the best balance to secure your existence, and since Georgia herself was into the EU and NATO to be part of them and have coalitions and integrations with them, which they already had since 1991, the outbreak of war in 2008 and the hostilities it brought afterward, provoked Georgia to work on her Western ties strongly, now Georgia had reliable reasons, that her neighbor is savage and cannot accept the freedom of actions of her former satellite partner (Nogayev,2019). According to the interview with Elbrus Satsaev, the senior researcher of the North Ossetian Institute for the Humanitarian and Social Research, he believes the innumerable pipeline projects in Central Asia and the South Caucasus Regions, is the New Great Game in the Eurasia Chessboard, which is apparently based on the Energy Routes and the Energy Supplies, but has another story behind, to diminish the role of Russia which is an aggressive player in the International System, based on Brzezinski Doctrine. Due to the new energy routes and pipelines, most of them tried to bypass Russia, stem out from Central Asia, the Caspian Sea, and going through the South Caucasus, which drastically decrease to influence of Russia on the energy sector generally. And how Russia confronts it? Russia's technique in this regard is to ignite hostilities and brings them to another level which scholars call it; the Frozen Conflict, which in the contemporary era these sorts of conflicts don't have any solution. It is obvious when the South Caucasus, as the new location for the passing pipeline routes, is under hostility and each

of the 3 countries in this region has its own troubles and un-secure atmospheres, this energy project would not be safe (Satsaev,2019).

Upon all these chaotic situations, the EU and the US insist on this region yet, and they will maintain this costly security of the routes themselves. Under these new geopolitical situations in Georgia after the war in 2008, numbers of the European states as the European Union Representatives chose to be the EU delegations in Georgia. And NATO under this circumstance could maintain its presence in Georgia and monitoring and controlling the peace and the security process in Georgia as well (Kerimow, 2019). This attempt is explained well by the Brzezinski's European Union Expansion viewpoint to spread democracy.

Also, since the independency, Georgia desired for the membership in the EU and the NATO but her concern was Russia that would not let the new independent state participate to in Western coalitions. These organizations were also hesitated for that decision, they just could help Georgia to develop her infrastructures, and their existence in Georgia were narrow and intangible. But after the war in 2008 they found a good reason to be in Georgia, economically, politically, culturally and socially, helped her to stand up again even stronger and more developed than before, NATO trained the Georgia's army and troops, maintained the security of her territory and the pipelines infrastructures. The result was satisfactory, Georgia became a democratic country with a free market and an interesting purpose for investors in any sector especially energy (Chibirov,2019).

After the collapse of the USSR, the Eastern European States who have common borders with Russia could join the EU, after some while, despite the Russia's obstacles, therefore in the Georgia's case this condition would be probable as well, nevertheless Georgia's membership to NATO is Russia's concern, the most. During the cold war Russia initiated the Warsaw Pact to counterbalance the NATO, the first threat for the unity and existence of the Soviet Union. Therefore, how is possible a country that bordered with Russia, as a former Soviet ally, join to the NATO? Unless Georgia left something for Russia. In two well-known examples in recent years, two countries which aimed to join NATO, lost 20% of their territories, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Georgia in 2008, and Crimea, Ukraine in 2014. Both of them still are not the members of NATO, but both have the observer status in this organization (Kaleji,2017).

One might say one of the main conditions for membership in the NATO and EU is the territorial integrity, how about the Georgia's integrity? Albeit *de jure* Abkhazia and South Ossetia are parts of the Georgia's territory and they must reunite with Georgia again, but *de facto* the probability of reuniting these two provinces with Georgia is very little, therefore due to this situation it is possible if NATO and EU accept Georgia under the new geopolitical conditions. Nevertheless, Russia thought by occupation of these two territories the membership of Georgia in EU and NATO will be suspended, this assumption can change, even these two organizations try to settle some new rules to be adaptive for the Eastern European Countries, as well as Georgia (Kaleji,2017). In fact, the US and the EU were seeking to establish transit routes that ensure access to the resources of the Caspian Sea. The United States is significantly interested in increasing its presence in Russia's Near Abroad (Foster,2004:14; SMITH,2005; Thomas,2000; Cornell,2005). From the Russian point of view, the Caspian Sea region has received special attention because of the multitude of interests that must be protected. Among the most important are:

1. Geo-strategic interests: Russia wants to remain strong in the region and use its power within and under the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to ensure the security of its southern geostrategy. Russia sees its greatest danger as the possible limitation of her direct access to the sea.
2. Geo-political interests: According to many analysts, maintaining Russia's influence in the former Soviet Union directly determines the future of the Russian government. Caspian oil, despite all its economic significance, is merely the external manifestation of the global political task of the present day-the restoration of Russia's might. The evolving problems in the North Caucasus among the republics of Russia (not only Chechnya but also the Karachay-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria, North Ossetia, Ingushetia, etc.) and growing religious pressures (from Wahhabis, among other groups) this region is as or perhaps more important to Russia than the CIS in terms of interests and stability (Thomas,2000:75-96). Therefore as a conclusion, Russia is afraid of the domino effect of the west influence in the region that might reach to the South of Russia too (Falkowski,2006).



Need to notice that the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline project is primary importance for Georgia, both from economic and political standpoints. From the very beginning, when it came to building the BTC pipeline, Georgia had many obstacles that had to be overcome, both domestically and internationally. These included the government's weakness, corruption, and Russia's policy toward Georgia. However, the "Rose Revolution" created new challenges and opportunities for the successful development of the country. In this regard, the implementation of various investment projects, including the BTC oil pipeline project, is expected to open new opportunities for Georgia (Cornell, 2005).

Cornell and Nilsson (2008:10) argue that the pipelines constitute "the only infrastructure for bringing Caspian energy to the European market, which is not under Russian control". The BTC pipeline is a successful project based on effective strategic planning. This increases supply diversity, reduces Russian dominance, strengthens the political and economic independence of Georgia and Azerbaijan, strengthens their independence, and opens new dimensions for Western interaction. Georgia's cooperation with the European Union and the United States and its geographical location are vital to the East-West Energy Corridor, and strategic partnerships between the two countries will help overcome key issues, such as the integration of independent transit routes (Utiashvili, 2014).

In 2013, during the new presidential election, Margvelashvili, the new president of Georgia, came to power, tried to calm some aspects of Georgian-Russian relations. In an interview in 2014 Margvelashvili said: "Cooperating with West doesn't mean attacking Russia's interests. We cooperate with all our neighbors. Georgia's foreign policy, Georgia's geopolitical role is in active cooperation projects. We see our geopolitical identity and role in connecting the eastern and western markets, in creating communication. The same applies to Russia. We would be happy to cooperate. But there is one very important principle: Russia has to accept the reality that Georgia is an independent state and that we will be building its future. It is the right policy to be very careful when you are dealing with your aggressive nuclear neighbor. But we have never retreated from our main principles: Georgia is a free and independent state, it has a European and Euro-Atlantic choice. Georgia is developing its statehood, and Georgia is an independent and sovereign country. This has never varied"

(Margvelashvili,2014) as he mentioned in this interview, Georgia's foreign policy from a subservient manner changed to an active cooperation.

During an interview with Bahram Amirahmadian, a scholar in Central Asia and Caucasus, he believed during the USSR, Georgia was located in the shatter belt, between the NATO and the Warsaw Pact, therefore this country was strategically important for the Eastern bloc and the Western bloc as well. After the collapse of USSR, Yeltsin decided to name these new independent states as the Near Abroad. After the dissolution of USSR, Russia still had numbers of military bases in the Georgia's territory, which were remained from the soviet era, to confront the NATO. These bases were located at Georgia-Turkey border, Tbilisi, Vaziani, Akhaltsikhe, Akhalkelaki, Batumi Port, Sokhumi Port, and the South Ossetia. After Georgia found her independency upon a national territory, the Georgian government asked Russia to evacuate these bases. There were some conflicts between the two governments for a while over this subject. Russia also had a maritime bases at Sokhumi port, since Georgia wanted to take it back, Russia provoked the Abkhazian against the central government in Tbilisi, and gave the Russian passport to the Abkhazian separatists, to not lose the maritime base. After the occupation of Crimea, the east of Ukraine, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Karabakh, by Russia, Moscow created the Russian buffer line between NATO and herself. From this viewpoint the Georgian importance is clear as well (Amirahmadian,2021). In Georgia, after the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014 prompted renewed concerns of another conflict with its vastly more powerful neighbor. Russia's militarization of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the two breakaway regions of the country that it supports, is a permanent threat to the security of Georgia. Furthermore, Russia signed the Treaty of Alliance and Integration with South Ossetia in 2015 (Hafeznia and et al,2021).

## **7. Conclusion**

According to these post- Soviet interests, a wider Europe and an enlarged NATO will serve the short-term and the longer-term goals of US policy, based on the Brzezinski Doctrine. But since the US and the EU must confront Russia as a first step, much effort has been put into it, the way they countered Russia since the collapse of USSR is very fragile and very perilous at the same time. US must sustain her Geostrategy bases in this continent, therefore the allies in the region must be very selective, and in

this case, US chose those States who had more conflicts with Russia, regards the ties they might have such as; the religion, ethnicity, culture, economic, energy concerns and etc. therefore Georgia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine and so on, could be the good choices for US. In this regard Russia, the greatest country in the world, which felt backwardness toward her neighbors from the aspect of internal grows, tried to step in the social modernization. But it also observed all the skeptical moves in the region, and never gave up on her traditional territory, her near abroad. The large-scale international investment in an increasingly accessible Caspian-Central Asian region would not only help to consolidate the independence of its new countries but in the long run, would also benefit democratic Russia and the South Caucasus States as well. The tapping of the region's energy and mineral resources would generate prosperity, prompting a greater sense of stability and security in the area, while perhaps also reducing the risks of Caucasus-type conflicts, this argument firstly mentioned by Brzezinski during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

As the conclusion, this research completely covered up the hypothesis and proved it. At the first glance Russia wanted to register the August war of 2008, to the ethnic diversity of the region and the uprising of the nationalism in this territory and the miss calculation of president Saakashvili at the time, but at the back stage the purpose was to sustain the Russia's security by creating a buffer zone on her south west borders, by creating the long-term hostilities, and aimless negations over the frozen conflicts, the reunion of Abkhazia and South Ossetia with Georgia. Beside she could confirm by the recognition of the independency of these breakaway regions, Georgia would not be able to join the EU and especially the NATO. Nevertheless, these two organizations, practiced the new rules and signed the new bills in their councils to be adopted by countries such as Georgia, with the same problems, so far, no practical action has been taken. Apparently, the Georgia's condition would remain the same as Karabakh<sup>1</sup> for a while, and the regional and the Western players would take no further actions in this regard, but the economic transitions and the foreign investments will

---

1.A disputed region between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the South Caucasus for years, according to both side the land belongs to Azerbaijan but the citizens are Armenian. Lately in 2020 there was a war between the two countries, it had many damages but the dispute remained intact.

increase, and Georgia is going to improve her infrastructures, and the central government in Tbilisi is going to establish the national reconciliation among the ethnicities as well. And in the end, we can admit that the Georgia's main foreign policy approach which is the membership to the EU and the NATO is one of those frozen conflicts that are exclusively belong to the post-soviet era, and there would be no alleviate in this regard, for the foreseeable future.

### **8. Acknowledgment**

This article is taken from Faezeh Ghasemi's master dissertation titled "Georgia's Foreign Policy from A Geopolitical Perspective (2008-2018); based on the Grand Chess Board Doctrine by Brzezinski" was done in the ECOI college of Allameh Tabataba'i University in Tehran. I am very grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Mandana Tishehyar, who did not spare any help and guidance during the master's period, as a supervisor, she always benefited the researcher with her opinions and support. I am very grateful to Dr. Hamid Hakim, the advisor professor of the dissertation, who has always had a sincere, conversation-oriented, and enlightening relationship with me. I am also very grateful to the director of the Department of Regional Studies and the head of the ECOI college, Dr. Saeed Shakoohi. I am also very grateful to the examiners of this article for their comments.

پژوهشگاه علوم انسانی و مطالعات فرهنگی  
پرتال جامع علوم انسانی

**References**

1. Amirahmadian, B. (2021). Georgia's foreign policy from a geopolitical perspective. (F. Ghasemi, Interviewer).
2. BBC News. (2019). Georgia profile - Timeline. Retrieved from BBC News: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17303471>.
3. Brzezinski, Z. (1988). America's New Geostrategy. *Foreign Affairs*, 680-699.
4. Brzezinski, Z. (1997). *The Grand Chessboard*. Washington, D.C.
5. Bzarov, R. S. (2019). Georgia's Foreign Policy after the War in 2008. (F. Ghasemi, Interviewer).
6. Chedia, B. (2019). US base in Georgia – A scarecrow in Russia's backyard? Retrieved from *New Eastern Europe*: <http://neweasterneurope.eu/2019/11/04/us-base-in-georgia-a-scarecrow-in-russias-backyard/>
7. Chibirov, A. (2019). The War In August 2008. (F. Ghasemi, Interviewer).
8. Civil.Ge. (2003). UNA. Georgia Online Magazine. Retrieved from Civil.Ge: <https://web.archive.org/web/20071118053631/http://www.civil.ge/eng/detail.php?id=5924>.
9. Civil.Ge. (2010). France, U.S. Welcome Tbilisi's Abkhaz, S.Ossetia Strategy. Retrieved from Civil Georgia: <https://civil.ge/archives/119826>.
10. Civil.Ge. (2019). Georgian, Russian Diplomats Meet in Prague. Retrieved from Civil.ge: <https://civil.ge/archives/329706>.
11. Cohen, S. B. (2003). *Geopolitics of the World System*. New York.
12. Cornell, S. F. (2005). *The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline: Oil Window to the West*. Washington, D.C: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program –A Joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center.
13. Europe Briefing. (2008). Georgia: The Risks of Winter, International Crisis Group.
14. European Commission. (2013). EU and Georgia conclude talks on Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area. Brussels: European Commission Press. Retrieved from European Commission: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_13\\_721](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_13_721).
15. Ezzati, E. (2000). *Geopolitics in 21st Century*. (06 ed.). Tehran: Samt. Retrieved from <https://civilica.com/doc/66780/>.
16. Falkowski, M. (2006). *Russia's Policy in the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia*. Centre for Eastern Studies Warsaw. Retrieved August 6, 2014, from <http://www.osw.waw.pl>.
17. Fedorov, Y. E. (2009). *Medvedev's Amendments to the Law on Defence: The Consequences For Europe*. Finnish Institute of International Affairs.
18. Frederick Starr, S.; Cornell, S. (2014). *Putin's Grand Strategy: The Eurasian Union and Its Discontents*. Singapore: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute &

Silk Road Studies Program.

19. Hafeznia, M.R (2022). Iran's strategic position in the Mediterranean Sea. Retrieved from Iraninan Association of Geopolitics. Geopolitics Quarterly <https://iag.ir/> **[In Persian]**
20. Hafeznia, M.R; Afshordi, M. (2005). Caucasus Geopolitical Analysis; A platform for formulating a more appropriate foreign policy in the region. Geographical research, 19-38. **[In Persian]**
21. Hafeznia, M.R; Rezaee Sekkehravani, D. (2021). Explanation of Geopolitical Territorializing of the States, Case Study: Russia in Euraisa. Geopolitics Jurnal, 50-62.
22. Hafeznia, M.R; Ahmadipour, Z; Booye, C. (2013). Legal and legitimate foundations of geopolitical actions of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Journal of Islamic Revolution Studies, 9-28. **[In Persian]**
23. Irna. (2012). IRI Cultural Section opened at Georgia National Library. Retrieved from Islamic Republic News Agency: <https://en.irna.ir/news/8017478/IRI-Cultural-Section-opened-at-Georgia-National-Library>. **[In Persian]**
24. Ismailzade, F. (2008). The Georgia–Russian conflict: a perspective from Azerbaijan and implications for the region. Caucasus Analytical Digest, 1 **[In Persian]**
25. Kakachia, K; Minesashvili, S. (2015). Identity politics: Exploring Georgian foreign policy behavior. Journal of Eurasian Studies, `171-180.
26. Kaleji, V. (2017). Caucasus in Iran's Foreign Policy: Legacies and Prospects. Retrieved from IRAS: <http://www.iras.ir/en/doc/note/3186/Caucasus-in-iran-s-foreign-policy-legacies-and-prospects>. **[In Persian]**
27. Kaleji, V. (2020 ). A scholar on Central Asia and Caucasian Studies. (F. Ghasemi, Interviewer).
28. Kerimow, G. (2019). How the South Caucasus will deal with the Threat of Russia and ambitious projects in the region. (F. Ghasemi, Interviewer).
29. Koolae, E. (2018). The geopolitical components of Russia's foreign policy, Geopolitics Quarterly, 14(49), pp. 1-25. **[In Persian]**
30. Margvelashvili, G. (2014). Georgia's president: 'Cooperating with West doesn't mean attacking Russia's interests'. (D. Z. Nemtsova, Interviewer) Retrieved from <https://www.dw.com/en/georgias-president-cooperating-with-west-doesnt-mean-attacking-russias-interests/a-41207551>.
31. Morgenthau, H.; Thompson, K. W. (1948). Politics among Nations. New York.
32. Nato.int. (2008). Bucharest Summit Declaration. Retrieved from North Atlantic Treaty Organization: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_8443.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm)
33. Nogayev, N. (2019). Georgia's Westernization after 1991. (F. Ghasemi,

- Interviewer).
34. O Tuathail; Gearoid; and et al. (1998). *The Geopolitics Reader*. London.
  35. Panjikidze, H. (2013). *Foreign Policy Priorities of Georgia*. Tokyo: Sasakawa Peace Foundation.
  36. Rezaee, M; Koolae, E. (2018). External Factors Affecting the Failure of Iran-Georgia Relations. *Human Geography Research Quarterly*, 935-950. **[In Persian]**
  37. Rferl. (2006). Georgia: Tbilisi Accuses Moscow Of Energy Sabotage. Retrieved from RadioFreeEuropeRadioLiberty: <https://www.rferl.org/a/1064976.html>.
  38. Satsaev, E. (2019 ). The observation on the Georgi'a foreign policy from the Russian viewpoint. *Georgia's foreign policy from her Geopolitical perspective. 2008-2018*. Faezeh Ghasemi. NOSU, Vladikavkaz.
  39. Sentryo. (2017). Sentryo. Retrieved from Cisco: <https://www.sentryo.net/The-sentryo-files-industries-vs-cyberattacksepisode-2-attack-on-the-btc-oil-pipeline-in-2008/>.
  40. Sharma, T. (2022). The Geopolitics of US-Poland Relations Under President Trump, *Geopolitics Quarterly*, 17(64), pp. 186-205. doi:20.1001.1.17354331.1400.17.64.8.5.
  41. Shokoohi, S; Safari, A; Moradifar, S. (2021). The impact of Europeanization and De-Europeanization on Turkey's Foreign Policy, *Geopolitics Quarterly*, 18(66), pp. 141-173. **[In Persian]**
  42. SMITH, K. E. (2005). *International Affairs. The outsiders: the European neighbourhood policy*, pp. 757-773.
  43. *The Georgian Times* (2008). Barack Obama Will Demonstrate His Fidelity to Principles in Relation to Georgia, Interview with S. Zurabishvili., Retrieved from Geotime: [www.geotimes.ge](http://www.geotimes.ge)
  44. Thomas, M. T. (2000). Perceptions. *Russian National Interests and the Caspian Sea*, pp. 75-96.
  45. Tocci, N; Darbouche, H; Emerson, M. (2008). The European Union as a Normative Foreign Policy Actor. CEPS, 1-38. Retrieved from <http://aei.pitt.edu/7582/1/Wd281.pdf>.
  46. Toncea, V. (2006). Geopolitical evolution of borders in Danube Basin.
  47. Torabi, Q. (2013). NATO presence in Central Asia and the Caucasus and the security of the Islamic Republic of Iran. *Journal of Political Science*, 175. **[In Persian]**
  48. Torkmeh, A; Hafeznia, M.R; Roumina, E.; Ahmadipour, Z. (2020). Critical Geopolitics Analysis from a Critical Realism aspect, *Geopolitics Quarterly*, 18(65), pp. 1-43. **[In Persian]**
  49. Utiashvili, T. (2014). why is a small state like georgia important for the usa

the eu and russia. Retrieved from E-INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS STUDENTS: <https://www.e-ir.info/2014/06/04/why-is-a-small-state-like-georgia-important-for-the-usa-the-eu-and-russia/>.

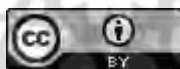
50. Zakariah, M. H. (2022). Britain's Geopolitical Consideration in the Middle East during the Six-day Arab Israel War of 1967: A Reassessment, *Geopolitics Quarterly*, 17(64), pp. 10-27.
51. Премьер-министр Армении. (2008). По-настоящему жизненно важный вопрос это установление добрососедских отношений со всеми странами региона и прежде всего с Азербайджаном. Retrieved from [www.day.az](http://www.day.az). [In Russian]

---

#### COPYRIGHTS

©2023 by the authors. Published by the Iranian Association of Geopolitics. This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>

---



پژوهشگاه علوم انسانی و مطالعات فرهنگی  
پرتال جامع علوم انسانی