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Intergroup Dynamics and Protracted Conflicts: An Analysis of the Ukraine and Georgia Conflicts

By Camilla Edemann Callesen

Dissertation submitted to the Department of Politics and International Relations
in the Faculty of Social Science
in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the award of the degree of
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Camilla Edemann Callesen
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Abstract

The Ukraine and Georgia conflicts have attracted a great deal of attention from scholars and practitioners who seek to explore why these conflicts have emerged and endure. In the literature, the conflicts tend to be treated as outcomes of the Soviet past or as consequences of negative relations between Russia and the EU/NATO. Such research does give valuable insight into why the conflicts emerged. But it does not sufficiently explain why the states and non-state actors involved in the conflicts continue to fail in implementing the conflict resolution efforts that they have all agreed to. This dissertation explores this research puzzle. By linking social constructivism and social psychology, it explores the role the conflict parties' understandings of the situation, self, and other play in shaping conflict protraction. More specifically it engages with how the conflict parties reach such understandings through social cognitive processing, and the role their interacting processing tendencies play in shaping negative intergroup dynamics between them.

The dissertation finds that the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts are protracted because the conflict parties struggle over who gets to be a group. The conflicts are thus not between groups per se but between agents who fight over who is present in the conflicts, which groups these agents belong to, and how these groups relate to each other. This struggle occurs as the result of four interacting cognitive tendencies, which the conflict parties resort to when they process conflict stimuli (social information such as behaviour, events, statements made by self or others in the conflict). The first of such tendencies is to process conflict stimulus by adapting self or other identities/interests, or to adapt stimulus so it fits with self or other identities/interests. The second tendency is to process the out-group's identity/interests as the outcome of leadership manipulation, and to process in-group identity/interests as the outcome of group think. The third tendency is to process the out-group's intent to be the management of the in-group's identity/interests, and the in-group tendency to manage the out-group's identity/interests. The fourth tendency is to support parts of another conflict party's social cognitive framework, and to point to cognitive support as the cause for conflict protraction.

These processing tendencies contribute to conflict protraction as they lead to flexible and opposed group identities, which the conflict parties continuously seek to present as real and distinct. It also leads to continued in-group mobilisation as the conflict parties need to uphold their opposed group identities, to ensure that their constructed in-group identity persists. This interaction leads to a cognitive struggle over how to, and who gets to, establish the social boundaries that define the conflicts. The Ukraine and Georgia conflicts are therefore not only protracted because there is a conflict between EU/NATO and Russia, nor because conflict narratives or self/other understandings are cemented. They are also protracted because the conflict parties continue to engage in processing tendencies, which shape a struggle over who gets to group the agents present in the conflict and thus by extension of this, who gets to be a group.

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1.0 Introduction

The conflicts in Georgia and Ukraine have attracted a great deal of attention over the years as scholars and practitioners have sought to make sense of why these conflicts occurred and why they continue to endure. Although the conflicts take place in different territories and between different conflict parties, the literature tends to point at the conflicts' seemingly similar nature. There is particularly a common argument that both conflicts are outcomes of struggles between governments and secessionists and/or the expansion of NATO and EU into what Russia perceives to be its neighbourhood and sphere of influence¹. The tendency is to treat the conflicts as outcomes of clashing interests and to argue that to end the conflicts, certain interests need to be aligned or curbed. What is puzzling about the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts, however, is that the conflict parties have all signed up to agreements (such as the Minsk and Sochi agreements and various ceasefires) that aim to align their clashing interests, and all conflict parties continuously express the importance of upholding these agreements. They nevertheless continue to fail in implementing these agreements and the conflicts continue to fester. This raises the question of whether the cause for conflict protraction should not merely be found in clashing interests, but also in clashing understandings. Because, given that the conflict parties continue to clash, it may imply that they continue to shape their actions around certain understandings, which drive them towards confrontation rather than reconciliation. The research puzzle that shapes this dissertation is thus why the Ukraine and Georgia conflict parties continue to be in conflict despite having reached several agreements, and what role ideational factors may play in this regard. To address this puzzle, I focus my attention on cognition, or the process of knowing, with the aim of exploring how sense-making may assist in shaping protracted conflicts. The objective is more specifically to analyse how each conflict party process the social information (stimuli) they encounter in the conflict context, and how they compartmentalise such stimuli into understandings that come to guide their thoughts and actions. It is then by exploring the conflict parties' interacting processing tendencies, or inter-group dynamics, that I can discuss how come the conflict parties in Ukraine and Georgia continue to fail in ending the conflicts between them. This then leads to the specific research question of this dissertation which is:

How do social cognitive processes and intergroup dynamics contribute to the protraction of the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts?

¹ John Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin." *Foreign Affairs* 93 (2014): 1-12; Charles King, "The Five-Day War: Managing Moscow After the Georgia Crisis." *Foreign Affairs* 87, (2008): 11; Stephen Blank, "Russian and the Black Sea's Frozen Conflicts in Strategic Perspective." *Mediterranean Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (2008): 23-54

To explore this topic, I apply a multidisciplinary approach which links social constructivism and social psychology. This allows me to explore and explain how and why the conflict parties seek to make sense of the situation, self, and other, and how their sense-making assists in shaping protracted conflicts. To this end, the theoretical framework focuses on what social cognitive processing is and how it results in intergroup dynamics. It also presents the theories of social categorisation, social identity, and attribution processing, which explain how and why agents reach understandings of situations, such as conflicts, by categorising self and other into groups and attaching identities and interests to these groups. The theoretical framework will also address the theories of conflict supporting narratives and radical disagreement, which point to how conflict protraction occurs from cemented self/other understandings. In combination, these theories allow me to explain the role social cognitive processes play in times of conflict. I engage with two case studies namely the Georgia and Ukraine conflicts and I draw my attention to the conflict parties: Russia, Georgia, Ukraine, South Ossetia, and the Donetsk Peoples Republic. These conflict parties are not treated as units or persons, but as group identities that state and non-state leaders use to make sense of self and other. Attention is thus on group identity management including how identity managers (Presidents, Prime Ministers, Ministers, and Ministries) process conflict stimuli, cognitively systematise stimuli, and how this results in cognitive frameworks from which thoughts and actions arise in the conflict contexts. The intention is to explore the conflict parties' official conflict narratives and the cognitive steps that make up these narratives. To do so, I apply a thematic and frame analysis, which allow me to explore what nodes are activated in the conflict narratives, how these nodes are compartmentalised into self-, other-, and situation-schemas, and how these schemas form social cognitive frameworks, which the conflict parties apply as cognitive roadmaps in their interactions. It is then by exploring the conflict parties' social cognitive frameworks, and the processes they use to reach these, that I will be able to discuss how conflict protraction may arise from social cognitive processing.

I argue that the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts are protracted because the conflict parties engage in processing tendencies, which form a cognitive struggle between them over who gets to be a group. When digging into the cognitive processes at play, it becomes noticeable that the conflicts are not between specific groups per se, but between agents who clash over who gets to cognitively systematise (or group) those involved in the conflicts, and who gets to define these groups. In their social cognitive processing, all conflict parties seek to dismiss and uphold certain group identities, and they all argue that they possess the true account of which groups are present and the characteristics and relations that define these groups. These group identities are, however, incompatible, which leads to interactions where each conflict party treats the opponent's group identities as fake, whilst they treat their own group identities as real. This cognitive struggle arises from four processing tendencies, which all conflict parties apply when they process and compartmentalise stimuli. The first tendency is to process stimulus by adapting self or

other identities/interests, and to adapt stimulus so it fits with self or other identities/interests. The second tendency is to process the out-group's identity/interests as the outcome of leadership manipulation, and to process in-group identity/interests as the outcome of group think. The third tendency is to process the out-group's intent to be the management of the in-group's identity/interests, and the in-group tendency to manage the out-group's identity/interests. The fourth tendency is to support parts of another conflict party's social cognitive framework, and to point to cognitive support as the cause for conflict protraction. These processing tendencies lead to a struggle between the conflict parties over how to, and who gets to, establish the social boundaries that define the agents present in the conflicts. The processing tendencies equally result in flexible understandings, which the conflict parties continue to adapt at their will. Rather than being the outcome of cemented understandings, the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts' protraction are thus outcomes of flexible cognition, and rather than being conflicts between groups, they are conflicts over who gets to be a group. This finding fills a gap in the literature as it expands our understanding of the factors that contribute to conflict protraction in Ukraine and Georgia. Apart from this, it is a finding that may function as a complementary study to the material studies of the conflicts, as it points to the importance of cognition in times of conflict and how clashing cognitions may hinder the "rational" pursuit of interests. It is also a finding which is of relevance for conflict resolution attempts, as it points to how we should equally explore potential cognitive struggles before we persuade conflict parties into pursuing common interests.

2.0 Studying Conflicts in the Post-Soviet Space

This chapter will explore the literature written on the conflicts in the post-Soviet space, and the conflicts in Ukraine and Georgia in particular. The first section will delve into the academic developments that have occurred in the study of conflicts from being primarily a state-focused endeavour, to encompass a wide range of theories and actors. This section will particularly draw attention to the inclusion of social psychology in the study of conflicts and how this relates to my research. Following this is a focus on the literature that deals with the conflicts in the post-Soviet space. To provide a more structured insight into this literature, I divide it into three perspectives: the historical/systemic perspective; the Russian/Eurocentric perspective; and the group/individual perspective. Each perspective relates to the overall arguments that scholars express when exploring why the conflicts in the post-Soviet space occurred and sustain. The chapter will end with a section where I situate my research in the existing literature and present the gap that this research will fill.

2.1 The Study of Conflicts

A predominant occupation in the field of International Relations (IR) has been to explore and explain why conflicts occur². To this end, scholars have traditionally focused on why states go to war with an emphasis on the structural and material factors that lead to conflicting state relations³. In the structuralist theories, such as neorealism and realism, scholars take the approach that it is the international structure and the inherent state of anarchy that causes conflicts, as the distribution of power and material factors fluctuate between states⁴. From this viewpoint arises the argument that conflicts are a naturally occurring phenomena as states inevitably clash over limited resources and power. Other theories, such as social constructivism and post-structuralism, have focused on ideational factors and how e.g. identities and norms construct interests and relations, which function as the subsequent foundation for conflicts⁵. In this approach, conflicts are largely caused by the ideas that state actors bring to their interactions with others⁶. The primary causes for conflicts have thus for long been regarded as outcomes of state behaviour and state relations. In the 1980s a new conflict-approach developed as scholars started exploring internal factors within states that

² John Stoessinger. *Why nations go to war*. (Cengage Learning, 2007); and Richard Ned Lebow. *Why nations fight: Past and future motives for war*. (Cambridge University Press, 2010)

³ Oliver Ramsbotham, "Introduction to Conflict Resolution: Concepts and Definitions" in *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, ed. Oliver Ramsbotham, Hugh Miall and Tom Woodhouse (Polity, 2011), 9

⁴ Walter Carlsnaes, "Actors, Structures, and Foreign Policy Analysis." In *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases*, ed. Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield, and Tim Dunne (Oxford University Press, 2016), 119.

⁵ Carlsnaes, "Actors, structures, and foreign policy analysis.", 121 and Ted Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory." *International Security* 23, no. 1 (1998): 171-200.

⁶ John Baylis, Patricia Owens, and Steve Smith. *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 146.

were conducive for conflict⁷. This shift was particularly enhanced with the end of the Cold War where a rise in intrastate conflicts propelled the need to shift academic attention from interstate to intrastate conflicts⁸. The end of the Cold War and its peaceful transfer of power also challenged the realist approach towards conflicts⁹.

What resulted was the creation of a multifaceted approach, which combined fields such as IR, conflict studies, political science, comparative politics, and social psychology¹⁰. Rather than focusing on how conflicts emerged as purely outcomes of state relations, scholars explored how conflicts occurred as an outcome of e.g. insufficient state structures, nation-building attempts, lack of social and economic development¹¹, criminal networks¹², ethnic rivalry¹³, and religion¹⁴. Another focus area was the psychological factors that contribute to conflicts, such as clashing beliefs¹⁵, misperceptions¹⁶, collective needs and fears¹⁷, greed and grievances¹⁸, and collective memories¹⁹. Scholars also included a wider range of actors to the study of conflicts. “Actors” such as civilians, non-state actors, NGOs²⁰, and international organisations²¹ were included to acquire a better understanding of conflicts’ multidimensional characteristics, and how they develop with the presence, intervention, assistance, and influx of others²². The

⁷ Paul van Tongeren, Hans van de Veen, and Juliette Verhoeven. *Searching for Peace in Europe and Eurasia: An Overview of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities*. (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 71

⁸ Tongeren, de Veen, and Verhoeven, *Searching for peace in Europe and Eurasia: An overview of conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities*, 71-72

⁹ Stefano Guzzini. “The Cold War is what we make of it’: when peace research meets constructivism in International Relations.” In *Contemporary security analysis and Copenhagen peace research*, Ed. Stefano Guzzini and Dietrich Jung (Routledge, 2003), 46; and Janice Bially Mattern. *Ordering international politics: identity, crisis and representational force*. (Routledge, 2005)

¹⁰ Herbert Kelman, “Social-psychological dimensions of international conflict”. In *Peacemaking in international conflict: Methods & techniques*, Ed. I.W. Zartman (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2007), 61

¹¹ Ramsbotham, “Introduction to Conflict Resolution: Concepts and Definitions.”, 5.

¹² Svante E. Cornell, “Narcotics and Armed Conflict: Interaction and Implications.” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30, no.3 (2007): 207-227.

¹³ Dietrich Jung, *Shadow Globalization, Ethnic Conflicts and New Wars A Political Economy of Intra-State War*. (Routledge, 2002)

¹⁴ Jonathan Fox, “The Rise of Religion and the Fall of the Civilization Paradigm as Explanations for Intra-State Conflict.” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 20, no. 3 (2007): 361-382

¹⁵ Daniel Bar-tal, “From Intractable Conflict through Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation: Psychological Analysis.” *Political Psychology* 21(2000): 351-365

¹⁶ Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics: New Edition* (Princeton University Press, 2017).

¹⁷ Kelman, “Social-psychological dimensions of international conflict”, 64

¹⁸ Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler. “Greed and Grievance in Civil War” *Oxford Economic Papers* 56, no. 4 (2004): 563-595.

¹⁹ Dario R. Paez and James Hou Fu Liu, “Collective Memory of Conflicts.” In *Intergroup Conflicts and Their Resolution: A Social Psychological Perspective*, Ed. Daniel Bar-tal (Psychology Press, 2011)

²⁰ Tongeren, de Veen, and Verhoeven, *Searching for peace in Europe and Eurasia: An overview of conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities*, 71

²¹ Simon Duke, “The United Nations and Intra-state Conflict.” *International Peacekeeping* 1, no. 4 (1994): 375-93.

²² Kelman, “Social-psychological dimensions of international conflict”, 64

end of the Cold War hence shifted attention to the complexity of conflicts and resulted in a multifaceted outlook on the study of this phenomenon.

This research is rooted in such an outlook as it takes a multidisciplinary approach with the aim of exploring how social cognitive processes and intergroup dynamics contribute to conflict protraction between states and non-state actors. It more specifically draws on IR's social constructivist theory, which it combines with social psychology to acquire a better understanding of the ideational factors at play in the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts. Although I apply a multidisciplinary approach, this does not mean that I seek to construct a new IR theory nor that I am trying to substitute IR theories with those of social psychology. Rather, I root my research in amongst other the work of Herbert Kelman who has also combined IR and social psychology in the study of conflicts. As Kelman explains, there is a need to integrate social psychological dimensions into a more general theory of IR²³. The reason for this is that psychological processes, at both the individual and collective level, constitute and mediate much of the behaviour that defines conflicts²⁴. He also argues that since IR explores notions such as decision making, risk taking, identities, and threat perception, IR already operates with psychological concepts²⁵. Adding social psychology to the study of IR phenomena thus merely offers complementary tools for exploring these issues, rather than functioning as a substitution for any existing theoretical framework. The inclusion of social psychology to the study of conflicts also assists researchers in exploring the less-explored dimensions of conflicts. This includes e.g. how states and non-state actors operate within structures which is an aspect yet to be fully developed in IR, but which may be elaborated with the use of social psychology as it focuses on relations between agents and social systems²⁶. Social psychology with its focus on how behaviour arises from continued situational interactions also offers a more contextual approach to conflicts²⁷. Rather than merely treating conflict protraction as the outcome of relations developed over time, social psychology allows one to explore how negative relations also sustain because of conflict parties' continued interactions. The inclusion of social psychology in IR therefore allows one to dig deeper into the connection between agents and structures.

The field of psychology is often perceived to only focus on the internal processes of the mind and how thoughts and feelings arise and shape certain types of behaviour. To include a social psychological approach to conflicts, however, does not mean that conflicts should be treated as unreal or as merely products of misunderstandings and misperceptions²⁸. Social psychological processes, such as emotional

²³ Ibid, 62

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Susan T. Fiske. *Social Beings: Core Motives in Social Psychology*. (John Wiley & Sons, 2018), 128

²⁸ Kelman, "Social-psychological dimensions of international conflict", 63

and cognitive processes, should be treated as underlying forces that generate differences in how conflict parties construct reality, which results in differing approaches towards conflicts and imposes constraints on the rational pursuit of interests²⁹. By adding social psychology, one emphasises the role ideational factors play and it allows one to explore how conflicts arise as a result of “actions and interactions of large numbers of individuals who, in turn, function through a variety of groups and organizations and who are propelled by collective moods and states of consciousness”³⁰. As Dunne et.al also state, scholars “need to keep asking whether there are processes, objects, ‘things’ that are not caught by the lens we are currently using”³¹. This is the point of departure for this research, as the literature review reveals a gap in the exploration of the ideational factors that may contribute to the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts’ protraction. Ultimately, as Dunne et.al further state, academic disciplines are artificial constructs and so there is no basis for keeping disciplines separate³². On the contrary, the inclusion of social psychology to the study of conflicts may strengthen the field of IR, as social psychological concepts and approaches can support IR’s theoretical claims³³.

Including social psychology to the study of conflicts is a matter of identifying what part of a conflict is neglected and such an analysis is a complementary matter, as the findings become part of a more comprehensive exploration and understanding of the conflict. The exploration of e.g. cognitive processes should thus be combined with e.g. the exploration of material constraints to acquire a holistic understanding of what drives and shapes a given conflict. In this research, I link social constructivism and social psychology to explore a yet to be explored aspect of the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts - namely why the conflicts are protracted and how the continued interaction between conflict parties’ cognitive processing may contribute to this protraction. This research will therefore address one aspect of the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts with the aim of providing a missing piece of the puzzle. Whereas the relation between social constructivism and social psychology will be further elaborated in the theory chapter, this chapter will explore the literature that has been written about the conflicts in the post-Soviet space. This is done to highlight what types of explanations already exist, and to present the gap this research will fill. Although the literature on the conflicts in the post-Soviet space is diverse, it is possible to divide it into three perspectives³⁴. These are: 1) the historical or systemic perspective, where emphasis is on the systemic

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Tim Dunne, Lene Hansen, and Colin Wight. "The end of International Relations theory?" *European Journal of International Relations* 19, no.3 (2013), 419

³² Ibid, 420

³³ Ibid

³⁴ The division of literature into these three perspectives is merely one possible classification. Another example of classification can be found from e.g. Elias Götz. "Russia, the West, and the Ukraine crisis: three contending perspectives." *Contemporary politics* 22, no.3 (2016): 249-266.

changes the Soviet Union imposed upon citizens/states, and the vacuum that occurred following the Soviet Union's collapse. 2) The Russian and Eurocentric perspective, where emphasis is on Russia's behaviour and interests in the post-Soviet space, and how this derives from Russia's relations with the West. Finally, there is the 3) group or individual perspective, which focuses on the role clashing ethnic group relations or elite interests play in causing and sustaining the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts. Although it is possible to divide the literature into these three perspectives, this does not mean that there is no overlap between them, as much of the literature engages with two or more of these perspectives when exploring the conflicts in the post-Soviet space. These three perspectives are, however, provided to give clarity to the content of the existing literature, and to offer an overview for situating my research within the gap found in this literature.

2.1.1 The Historical and Systemic Perspective

Reading through the literature on the conflicts in the post-Soviet space one finds a stark difference in how these conflicts are defined as scholars have approached them as frozen conflicts³⁵, separatist conflicts³⁶, ethnic conflicts³⁷, geopolitical conflicts³⁸, and as conflicts between Russia and a given state³⁹. There is thus from the outset a discrepancy in how to make sense of these conflicts, their primary characteristics, and the parties involved. Despite this, a dominant perspective found in the literature is that the post-Soviet conflicts are an outcome of the ideational and material structures the Soviet Union imposed on its citizens. In this perspective is a recurring argument that the conflicts are predominantly outcomes of the Soviet Union's reliance on ethno-federalism, which increased the chances of conflicts between groups as agents were socially separated based on identity affiliation⁴⁰. As Zurcher and Martin state, the Soviet Union created a context for separatist movements as Soviet leaders were "systematically promoting the national

³⁵ Mykola Kapitonenko, "Resolving Post-Soviet 'Frozen Conflicts': Is Regional Integration Helpful?" *Caucasian Review of International Affairs* 3, no. 1 (2009): 37-44.

³⁶ Dov Lynch, "Separatist States and Post-Soviet Conflicts." *International Affairs* 78, no. 4 (2002): 831-848 and Ivan Katchanovski, "The Separatist War in Donbas: A Violent Break-up of Ukraine?" *European Politics and Society* 17, no. 4 (2016): 473-489.

³⁷ John M. Cotter, "Cultural Security Dilemmas and Ethnic Conflict in Georgia." *Journal of Conflict Studies* 19, no. 1 (1999): 1-27

³⁸ Gerard Toal, "Russia's Kosovo: A Critical Geopolitics of the August 2008 War over South Ossetia." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 49, no. 6 (2008): 670-705; Rein Müllerson, "Ukraine: Victim of Geopolitics." *Chinese Journal of International Law* 13, no. 1 (2014): 133-45; and Hiski Haukkala, "From Cooperative to Contested Europe? The Conflict in Ukraine as a Culmination of a Long-Term Crisis in EU-Russia Relations." *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 23, no. 1 (2015): 25-40.

³⁹ Nona Mikhelidze, "After the 2008 Russia-Georgia War: Implications for the Wider Caucasus." *The International Spectator* 44, no. 3 (2009): 27-42; and Elina Lange-Ionatamishvili and Sanda Svetoka. "Strategic Communications and Social Media in the Russia Ukraine Conflict." In *Cyber War in Perspective: Russian Aggression against Ukraine*, Ed. A. Niglia (IOS Press, 2015)

⁴⁰ Christoph Zurcher, *The Post-Soviet Wars: Rebellion, Ethnic Conflict, and Nationhood in the Caucasus* (New York University Press, 2007) and Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Cornell University Press, 2001), 1

consciousness of its ethnic minorities and establishing for them many of the characteristic institutional forms of the nation-state”⁴¹. Once the Soviet Union collapsed, a power vacuum occurred and the space for separatism and conflicts flourished. This argument is contrasted by Gellner who argues that the Soviet Union did not create the foundation for the post-Soviet conflicts, as the Soviet Union contained conflicts that had historically existed between groups in the area⁴². The post-Soviet conflicts that occurred in the early 1990s were therefore unleashed ethnic conflicts, which had existed prior to the Soviet Union’s establishment.

Another dominant argument is that the post-Soviet conflicts were not outcomes of, or held in place by, the Soviet Union per se. They instead arose in the wake of the Soviet Union’s collapse as the post-Soviet states started to engage in (often) failed state- and nation-building attempts⁴³, as well as struggled with deep socioeconomic crises that spun grievances and divided nations along ethnic lines⁴⁴. Wanner and Kolstø e.g. point to how tensions emerged between non-Russians and ethnic Russians, as the collapse of the Soviet Union changed the status of ethnic Russians from being “members of the dominant nationality of a multinational state” into a diaspora⁴⁵. This social change played a role in the increased instability in the post-Soviet space, as the presence and demands of the Russian diaspora complicated the construction of unified national identities⁴⁶. This argument is also found in the analyses of the Ukraine conflict where the non-state actors in Eastern Ukraine tend to be defined as “ethnic Russians” or “Pro-Russians” who are struggling to reunite with Russia and/or re-establish the times under the Soviet Union⁴⁷. From this viewpoint it is argued that the Soviet Union imposed a form of “colonial legacy” on the post-Soviet states through various Soviet nationality policies⁴⁸. This legacy explains the occurrence of conflicts in the area as states have since struggled to reclaim a national historiography devoid of Soviet myths and legends⁴⁹.

⁴¹ Martin. *The affirmative action empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*, 1

⁴² Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1997)

⁴³ James Hughes and Gwendolyn Sasse, “Comparing Regional and Ethnic Conflicts in Post-Soviet Transition States.” *Regional & Federal Studies* 11, no. 3 (2001), 28; and Catherine Wanner, *Burden of Dreams: History and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine* (Penn State Press, 2010), 11; and Barnett Rubin and Jack Snyder. *Post-Soviet Political Order*. (Routledge, 2002).

⁴⁴ Leokadia Drobizheva, Rose Gottemoeller, Catherine McArdle Kelleher, and Lee Walker. *Ethnic Conflict in the Post-Soviet World: Case Studies and Analysis: Case Studies and Analysis*. (Routledge, 2015).

⁴⁵ Wanner, *Burden of Dreams: History and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine* (Penn State Press, 2010), 13

⁴⁶ Pål Kolstø, “The New Russian Diaspora - An Identity of Its Own? Possible Identity Trajectories for Russians in the Former Soviet Republic.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 19, no 3 (1996): 609

⁴⁷ Al-Khateeb, Samer, and Nitin Agarwal. “Understanding Strategic Information Manoeuvres in Network Media to Advance Cyber Operations: A Case Study Analysing Pro-Russian Separatists’ Cyber Information Operations in Crimean Water Crisis.” *Journal on Baltic Security* 2, no 1 (2017): 6-27; Dmitri Trenin, “The Revival of the Russian Military; How Moscow Reloaded.” *Foreign Affairs* 95 (2016), 23

⁴⁸ Taras Kuzio. "History, memory and nation building in the post-Soviet colonial space." *Nationalities Papers* 30, no.2 (2002): 241-264.

⁴⁹ Ibid

As seen, there are diverging arguments regarding the role the Soviet Union played in shaping the post-Soviet conflicts, and the extent to which these conflicts existed prior to the Soviet Union or were outcomes of developments that ensued following its collapse. What unites this literature is that the Soviet Union played a role in shaping the conflicts, as the Soviet Union either imposed or disrupted material and ideational divisions, which states have since struggled to change and unify. The Soviet Union functioned as a catalyst for containing or defining e.g. identities and it led to relations that now make up the post-Soviet space and the conflicts within it. In the historic/systemic literature it is thus inferred that the conflicts are products of the past and structures generated over time. This is of interest as it indicates that the Ukraine and Georgia conflict parties are responding to factors largely beyond their control. From this perspective, the conflict parties are not responding to outcomes produced in the conflicts but to the ideational and material structures that they find themselves in. The historic/systemic perspective hence confines the conflicts to the systems and structures that were imposed upon citizens, and it approaches the conflicts, and the continuous interactions that unfold in such contexts, as mainly outcomes of history. It may, however, be argued that the post-Soviet conflicts are not only outcomes of historical developments as the conflict parties' relations are also shaped by the stimuli that they continue to produce in the conflict situation. There is hence a contextual aspect to these conflicts which the historical/systemic perspective neglects, but which this research addresses as it explores how relations between conflict parties equally form and sustain as part of the interactions that take place in the conflicts. This does not mean that this research treats the Georgia and Ukraine conflicts as ahistorical phenomena, but that it draws in contextuality to explore how conflict protraction may also emerge from continued interactions.

2.1.2 The Russian and Eurocentric Perspective

The other perspective that dominates the literature on the conflicts in the post-Soviet space is the Russian and Eurocentric perspective, which perceives the conflicts as outcomes of Russia's behaviour and Russia's relations with "the West". In this literature, there is an argument that the conflicts in Ukraine and Georgia are outcomes of a rivalry that occurred between Russia and the West following the end of the Cold War⁵⁰. In his work on the Ukraine conflict, Mearsheimer argues that the annexation of Crimea, and the conflict that followed, is the result of the West's failure to acknowledge Ukraine's strategic importance⁵¹. Here the conflict is put into the context of NATO and EU's expansion, as it is argued that this expansion resulted in

⁵⁰ Ronald Asmus, *A Little War That Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West*. (St. Martin's Press, 2010)

⁵¹ John Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin." *Foreign Affairs* 93 (2014): 1-12.

conflicting structural conditions⁵². Adding to this argument is also the point, that the conflicts in the post-Soviet space can be regarded as a Russian reaction towards an increasingly liberal world order⁵³. On the other hand we find scholars such as Götz who points to the geopolitical nature of the conflicts, as he argues that Russia's behaviour in Ukraine was a response to Ukraine's geographic location; the EU's activism in Eastern Ukraine; and the new Kiev government's pro-Western orientation⁵⁴. In connection to this argument we find Tuathail who argues that the 2008 events in Georgia occurred because of, amongst other, Georgian leaderships' dismissal of Georgia's geopolitical position⁵⁵. When Georgian leadership started moving towards NATO and EU, they neglected the geopolitical context they found themselves in which, combined with Russia's great power ambitions, assisted in fuelling the conflict⁵⁶. In contrast to this is, however, Raik who argues that the Ukraine conflict should not be understood as a battle over "who controls the region" but a conflict over the norms and values of the European order that defines "Ukraine's place in Europe"⁵⁷. Others have moved beyond a focus on Europe and instead point to the issue of uni- and multipolarity and how Russia is seeking to improve its international standing by creating a sphere of influence in its neighbourhood through amongst other the use of conflicts⁵⁸. Here scholars such as Abushov argue that Russia is interested in keeping the post-Soviet conflicts intact as "controlled instability" allows Russia to establish a balance of power⁵⁹. To re-establish Russia's power, as it enjoyed during the Cold War, Russia deploys a strategy of "occupation without occupation" where it seeks to create a "cultural construction of fear and intimidation"⁶⁰. This is equally stressed by Kapitonenko, Toal and Dunn et.al who argue that the creation of conflicts is a central part of Russia's foreign policy tools⁶¹, as this prevents post-Soviet states

⁵² Walter Carlsnaes, "Actors, Structures, and Foreign Policy Analysis." In *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases*, Ed. Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield, and Tim Dunne (Oxford University Press, 2016); and Hiski Haukkala. "From Cooperative to Contested Europe? The Conflict in Ukraine as a Culmination of a Long-Term Crisis in EU–Russia Relations." *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 23, no.1 (2015): 25-40.

⁵³ Suzanne Loftus and Roger E. Kanet. "The Russian challenge to the liberal world order." In *Routledge Handbook of Russian Security*. Ed. By Robert Kanet (Routledge, 2019)

⁵⁴ Götz, Elias. "It's geopolitics, stupid: explaining Russia's Ukraine policy." *Global Affairs* 1, no.1 (2015): 3-10.

⁵⁵ Tuathail, Gearóid Ó. "Russia's Kosovo: a critical geopolitics of the August 2008 war over South Ossetia." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 49, no.6 (2008): 670-705.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 698

⁵⁷ Raik, Kristi. "The Ukraine crisis as a conflict over Europe's political, economic and security order." *Geopolitics* 24.1 (2019): 51-70.

⁵⁸ Stephen Blank, "Russian and the Black Sea's Frozen Conflicts in Strategic Perspective." *Mediterranean Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (2008): 23-54

⁵⁹ Kavus Abushov. "Policing the near Abroad: Russian Foreign Policy in the South Caucasus." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 63, no. 2 (2009): 187-212.

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Cullen Dunn and Michael S. Bobick. "The Empire Strikes Back: War without War and Occupation without Occupation in the Russian Sphere of Influence." *American Ethnologist* 41.3 (2014): 405

⁶¹ Mykola Kapitonenko, "Resolving Post-Soviet 'Frozen Conflicts': Is Regional Integration Helpful?" *Caucasian Review of International Affairs* 3, no. 1 (2009): 37-44; and Gerard Toal, "Russia's Kosovo: A Critical Geopolitics of the August 2008 War over South Ossetia." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 49, no. 6 (2008): 670-705

from joining the NATO/EU and ensures a situation where Russia may re-establish the Russian empire⁶². The Georgia and Ukraine conflicts are thus calculated outcomes that Russia has set in motion to counter the shifts in power that followed the end of the Cold War.

In conjunction to this viewpoint is the argument that, although driven by power, Russia's behaviour is primarily shaped by a wish to gain "respect and recognition rather than territorial enlargement or the need to dominate per se"⁶³. Russia's behaviour in the post-Soviet space should not be regarded as an attempt to resurrect an empire, as Russia's actions in e.g. Georgia was an attempt to counter US' influence and reshape the post-Soviet space in Russia's favour⁶⁴. Allison also argues that the geopolitical account of the Ukraine conflict is insufficient in explaining the cause of the conflict⁶⁵. The Ukraine conflict rather derives from increased tensions in Ukraine-Russia relations and from Russia's domestic considerations, as Russia's actions in Ukraine could be used to silence internal opposition to Vladimir Putin's centralised rule and prevent the occurrence of colour revolutions inside Russia⁶⁶. Alongside this argument is the claim that Russia's behaviour in Ukraine came as a response to the "Ukrainian nationalist politics that alienated the country's ethnic Russian community" as such policies opened a window for Crimea's annexation⁶⁷. Freedman and Treisman, on the other hand, argue that Crimea's annexation, and the following Ukraine conflict, did not occur as the result of a long-held strategy, but as the result of an impulsive Russian decision with no clear end point⁶⁸. Also, rather than imperial ambitions per se, Russia was driven by a material interest of maintaining control over the Black Sea Fleet and gaining access to new maritime territorial claims⁶⁹. Finally, one finds the argument that Russia's behaviour in the post-Soviet space should be treated from a comparative perspective, as Russia's behaviour in Georgia came as a response to Kosovo's independence and the West's failure to dismiss Russia's assertive behaviour in Moldova⁷⁰. Another

⁶² Dunn and Bobick. "The Empire Strikes Back: War without War and Occupation without Occupation in the Russian Sphere of Influence.", 405-406

⁶³ Roy Allison, "Russia Resurgent? Moscow's Campaign to 'Coerce Georgia to Peace.'" *International Affairs* 84, no. 6 (2008): 1171; and Jeffrey Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 24

⁶⁴ Charles King, "The Five-Day War: Managing Moscow After the Georgia Crisis." *Foreign Affairs* 87, (2008): 11

⁶⁵ Roy Allison, "Russian 'Deniable' Intervention in Ukraine: How and Why Russia Broke the Rules." *International Affairs* 90, no. 6 (2014):1296

⁶⁶ Allison, "Russian 'Deniable' Intervention in Ukraine: How and Why Russia Broke the Rules.", 1296

⁶⁷ Sergey Salushev. "Annexation of Crimea: Causes, Analysis and Global Implications." *Global Societies Journal* 2 (2014), 44

⁶⁸ Lawrence Freedman, "Ukraine and the Art of Limited War." *Survival* 56, no. 6 (2014): 7-38; Daniel Treisman. "Why Putin Took Crimea: The Gambler in the Kremlin." *Foreign Affairs* 95, no. 3 (2016): 47-54

⁶⁹ Biersack, John, and Shannon O'lear. "The geopolitics of Russia's annexation of Crimea: narratives, identity, silences, and energy." *Eurasian geography and economics* 55, no.3 (2014): 247-269.

⁷⁰ Allen C Lynch, "The Realism of Russia's Foreign Policy." *Europe - Asia Studies* 53, 1 (2001): 7-31; Richard G. Whitman and Stefan Wolff. "The EU as a Conflict Manager? The Case of Georgia and Its Implications." *International Affairs* 86, no. 1 (2010): 87-107.

dominant argument in the literature is thus that the conflicts in the post-Soviet space should be explained by looking at Russia's national interests and Russia's standing vis-à-vis the West.

In connection to these arguments is literature that explores the role identities play in shaping Russia's behaviour in the post-Soviet space. Here Europe plays a central role as it is argued that Russia's self-understanding derives from the other-understanding of Europe, and that this self/other understanding is central in explaining why Russia behaves the way it does in the post-Soviet space⁷¹. Amongst other Hopf argues that Russia's national identity discourse made the annexation of Crimea and the intervention in Eastern Ukraine thinkable and natural, and this discourse evolved as a response to the West's actions and to the internal developments within Russia⁷². Bassin has had a similar focus but he argues that Russia's identity discourse emerges from the geopolitical position Russia has as neither a European nor an Asian state⁷³. On the other hand, are scholars such as Prizel who points to how different intellectual groups within Russia have had an influence on Russia's national identity formation⁷⁴. Although these Russian schools differ in their approach, they believe that Russia is a distinct civilization whose "survival depends on preserving a way of life that is different from, if not contrary to, the civilizations of the West"⁷⁵. There is also work that focuses on how Russia's identity has developed alongside changes in "self-identification and prioritizations of Russia as a security actor"⁷⁶. On the other side of the spectrum, one finds Morozov et.al who have focused on how Russia as "the other" has shaped Europe's identity discourse⁷⁷. Relations, and particularly worsening relations, between Russia and the West have thus been drawn in when explaining the formation of a distinct Russian identity. Scholars such as Heller e.g. point to how Russia's behaviour to a great extent is driven by a moral expectation about Russia's social status in world politics, which derives from "negative experiences of status deprivation and misrecognition by the West throughout the post-Cold

⁷¹ Iver B. Neumann. *Russia and the idea of Europe: a study in identity and international relations*. (Routledge, 2013)

⁷² Ted Hopf. "Crimea is ours': A discursive history." *International Relations* 30, no.2 (2016): 227-255; and Andrei P. Tsygankov, *Russia's foreign policy: change and continuity in national identity*. (Rowman & Littlefield, 2019); and Rick Fawn. *Ideology and National Identity in Post-communist Foreign Policy*. (Routledge, 2004); and Luke March. "Is Nationalism Rising in Russian Foreign Policy?: The Case of Georgia." *Demokratizatsiya* 19, no.3 (2011); and Edward Lucas. *The new Cold War: how the Kremlin menaces both Russia and the West*. (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009).

⁷³ Mark Bassin "Russia between Europe and Asia: the ideological construction of geographical space." *Slavic review* 50, no.1 (1991): 1-17.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 241

⁷⁵ Ibid, 256

⁷⁶ Aglaya Snetkov. *Russia's Security Policy under Putin: A critical perspective*. (Routledge, 2014), 2

⁷⁷ Viatcheslav Morozov and Bahar Rumelili. "The external constitution of European identity: Russia and Turkey as Europe-makers." *Cooperation and Conflict* 47, no.1 (2012): 28-48.; and Viatcheslav Morozov. "Western hegemony, global democracy and the Russian challenge." In *The struggle for the West: A divided and contested legacy*. Ed. by Christopher Browning and Marko Lehti (2009)

War era”⁷⁸. To understand Russia, and the role identity plays in shaping Russia’s behaviour in Ukraine, one thus needs to draw in the aspect of emotions. Casier, on the other hand, points to cognition as he argues that the worsening relations between EU and Russia resulted from attribution biases where both parties gradually processed behaviour from the perception of the other’s negative geopolitical ambitions⁷⁹. This is echoed by Nitoiu who points to how the Ukraine conflict is the physical manifestation of a conflict/cooperation dichotomy that for long has characterised EU-Russia relations⁸⁰. To this argument one also finds the work of Korosteleva, who points to how the “speech war” in Ukraine was not about Ukraine per se, but about the EU and Russia and their exclusive identities⁸¹. In this literature there is hence overall a focus on how Russia’s self/other understanding has formed vis-à-vis the West, and how this has shaped the interests Russia pursues and the behaviour it engages with in the post-Soviet space.

Although this Russia/West-centred literature addresses the material and ideational structures that shape developments in the post-Soviet space, it neglects the role of other actors in shaping the post-Soviet conflicts. In this literature, the Georgian state and the de-facto South Ossetian government e.g. are often rendered voiceless and to a great extent without agency, as they are treated as victims or followers that either had to succumb to, or chose to, support Russia’s interests. This tendency to omit or reduce small states and particularly non-state actors in the study of conflicts has consistently characterised the field of IR. As Barkawi and Laffey state, conflicts are in IR traditionally treated as struggles between great powers, which is an outcome of a Eurocentric perspective that has led to a misrepresentation of the South and non-state actors in shaping conflicts and security threats⁸². To understand conflicts, scholars need to approach the North and South, state and non-states, as mutually constitutive in “making history”⁸³. There is a need to reformulate “the categories we deploy to make sense of both past and present security relations”⁸⁴. Although other fields, such as social psychology, place “the weak and the strong” in a “common analytical framework”, IR continues to focus on the strong⁸⁵. There is therefore a gap in exploring relations between weak/strong states and states/non-states in IR, which also extends to the study of the Georgia and Ukraine

⁷⁸ Regina Heller. "Russia’s Power Politics Towards Ukraine: Social Status Concerns and the Role of Emotions." In *Russia in the Changing International System*. Ed. Emel Parlar dal and Emre Erşen (Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2020)

⁷⁹ Tom Casier, “From Logic of Competition to Conflict: Understanding the Dynamics of EU–Russia Relations.” *Contemporary Politics* 22, no. 3 (2016): 376-394

⁸⁰ Cristian Nitoiu, “Towards Conflict or Cooperation? The Ukraine Crisis and EU-Russia Relations.” *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea* 16, no 3 (2016): 375-390

⁸¹ Elena A. Korosteleva "The European Union, Russia and the Eastern region: The analytics of government for sustainable cohabitation." *Cooperation and Conflict* 51, no.3 (2016): 365-383.

⁸² Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey. "The postcolonial moment in security studies." *Review of International Studies* 32. No 2 (2006): 329-330

⁸³ Ibid

⁸⁴ Ibid

⁸⁵ Ibid, 332-333

conflict. An objective of this research is thus to explore this state/non-state relation by focusing on relations between Georgia, Ukraine, Russia, South Ossetia, and the Donetsk People's Republic, and how these relations contribute to the conflicts' protractions. I do so from the argument that to fully understand the ideational factors at play in the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts, there is a need to include the processes that form, sustain, and change relations between states and non-states. There is thus a need to move beyond the dominant argument that the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts can merely be explained by referring to Russia/West relations.

2.1.3 The Group and Individual Perspective

The literature on the conflicts in the post-Soviet space also includes a group and individual perspective. Here it is argued that the conflicts in the post-Soviet space, and in Georgia and Ukraine in particular, are outcomes of ethnic group relations or individual interests. In the literature on group relations, the Georgia conflict is sustained by a patron-client relationship between Russia, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia⁸⁶. The conflict's protraction is an outcome of group relations where Russia's hegemony prevents the non-state actors from establishing external relations with others such as the EU⁸⁷. There is generally a dominant argument in scholarly literature and policy circles that the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts are outcomes of Russia's patronage⁸⁸. Scholars such as O'Loughlin et.al, however, argue that Russia's policies are not necessarily imposed upon the non-state actors, but are a welcome feature as relations with Russia assists the non-state actors in ensuring their interests⁸⁹. The local elite in South Ossetia are not "compliant instruments of Russian influence"⁹⁰. The Georgia conflict instead draws on historically conflictual relations where the fight between ethnic and cultural groups over territory, perceived as the cradle of each group's identity, is the root cause of the conflict's occurrence and continuation⁹¹. Here, the South Ossetians view Russia as a military mean for protecting their ancestral territory and so South Ossetia-Russia relations is a mutual benefitting partnership⁹². An aligning argument is that the Georgia conflict is an outcome of a security dilemma between the Georgian and Ossetian ethnic groups, as each group's aspiration for

⁸⁶ Andre W.M. Gerrits and Max Bader. "Russian Patronage over Abkhazia and South Ossetia: Implications for Conflict Resolution." *East European Politics* 32, no. 3 (2016): 306

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ George Mchedlishvili "Viewpoint: What's behind Russia's actions in Georgia?" *BBC*, August 10, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33675488>; and Robert Ortung and Christopher Walker, "Putin's Frozen Conflicts" *Foreign Policy*, February 13, 2015, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/02/13/putins-frozen-conflicts/>

⁸⁹ John O'Loughlin, Vladimir Kolossov, and Gerard Toal. "Inside the Post-Soviet de Facto States: A Comparison of Attitudes in Abkhazia, Nagorny Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Transnistria." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 55, no 5 (2014): 423-456

⁹⁰ O'Loughlin, Kolossov, and Toal. "Inside the Post-Soviet de Facto States: A Comparison of Attitudes in Abkhazia, Nagorny Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Transnistria.", 427

⁹¹ Ibid

⁹² Ibid

independence (to ensure their cultural heritage) led to a conflict between them⁹³. Garb also points to how the Georgia conflict occurred and sustains from the South Ossetian's lack of trust in the West and Georgia following the 2008 events⁹⁴. In this literature it is thus argued that the conflict in Georgia occurred and sustains as a result of group relations and interests, but equally so as a result of "group think" where ethnic groups have come to perceive each-other as a threat.

Whereas the Georgia conflict has mainly been approached from a group perspective, the Ukraine conflict has to a greater extent been approached from a leadership perspective. In this literature, there is a tendency to approach the Ukraine conflict as an outcome of Vladimir Putin's personality and interests, as it is argued that Putin's competitive logic has shaped Russia's military strategy⁹⁵. Similar is said for Russia's foreign policy, which has been treated as the outcome of Putin's personality or as stated by Lo: "Russian foreign policy[...]is intimately associated with Putin the individual"⁹⁶. Forsberg et.al argue that Russia's behaviour in Ukraine can partially be explained by including a psychological analysis of Putin as a decision maker⁹⁷. Others have argued that the conflict in Ukraine, and Russia's behaviour in this regard, cannot be explained by merely pointing at Putin. O'Loughlin et.al argue that the project of Novorossiia was largely launched and sustained by intellectuals and aspiring local politicians inside Ukraine⁹⁸. The conflict is instead an outcome of identity politics where Ukrainian political elites manipulated identities that Russia later used to justify its actions with⁹⁹. The Ukraine conflict is also treated as an outcome of domestic bargaining failures and commitment problems between Ukrainian political actors¹⁰⁰. Rather than identity politics, the conflict is rooted in failed power-sharing arrangements, which prompted separatists to take up arms¹⁰¹. Katchanovski similarly points to how elites amongst the separatists, the Yanukovich regime, the Maidan opposition and government, far-right organizations, the EU, and the US all misrepresented the demands that occurred amongst the Donbass population¹⁰². The Ukraine conflict thus

⁹³ Cotter "Cultural Security Dilemmas and Ethnic Conflict in Georgia." *Journal of Conflict Studies* 19, no. 1 (1999): 1-27; and Laurence Broers, "Filling the Void: Ethnic Politics and Nationalities Policy in Post-Conflict Georgia." *Nationalities Papers* 36, no. 2 (2008): 275-304.

⁹⁴ Paula Garb, "The View from Abkhazia of South Ossetia Ablaze." *Central Asian Survey* 28, no 2 (2009): 235-246

⁹⁵ Thomas, Timothy. "Russia's military strategy and Ukraine: Indirect, asymmetric—and Putin-led." *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 28, no.3 (2015): 445-461.

⁹⁶ Bobo Lo. *Vladimir Putin and the evolution of Russian foreign policy*. (John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 3.

⁹⁷ Tuomas Forsberg and Christer Pursiainen. "The psychological dimension of Russian foreign policy: Putin and the annexation of Crimea." *Global Society* 31, no.2 (2017): 220-244.

⁹⁸ O'Loughlin, Toal, and Kolosov. "The Rise and Fall of 'Novorossiia': Examining Support for a Separatist Geopolitical Imaginary in Southeast Ukraine." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 33, no 2 (2017): 124-144.

⁹⁹ Tatiana Zhurzhenko, "A Divided Nation? Reconsidering the Role of Identity Politics in the Ukraine Crisis." *Die Friedens-Warte* 89, no. 1/2 (2014): 249-267.

¹⁰⁰ Julia Strasheim "Power-Sharing, Commitment Problems, and Armed Conflict in Ukraine." *Civil Wars* 18, no 1 (2016): 26

¹⁰¹ Strasheim "Power-Sharing, Commitment Problems, and Armed Conflict in Ukraine.", 26-27

¹⁰² Ivan Katchanovski, "The Separatist War in Donbas: A Violent Break-up of Ukraine?" *European Politics and Society* 17, no. 4 (2016): 473-489.

emerged because of grievances inside Ukraine, which were either manipulated or miscalculated by elites and state actors. In addition to explaining the Ukraine conflict as an outcome of Russia/West relations, is hence also the argument that the conflict was forged from individual interests and missteps.

Whereas there is a tendency in the Georgia conflict to focus on group relations, there is in the Ukraine conflict a tendency to focus on leadership. Both perspectives omit certain aspects of the conflicts particularly those pertaining to agency and relations between leaders and citizens. In the Georgia conflict, the focus on groups omits the role of individuals in shaping the situation and it approaches the conflict as an outcome of “group think”. Here there is no further exploration of who is speaking and how group members come to behave from an understanding of collective belonging. In Ukraine, focus is on leaders with little attention as to how leaders’ personality come to shape the behaviour of their citizens. Citizens are rather treated as puppets who automatically adopt the identity of their leaders and act on behalf of these leaders’ personal interests. Further exploration of what links leaders and citizens, and how leaders and groups can create and sustain a conflict, is lacking. According to Wendt, this group/individual perspective derives from the tendency in IR to attribute human properties to states, whilst at the same time treating states as non-human¹⁰³. This blurs the human processes that allow groups to “think and act” collectively. It may, however, be argued that to understand why conflicts become protracted and how individuals and groups shape such protraction, there is a need to move beyond the individual/group divide and address how collective behaviour is rooted in processes of group belonging managed by individuals¹⁰⁴. It is by exploring the role group identities play in transforming individual agency into group behaviour that one may bridge this divide. When doing so, conflicts do not merely become outcomes of groups per se or individuals. Conflicts can instead be treated as outcomes of ideational processes that mobilise collectives and offer citizens and leaders a lens through which the situation is viewed and from which actions arise¹⁰⁵. When we approach conflict protraction as an outcome of group identity formation and maintenance, this deconstructs our understanding of who is acting and how relations form between perceived protagonist and antagonist. This approach also allows one to apply a common analytical framework to the study of state/non-state relations as it treats all actors as group identities that are used for sense-making in times of conflict¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰³ Alexander Wendt. "The state as person in international theory." *Review of international Studies* 30, no.2 (2004): 289-316.

¹⁰⁴ Rogers Brubaker. "Neither Individualism nor ‘Groupism’ A Reply to Craig Calhoun." *Ethnicities* 3, no. 4 (2003): 555

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 554

¹⁰⁶ Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey. "The postcolonial moment in security studies." *Review of International Studies* 32, No 2 (2006): 332-333

The focus on group identity management equally addresses the tendency in IR to approach identities as the outcome of a leadership-citizen hierarchy¹⁰⁷. In e.g. foreign policy analysis, state leaders are granted the agency to act and think on behalf of the state they represent¹⁰⁸. This diminishes collective behaviour to a matter of puppetry and excludes citizens' agency. Focus on identity management, on the other hand, allows one to explore how group identities form from a mutual reciprocal relation between leaders and citizens. When doing so, the leader is still granted agency, but the group identity that unites leaders and citizens is not merely an outcome of unilateralism but rooted in a dialogue because as Wendt states:

States and their members (citizens) are dynamically interdependent. The behaviour of citizens causally produces and reproduces states over time, and that behaviour is in turn shaped by states. And they are also mutually constitutive. A state only exists in virtue of citizens and their practices (bottom-up constitution), and the identities of those citizens and practices only exist in virtue of the state (top-down)¹⁰⁹

When addressing states and non-states as group identities, one can explore conflicts as joint efforts that are equally upheld by leaders and citizens. This is the approach taken in this research as I explore conflict protraction from the issue of how group identities occur and are maintained from a dialogue between leaders and citizens. This allows me to explore the ideational aspect of protracted conflicts and it also addresses the agent-structure dilemma of IR, as it explains and explores how agents can produce/reproduce/transform structures and how these structures enable/constrain agents' actions¹¹⁰.

2.2 The Gap in the Literature

The three perspectives outlined in the previous sections each have limitations in terms of explaining why the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts sustain. These limitations are e.g. a lack of literature which explains how conflict protraction occurs from agency and interactions, and not merely long-held and imposed structures. There is also a lack of literature which explains the role relations between states and non-state actors play in times of conflict, how and why individuals engage in collective behaviour, and how groups come to "think". To account for these gaps, this research will approach the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts with attention to contextuality; state/non-state relations; and group identity management as this allows me to dig into the processes that may assist in sustaining the conflicts. Another contribution this research will make

¹⁰⁷ Valerie M. Hudson and Benjamin S. Day. *Foreign policy analysis: classic and contemporary theory*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2019.

¹⁰⁸ Valerie M. Hudson "Foreign policy analysis: Actor-specific theory and the ground of international relations." *Foreign policy analysis* (2005): 1-30.

¹⁰⁹ Wendt. "The state as person in international theory", 308

¹¹⁰ Roxanne Lynn Doty "Aporia: A critical exploration of the agent-structure problematique in international relations theory." *European Journal of International Relations* 3, no.3 (1997), 367

is to address the conflicts' protraction specifically. As seen in the previous sections, there is a tendency in the literature to primarily focus on the cause of the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts. Limited focus is on the conflicts' protraction and if so, the causes of protraction are regarded as the same that caused the conflicts. As stated by Crocker et.al, however, the source of conflict protraction is rarely the same as the source of conflict outbreak. As they further state: "no matter what issues formed the foundation for the initial conflict, a number of other elements will come into the mix to augment or even supplant the original disputes"¹¹¹. This development is amongst other linked to the continued interactions between the conflict parties but also to the increased involvement of other actors, as well as social, cultural, political, and economic developments that may occur around the conflicts¹¹². There is thus a need to establish the specific aspects that may contribute to conflict protraction and these, I argue, may be explained by drawing on a contextual approach and particularly by exploring how group identities form in relation to the continued interactions that occur between the conflict parties in the conflict context.

This research hence draws attention to the continued creation and reinforcement of social boundaries¹¹³. As Neumann states "Students of international relations have studied physical and economic borders for a long time. The concern with these types of boundaries needs to be complemented by a focus on how *social* boundaries between human collectives are maintained"¹¹⁴. To focus on how group identities are formed and sustained in interactions between the conflict parties, is to explore how these parties continuously seek to construct an order of shared knowledge from their interactions, which they can use for the pursuit of interests¹¹⁵. The focus on processes of social boundary formation allows one to explore the factors that put constraints on the rational pursuit of interests, or constraints on the rational implementation of conflict resolution efforts. This is of relevance to the study of the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts where the conflict parties continue to dismiss conflict resolution efforts, whose primary objective is to ensure that clashing interests and concerns are addressed. An example is the Minsk Agreements in Ukraine, which all parties have agreed are conducive for ending the conflict, but which they continuously fail to implement. Another is the Sochi agreement in Georgia or the creation of a non-use of force agreement, which equally have failed to be implemented and instrumental in ending the conflict. This may imply that there are continued processes of boundary formations within the conflict parties' interactions, which need to be

¹¹¹ Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela R. Aall. *Grasping the nettle: Analyzing cases of intractable conflict*. (US Institute of Peace Press, 2005), 5

¹¹² Edward E. Azar *The management of protracted social conflicts: Theory and cases*. (Dartmouth Publishing Company, 1990); and Ho-Won Jeong. *Conflict management and resolution: an introduction*. (Routledge, 2009), 36.

¹¹³ Iver B. Neumann "Self and other in international relations." *European Journal of International Relations* 2, no.2 (1996), 167

¹¹⁴ Ibid

¹¹⁵ Janice Bially Mattern. *Ordering international politics: identity, crisis and representational force*. (Routledge, 2005), 3

unravelling to understand why the conflicts continue to exist. This research hence focuses on the processes that shape these boundaries and the resulting intergroup dynamics that arise from their interactions. It is by exploring this aspect that this research contributes to the IR literature on the conflicts in post-Soviet space and the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts in particular.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter presented the gap in the literature that this research will fill. The gap is a lack of literature which deals with why the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts are protracted, and the role continued interactions between states' and non-states' group identity management play in this regard. In the existing literature there is a tendency to treat conflict protraction and conflict outbreak as the same. There is also a tendency to approach the conflicts in the post-Soviet space from either a historic/systemic perspective; Russia/Eurocentric perspective; or individual/group perspective. In the literature it is argued that the conflicts in the post-Soviet space are either: consequences of the Soviet Union's collapse and/or a result of the social and political changes this system imposed on the post-Soviet states; outcomes of Russia's interests and relations with the West; or outcomes of ethnic group relations or leadership interests. I, however, argue that there is a need to approach conflict protraction as something separate from conflict outbreak, and a need to explore how social boundaries continue to form and sustain as a result of the continued interactions that states and non-states engage in. This research hence emphasises the cognitive processes that shape self/other understandings and how these processes interact to form intergroup dynamics.

This does not imply that this research dismisses the issue of e.g. history, power, and material interests in shaping conflict protraction. Each of these aspects offer insight into the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts' characteristics. But it does imply that this research addresses a yet to be explored aspect of the conflicts, which is essential for understanding why the Ukraine and Georgia conflict parties continue to engage in violence and deny the implementation of conflict resolution efforts proposed to them. To this end, this research will draw in social psychology as it allows me to explore the cognitive processes that lead to self/other understandings. This will, however, not stand alone as social psychology's combination with social constructivism allows me to explore how such processes manifest into discursive practices. The inclusion of social psychology to the study of conflicts is thus not meant to replace any existing IR framework, but is a complementary approach as it allows one to dig deeper into the human subtleties that contribute to conflict protraction.

3.0. Theories of Protracted Conflicts and Intergroup Dynamics

In this chapter I lay out the theoretical framework used to explore the role that ideational factors play in shaping conflict protraction. The chapter will start by presenting the multidisciplinary approach applied, which combines social constructivism and social psychology. In this section, I present how and why social constructivism and social psychology can be linked, and why their combination is beneficial for the study of conflict protraction. It will then proceed to present the theories and concepts applied, including social cognitive processing, social identity theory, attribution theory, and opposed conflict narratives. In combination, these theories and concepts allow me to explain how negative interactions between conflict parties may occur as a result of cognitive processes that partition situations and agents around a group-prism, and how conflicts may become protracted as a result of these interacting understandings.

3.1 Linking Social Psychology with Social Constructivism

This research is based on a multidisciplinary approach as I link social psychology with social constructivism to address how ideational factors shape protracted conflicts. Social constructivism is an IR theory that explores the construction of social reality within the realm of international politics¹¹⁶. Unlike the more traditional structuralist IR theories, such as structural realism that regards the role of agents as determined by their relative position in an international system structured along material capabilities, social constructivism approaches agents and structures as co-constitutive¹¹⁷. Thus, rather than treating the world “as it is, constructivism sees the world as a project under construction as *becoming* rather than being”¹¹⁸. According to social constructivist scholars, the social world is comprised of intersubjective understandings, subjective knowledge and material objects, and so social facts, such as identities and interests, are rooted in collective understandings and discourses¹¹⁹. Social facts such as who we/they are and what we/they want, depend on social knowledge being attached to the physical reality¹²⁰. Social constructivism questions the realist argument that the world is a physical reality that can be grasped and challenges the explanation that state behaviour occurs as merely a response to clashing material interests or shifting distributions of

¹¹⁶ Emanuel Adler, “Constructivism in International Relations: Sources, Contributions, and Debates.” In *Handbook of International Relations*, Ed. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A Simmons. (SAGE, 2013), 113

¹¹⁷ Richard Jackson, Georg Sørensen, and Jørgen Møller. *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches*. (Oxford University Press, 2019), 162

¹¹⁸ Adler, “Constructivism in International Relations: Sources, Contributions, and Debates”, 113

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 121

¹²⁰ *Ibid*

power¹²¹. Rather, in social constructivist literature, behaviour derives from interpretations¹²². The agent is thus drawn into the equation of international politics as it is argued that to explore and understand state behaviour, we must explore the human properties that have assisted in constructing the intersubjective understandings state actors rely on¹²³.

From the outset, social psychology and social constructivism share the same approach that to explain behaviour, one must explore the interpretations that agents rely on when engaging with one another. Despite this, the inclusion of social psychology in IR is still a relatively new engagement and this even though social psychology deals with how cognitive and emotional processes lead to intersubjective understandings¹²⁴. As Ringmar states: “Constructivists have conclusively established that meaning matters to the study of international relations - and cognitive theory can tell us how meaning is made”¹²⁵. The cause for the division between social psychology and social constructivism may be found in the constructivist tendency to primarily focus on the products of ideational processes than on the processes themselves¹²⁶. In social constructivist research, focus is often on how social knowledge, or a system of ideas, regulate and determine behaviour¹²⁷. Social psychology, on the other hand, tends to focus on the processes that shape and change social knowledge. To explore these processes, social psychologists focus on the agent, which is common for all fields of psychology. However, whereas the more traditional strands of psychology address the ideational processes that arise within an agent, and how these shape the agent’s behaviour, social psychologists explore how ideational processes occur because of interactions between agents¹²⁸. Focus is more specifically on how agents reach social knowledge by processing the “actual, imagined, or implied presence of other human beings”¹²⁹. Social psychologists direct their attention to how social knowledge occurs from the emotional and cognitive processing of the physical or remembered presence of human beings and/or the social facts human beings attach to the psychical reality. The field of social psychology is thus rooted in the same argument as seen in social constructivism that to reach an

¹²¹ Emanuel Adler, “Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics.” *European Journal of International Relations* 3, no 3 (September 1997): 321-322; and Jackson, Sørensen and Møller. *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches*, 162

¹²² Adler, “Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics”, 322

¹²³ Jackson, Sørensen and Møller. *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches*, 162

¹²⁴ William McDougall. *An introduction to social psychology* (Psychology Press, 2015), 1.

¹²⁵ Ibid

¹²⁶ Vaughn P Shannon and Paul A. Kowert. *Psychology and Constructivism in International Relations: An Ideational Alliance*. (University of Michigan Press, 2012), 14-15

¹²⁷ McDougall. *An introduction to social psychology*, 3.

¹²⁸ Matt Jarvis. *Theoretical Approaches in Psychology*. (Routledge, 2005), 8

¹²⁹ Miles Hewstone, Wolfgang Stroebe and Klaus Jonas. *Introduction to social psychology*. (John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 5

understanding of how and why behaviour occurs, one must explore how self/other understandings emerge from emotional and cognitive processes¹³⁰.

In IR, scholars have also focused on cognitive and emotional processes and particularly how e.g. cognitive biases and emotions hinder rational decision making¹³¹. A significant contribution in this direction is the work of Jervis and his misperception theory¹³², but others such as Crawford¹³³, Hutchison¹³⁴, Clément and Sanger¹³⁵, Koschut et.al¹³⁶, Mercer¹³⁷, Reus-Smit¹³⁸, Casier¹³⁹ and Young and Schafer have focused on how cognition and emotions play a role in shaping IR phenomenon¹⁴⁰. As in the field of social psychology, so too is there a tendency in IR to draw a sharp distinction between cognitive and emotional processes. It varies why scholars in psychology and IR treat emotions and cognition as two separate processes, although there has been a tendency in IR to exclude emotions, as emotions are perceived as processes that do not feature in the rational decision making that political actors engage with¹⁴¹. However, as Mercer states, the assumption that emotions do not play a role in rational thinking is misguided, and it is often driven by the observation amongst political actors and scholars that “thinking does not feel like an emotion”¹⁴². The separation between the two processes is nevertheless not clear-cut, as emotions are needed for agents to process the social information that they receive, whilst cognition fuels or activates certain emotions¹⁴³. Emotions and cognition work in tandem in the construction of understandings and behaviour, which is an observation that has started to dominate in social psychology¹⁴⁴, and which is an understanding that also drives this research. In this research I will, however, continue to focus on cognition exclusively and how these processes contribute to conflict protraction. This does not mean that I dismiss the validity of

¹³⁰ Roxanne Lynn Doty. "Aporia: A critical exploration of the agent-structure problematique in international relations theory." *European Journal of International Relations* 3, no.3 (1997), 376.

¹³¹ Neta C. Crawford, "The passion of world politics: Propositions on emotion and emotional relationships." *International Security* 24, no.4 (2000), 118

¹³² Robert Jervis. *Perception and misperception in international politics: New edition*. (Princeton University Press, 2017)

¹³³ Neta C. Crawford, "The passion of world politics: Propositions on emotion and emotional relationships."

¹³⁴ Emma Hutchison, *Affective communities in world politics*. (Cambridge University Press, 2016)

¹³⁵ Maéva Clément and Eric Sanger. *Researching Emotions in International Relations* (Palgrave, 2018)

¹³⁶ Simon Koschut, Todd H. Hall, Reinhard Wolf, Ty Solomon, Emma Hutchison and Roland Bleiker. "Discourse and emotions in international relations". *International Studies Review*, 19, no.3 (2017): 481-508.

¹³⁷ Jonathan Mercer "Emotional Beliefs." *International Organization* 64, no. 1 (2010): 1-31.

¹³⁸ Christian Reus-Smit, "Emotions and the Social," *International Theory* 6, no. 3 (2014): 568-574

¹³⁹ Casier. "From Logic of Competition to Conflict: Understanding the Dynamics of EU-Russia Relations."

¹⁴⁰ Michael D. Young and Mark Schafer. "Is there method in our madness? Ways of assessing cognition in international relations." *Mershon International Studies Review* 42, no. 1 (1998), 64

¹⁴¹ Jonathan Mercer. "Feeling like a State: Social Emotion and Identity." *International Theory* 6, no 3 (2014), 518

¹⁴² Ibid, 520

¹⁴³ Norbert Schwarz. "Emotion, cognition, and decision making." *Cognition & Emotion* 14, no.4 (2000): 433-440; Joseph P. Forgas, *Feeling and thinking: The role of affect in social cognition*. (Cambridge University Press, 2001); and Antony SR. Manstead "Emotion in social life." *Cognition & Emotion* 5, no.5-6 (1991): 353-362

¹⁴⁴ van Kleef, Gerben A., Marc W. Heerdink, and Astrid C. Homan. "Emotional influence in groups: the dynamic nexus of affect, cognition, and behavior." *Current opinion in psychology* 17 (2017): 156-161.

emotions or that I advocate for a renewed dichotomy between emotions and cognition. Rather, the focus on cognition is an analytical choice that I have had to make to not expand this research beyond its scope. For future research it would however be interesting to pair this research with an analysis of the emotional processes that occur in the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts, as this will ensure a more holistic understanding of the intergroup dynamics at play.

As focus in this research is on cognitive processes, it will to a great extent be rooted in the social psychology sub-field of social cognition, which focuses on how agents reach an understanding of the social world and their place within it¹⁴⁵. Whereas social psychology more broadly seeks to understand the “social nature of being human”¹⁴⁶, social cognition draws attention to how agents store and process social information for the use in certain situations¹⁴⁷. Emphasis is on cognitive processing in social contexts and how social knowledge forms, operates, and changes¹⁴⁸. As a field of study, social cognition builds on the concept of naive psychology developed by Heider¹⁴⁹, which explores how agents think about others through causal reasoning¹⁵⁰. Social cognition is interested in examining how agents reach knowledge about themselves, others, and situations through a deductive process¹⁵¹. As Fiske and Taylor state, behaviour “is more usefully understood as a function of people’s perceptions of their world rather than as a function of objective descriptions of their stimulus environment”¹⁵². Social cognition also draws on social constructivism’s outlook that behaviour is not merely an automated response to an environment, but hinges on how agents process information that they receive through various types of stimuli being produced in the interaction they have with others¹⁵³. Emphasis is thus on “cognitive elements that intervene between observable stimulus and observable responses”¹⁵⁴. Whereas social constructivism and social psychology tend to draw attention to how self/other understandings have formed over time, social cognition focuses on specific situations (such as conflicts) and how self/other understandings are formed, changed, and sustained within these situations as a result of the continued interactions that occur between the agents present. This contextual focus does not mean that social cognition refutes the role that e.g. history and memory play in shaping self/other understandings. But it does imply that to understand the forces that shape a conflict it is not enough to focus on how a conflict has occurred because of a “stored” or general understanding of self

¹⁴⁵ Martha Augoustinos, Iain Walker, and Ngaire Donaghue. *Social cognition: An integrated introduction*. (Sage, 2014), 1-2

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 1

¹⁴⁷ Judith A. Howard "Social psychology of identities." *Annual review of sociology* 26, no 1 (2000): 368

¹⁴⁸ Susan T. Fiske and Shelley E. Taylor. *Social cognition: From brains to culture*. (Sage, 2013), 17

¹⁴⁹ Fritz Heider, *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations*. (Psychology Press, 2013), 5

¹⁵⁰ Susan T. Fiske. *Social Beings: Core Motives in Social Psychology*. (John Wiley & Sons, 2018), 128

¹⁵¹ Gordon B. Moskowitz, *Social Cognition: Understanding Self and Others*. (Guilford Publications, 2013), 3

¹⁵² Fiske and Taylor. *Social cognition: From brains to culture*, 11

¹⁵³ Ibid, 12

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 17

and other. One also needs to explore how self/other understandings are further shaped, sustained, and changed by the interactions that occur in the conflict context. This approach is of interest to this research as emphasis here is on the ideational factors that contribute to conflict protraction in Ukraine and Georgia. In the literature on the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts, there is generally an argument that certain historical developments and collective memories have shaped self/other understandings, which caused the outbreak of the conflicts. It may, however, be argued that conflict protraction is not only found in these stored self/other understandings. The factors that contribute to conflict protraction may to a greater extent be in the processes that the conflict parties continue to rely on in their interactions. This research thus explores how self/other understandings are upheld in the conflict context through continuous cognitive processing of stimuli, and how the interpretation of interactions continues to feed into the conflicts' continuation. Focus is hence on the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts parties' interacting social cognitive processes, and how these may shape intergroup dynamics that contribute to the conflicts' protraction.

In connection to this one should address the role of power and how it relates to cognition. In this research I focus on cognition exclusively and how it emerges and sustains in certain contexts. This does, however, not mean that I treat cognition as neutral processes devoid of any power considerations. In IR, scholars have drawn attention to the cognition-power nexus with amongst other Young and Schafer pointing to how power derives from cognitive processes that political actors engage with¹⁵⁵. This is a development in IR as there has long been a tendency, amongst particularly realist scholars, to dismiss the relevance of cognition. When analysing cognition in IR, scholars have often found themselves bound or challenged by the rationalist approach, which emphasises that all political actors think and act rationally¹⁵⁶. According to this approach, an elaboration of the cognitive processes that underly thoughts and actions is futile¹⁵⁷. Instead one should "consider all decision-makers to be alike" and so focus should be on systems and state power as sources of action in IR¹⁵⁸. According to Rosati, however, one cannot treat events such as e.g. the Cold War as "foreordained and determined" by the presence of certain systems, and one should not trivialise the role of policymakers by treating them as unitary actors¹⁵⁹. Instead there is a need to explore the social construction of politics and how cognition shapes individual understandings of interests and power. When doing so one arrives at an understanding that political actors do not think from the same

¹⁵⁵ Michael D. Young and Mark Schafer. "Is there method in our madness? Ways of assessing cognition in international relations.", 64

¹⁵⁶ Jerel A. Rosati, "The power of human cognition in the study of world politics." *International Studies Review* 2, no.3 (2000), 45

¹⁵⁷ Ibid

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 45-46

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 47

perspective¹⁶⁰. Political actors often think in different ways, which leads to different understandings of interests and power (not to mention understandings of how power should be obtained)¹⁶¹. To understand power and the role it plays in IR, there is a need to explore how political actors themselves define and understand power. This is equally argued by Wendt who points to how agents act towards other agents based on the meanings these others have for them¹⁶². In this sense the distribution of power may shape state behaviour, but the existence of power depends on intersubjective understandings and “the “distribution of knowledge”, that constitute their conceptions of self and other”¹⁶³. Power is thus dependent on shared knowledge as social constructs may lose their significance if agents decide that these constructs no longer are of validity or exist¹⁶⁴.

Similar argument can be found in post-structuralism where Foucault points to how knowledge and power imply one another as “there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations”¹⁶⁵. Here he emphasises the power of discourse with specific attention to how discourse is not neutral but an active engagement that allows for the establishment or maintenance of power relations¹⁶⁶. From this perspective, language is power as it is through language that actors and their identities are constructed¹⁶⁷. In IR, and in social psychology, there is thus an understanding that knowledge, cognition, and power are inextricably interlinked. The difference in focus is whether scholars explore how the understanding of power shapes the processes (cognition) that may lead to understandings, or how power derives from the discursive practices (knowledge) that agents rely on. In my research I do acknowledge the nexus between power, cognition, and knowledge. I will, however, not engage with a further exploration of power and how it is pursued or upheld in the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts, as focus is on the role cognitive processes play in contributing to conflict protraction. I thus do not engage further with the realist or post-structuralist conceptualisation of power, but I do acknowledge that cognition and power are interlinked and acknowledge that the production of cognition is not neutral, but often rooted in attempts of establishing certain power relations. The focus on power relations is of course of relevance to this research, particularly given Russia’s role in the conflicts and the position of power that Russia seeks to establish or maintain

¹⁶⁰ Michael D. Young and Mark Schafer. "Is there method in our madness? Ways of assessing cognition in international relations.", 64

¹⁶¹ Michael D. Young and Mark Schafer. "Is there method in our madness? Ways of assessing cognition in international relations.", 64

¹⁶² Alexander Wendt, *What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics, International Theory*. (Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), 396-397

¹⁶³. " Ibid, 397

¹⁶⁴ Ibid

¹⁶⁵ Michel Foucault. *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. (Vintage, 2012) 27

¹⁶⁶ Lene Hansen. "Discourse analysis, post-structuralism, and foreign policy." *Foreign policy: Theories, actors, cases* 2 (2016), 101

¹⁶⁷ Ibid

towards the other conflict parties. As there is, however, a limit to the scope of this research, I only focus on the “cognitive moment” of conflict protraction as I wish to unravel how cognitive processes form from contexts and how these processes shape conflict protraction. These are processes that tend to be neglected in the existing literature, but they are processes that we need to explore to establish the intergroup dynamics present in the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts. Once these intergroup dynamics have been located, one may then apply these dynamics in e.g. a post-structuralist study or critical geopolitical study of how these dynamics assist in shaping or maintaining certain power relations between the conflict parties in Ukraine and Georgia. Given that I focus on the cognitive element of conflict protraction, I also exclude any further evaluation of material power and power as influence. Such a realist analysis equally has merits in the study of these conflicts, but it is also a topic that has been explored at length in the existing literature. As this research is of a complementary nature to the existing literature, the findings may, however, also be combined with a realist study for a more comprehensive understanding of the factors (ideational and material) that shape the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts’ protraction.

Eventually the reason why the interlinkage of social constructivism, social psychology, and its’ sub-field of social cognition is of use in this research, is because these fields approach behaviour from the understanding that agents and structures are co-constitutive, and that the link between agents and structures is to be found in interpretations. Where the fields differ is in the approach they take to the study of ideation as social constructivists tend, in practice, to focus on the macrostructural boundaries on perceptions based on prevailing identities and norms¹⁶⁸. Social psychology and social cognition tend to focus on the micro-foundations that assist in shaping and changing behaviour and identities¹⁶⁹. In this sense, social constructivism explains how established self/other understandings shape behaviour, whilst social psychology and social cognition explain how self/other understandings are formed and why they change. To combine social constructivism and social psychology is thus an opportunity to engage with how social knowledge is formed and the role social knowledge plays in shaping behaviour¹⁷⁰. When adding the element of contextuality emphasised in social cognition, one may construct a theoretical framework that explores how social knowledge is formed, sustained, and changed as a contextual phenomenon. In the end, as Jackson states, social constructivism is an approach to social research and is therefore not a substantive theory in and of itself¹⁷¹. As he puts it: “Constructivism does not have anything specific to say about war, conflict or conflict resolution; anything that can be said about conflict resolution can only be inferred from broader theory and research findings of particular constructivist studies”¹⁷². Social constructivism’s

¹⁶⁸ Shannon and Kowert. *Psychology and Constructivism in International Relations: An Ideational Alliance*, 14-15

¹⁶⁹ Ibid

¹⁷⁰ Ibid

¹⁷¹ Jackson. "Constructivism and Conflict.", 173

¹⁷² Ibid

contribution to the study of conflicts is therefore not specific theories for analysing why conflicts occur and sustain. Instead, social constructivism offers the lens and concepts needed to engage with the ideational factors that shape and sustain conflicts. To apply theories that can explain why conflict protraction occurs, one may include social psychological theories such as social identity, attribution theory, and opposed conflict narratives. Such theories apply the same concepts as social constructivism, but they dig deeper into the “technicality” of how e.g. clashing identities occur and why opposed narratives may shape conflict protraction. Social constructivism thus sets the stage for exploring the role self/other understandings play in conflicts, and social psychology offers the theories for further exploring how these understandings occur, sustain, and change in conflict contexts.

Apart from providing a theoretical outlook for exploring the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts’ protraction, the multidisciplinary approach allows me to address the gaps located in the literature. As stated, such gaps pertain to: the tendency to dismiss the forces that shape protraction (as these are regarded as the same that caused the conflict); the tendency to dismiss relations between states and non-states; and the tendency to dismiss further establishing the link between individuals and groups. The multidisciplinary approach addresses the first gap as its’ focus on self/other understandings and contextuality allows me to dig into the processes that contribute to the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts’ protraction. The approach allows me to explore whether there are certain trends in the conflict parties processing that continue to feed into their opposed self/other understandings. Social psychology and social constructivism’s focus on group identities also allows me to apply a common analytical framework for the study of relations between state and non-state actors. In social constructivism, scholars primarily grant attention to how collective identities occur in the form of states. In social psychology focus is on how collective identities occur in the form of groups. This state/group divide is not incompatible as both concepts are approached from an ideational perspective. In social constructivism, collective identities are treated as states’ discursive practices, whilst social psychology treats collective identities as group processes. Whereas the state-focus, however, limits the inclusion of non-state actors in the analysis of conflict protraction, the focus on collective identities as group processes removes this divide. The group level of analysis also allows one to dig into the link between leaders and citizens. As will be explained further on, social constructivism does not approach collective identities as outcomes of “group think”, but as discourses that leaders produce and sustain. Similar approach is taken in social psychology where collective identities are an outcome of a reciprocal relation between group leaders and group members. Leaders are thus managers of the group forming process, but they are not puppet masters who automatically steer the thoughts and behaviour of their group members. Rather,

leaders' discursive practices, amongst other, derive from a processing of stimuli their members generate¹⁷³. Social psychology's group level thus allows one to approach collective behaviour as an ideational process between leaders and members. It is from this understanding that I have chosen to apply a multidisciplinary approach as it allows me to explore the forces that contribute to conflict protraction. It also allows me to bridge the theoretical divides and fill the gap located in the literature review.

3.1.1 The Importance of Context

To study why conflicts are protracted is to study why conflict parties continue to engage in negative interactions, such as the continued engagement in violence and the dismissal of conflict resolution efforts. To understand why conflicts become protracted there is a need to explore the forces that shape and sustain such behaviour. To this end, one needs to situate behaviour within the context it occurs. In the realist theories of IR, there is a tendency to explain behaviour by referring to human nature and/or the environment in which international politics takes place¹⁷⁴. Here conflicts and the behaviour that unfolds are explained by referring to the human nature of self-interest, and how the combination of such tendencies coupled with an environment of anarchy (lack of central authority) results in power competitions¹⁷⁵. In psychology, scholars also refer to the role the environment and human tendencies play in generating behaviour. In e.g. behavioural psychology, behaviour is thought to occur as purely a response to the environment, whereas personality psychology focuses on how personalities shape repetitive behaviour¹⁷⁶. In social constructivism and social psychology scholars point to the co-constitution between agents and structures, as behaviour is treated as an outcome of structures of meaning and the interpretations that agents bring to their engagements. Both theories thus try to tread the middle ground in the agent-structure debate as they emphasise the importance of interactions in shaping behaviour. This argument is also found in post-structuralism where interactions are an essential aspect of the co-constitution between structures and agents¹⁷⁷. As Doty states: structures are only "instantiated by the practices of agents" and agents emerge "with the effecting of structures"¹⁷⁸.

¹⁷³ Jodie Anstee. "Norms and the Management of Identities: The Case for Engagement between Constructivism and the Social Identity Approach" in *Psychology and Constructivism in International Relations: An Ideational Alliance*, Ed. Vaughn P. Shannon and Paul A. Kowert. (University of Michigan Press, 2012), 79

¹⁷⁴ Tim Dunne, Brian C. Schmidt. "Realism" in *The globalization of world politics: An introduction to international relations*. Ed. John Baylis, Patricia Owens, and Steve Smith. (Oxford University Press, 2017), 103

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 104-105

¹⁷⁶ Brian Garvey "The Situationist Challenge to Free Will". In: *Free Will & Action. Historical-Analytical Studies on Nature, Mind and Action*. Ed. Grgić F., Pećnjak D. (Springer, 2018), 73; and Howard S. Friedman and Miriam W. Schustack. *Personality: Classic theories and modern research*. (Pearson, 2016).

¹⁷⁷ Roxanne Lynn Doty. "Aporia: A critical exploration of the agent-structure problematique in international relations theory." *European Journal of International Relations* 3, no.3 (1997), 387

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 376.

In the field of social cognition, scholars have expanded the concept of interactions as behaviour is not merely treated as an outcome of general self/other understandings but also as an outcome of contexts. As social psychologists such as Lewin and Fiske have stated, “social behaviour is, to a larger extent than people commonly realize, a response to people’s social context, not a function of individual personality”¹⁷⁹. From this perspective, behaviour cannot be purely explained by referring to ideational structures that endure, or agent-specific tendencies that cause repetitive behaviour. Rather, to understand why agents engage in certain behaviour, one should also explore how agents respond to other agents present within a given situation, and the stimuli that arise as a result of the presence of such agents¹⁸⁰. Termed situationism, it pertains to the “scientific belief in the significance of context” and the premise that “the social situation, not just unique personality, dramatically controls people’s behaviour”¹⁸¹. To understand why conflict parties engage in negative interactions, there is a need to zoom into the situation and explore how self/other understandings sustain as a result of the parties’ contextual interactions¹⁸². From this outlook, behaviour is a “social and intersubjective phenomenon” and so it cannot be reduced to a universal phenomenon that continues to replicate¹⁸³. Behaviour changes in connection to context as behaviour that occurs in e.g. an office meeting is fundamentally different from behaviour that occurs in a conflict. This means that to explain the continuation of a conflict, it is not enough to identify material interests or general human traits and how this may lead to competition¹⁸⁴. Conflict protraction and interactions that generate such protraction cannot be explained by “general rules derived from past events; nor can their outcomes be used to predict future ones”¹⁸⁵. Understanding the past may serve as a starting point for analysing structural conditions, but it will never suffice in unravelling the processes at play within the situation¹⁸⁶. There is a need to focus on the interactions that form within a situation, but this should be done from an understanding that several processes feed into interactions and that most outcomes are “instances of singular causation”, which are non-repetitive¹⁸⁷. It is therefore not possible to define a standard set of causes for the continuation

¹⁷⁹ Fiske *Social Beings: Core Motives in Social Psychology*, 7

¹⁸⁰ Ibid

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 5-6

¹⁸² Roxanne Lynn Doty. "Aporia: A critical exploration of the agent-structure problematique in international relations theory.", 387-388; and Kenneth Tucker, *Anthony Giddens and modern social theory*. (Sage, 1998.), 57

¹⁸³ Guzzini. "'The Cold War is what we make of it': when peace research meets constructivism in International Relations", 47; John F. Rauthmann, "You Say the Party Is Dull, I Say It Is Lively: A Componential Approach to How Situations Are Perceived to Disentangle Perceiver, Situation, and Perceiver × Situation Variance." *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 3, no. 5 (2012): 519; Harry T. Reis, "Reinvigorating the Concept of Situation in Social Psychology." *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 12, no 4. (2008): 313

¹⁸⁴ Lee Ross and Richard E. Nisbett. *The Person and the Situation: Perspectives of Social Psychology*. (Pinter & Martin Publishers, 2011), 8

¹⁸⁵ Richard Ned Lebow, *Richard Ned Lebow: Major Texts on Methods and Philosophy of Science. Vol. 3*. (Springer, 2016), 115

¹⁸⁶ Ibid

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, 46

of conflicts, but rather one needs to look for *causes of causes* from an understanding that there are multiple causal chains¹⁸⁸.

Where this research deviates from the existing literature on the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts, is that it approaches the conflict parties' behaviour from a contextual perspective. This research does therefore not draw on a meta-analysis of behaviour, such as that of post-structuralism where emphasis is on the role of history and power in shaping systems of knowledge¹⁸⁹. Focus is instead on the interactions that occur in the conflict situation and how this is processed and structured into contextual meanings that sustain negative relations. This research thus emphasises the role the situation and the constellation of conflict parties in the situation play in shaping behaviour¹⁹⁰. This does not imply that I disregard the role of history and memories in shaping behaviour, but that I seek to engage with how behaviour is also responsive as it equally forms from contextual interactions¹⁹¹. The aim of this research is thus not to draw out general cognitive processes that shape conflict protraction, but to draw out the dynamics that shape the Georgia and Ukraine conflicts' protraction specifically as a result of the responses the conflict parties make towards each other in the conflict. This also means that the findings reached in the analysis should not be treated as a definitive answer to why the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts are protracted. It is an additional insight that fills a gap in the existing literature and complements existing analyses of the conflicts.

3.1.2 States as Group Identities

As established in the literature review, there is a foundation for approaching the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts from a group identity perspective, as this offers a better insight into the link between states/non-states and the cognitive processes that may compel the conflict parties to dismiss conflict resolution efforts. In this research, I approach the conflict parties (states and non-state actors) as group identities. More specifically, I focus on how the leadership of each conflict party constructs and communicates certain group identities, which they themselves and their citizens come to think and act on behalf of (or are expected to think and act on behalf of) in the conflict context. When I refer to states and non-state actors as group identities, I do not mean that states are persons or physical units, but that they are collective identities agents activate in certain contexts and choose to unite around. These identities are generally administered by state or non-state leaders who have the role of managing a group identity, and constructing a narrative around the group identity, which they and their citizens can apply as the ideational foundation for their thoughts and actions in a given context. This does not mean that citizens of states necessarily agree with how their

¹⁸⁸ Reis, "Reinvigorating the Concept of Situation in Social Psychology.", 312; and Richard Ned Lebow. *Constructing Cause in International Relations* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 144

¹⁸⁹ The exclusion of power and history from this research is further explained in the section on theoretical constraints

¹⁹⁰ Fiske. *Social beings: Core motives in social psychology*, 7

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, 12

state leaders construct the group identity that they are said to belong to¹⁹². But it means that states are group identities that leaders manage for the purpose of e.g. sense-making and interest-seeking, and which some citizens choose to belong to and use as the lens through which a context is viewed.

Treating states and non-state actors as group identities is an interesting endeavour as it opens the IR debate about actors/agents and the extent to which states are persons, institutions, or something entirely different¹⁹³. In the work of Wendt, a state is a “superorganism”, which is a “collection of single creatures that together possess the functional organization implicit in the formal definition of organism”¹⁹⁴. Wendt treats a state as a “person”, but what is interesting is that to reach this interpretation, he draws on a distinction between a state as a corporate entity, and a state as an identity. As he puts it, states constitute of a corporate and a social component, which generates an interaction between the “we” and the “I”¹⁹⁵. This means that states (at times) have an influence on agents’ identity or the “I”. States also have an aspect of “we” as the constituent agents and institutions create the feeling of states as an entity¹⁹⁶. Wendt hence points to how a state is both a physical manifestation, but also an ideational manifestation. In the work of Hudson, and particularly in the field of foreign policy analysis¹⁹⁷, a state is not treated as a person per se, but as an outcome of state leaders’ personal characteristics¹⁹⁸. Stated differently, leaders and their personalities make up the states and come to define the states’ behaviour. In his work, Sasley, however argues that a state should not be treated as a person nor as an outcome of state leaders’ personality per se¹⁹⁹. States should instead be treated as a group where state leaders’ “cognitive and emotional practices represent, comprise, and reflect that of the group (state) and so determine how the state will act”²⁰⁰. What Sasley points to is that states are outcomes of group reification processes, as states can be treated as group identities, which grant citizens and state leaders a structured self/other understanding and an understanding of shared expectations in the situation²⁰¹. It is then from this group identity that behaviour and the pursuit of interests, in the name of the state may arise²⁰². A state is hence not a physical being, nor is it merely an outcome of leadership

¹⁹² Rawi Abdelal, Yoshiko M. Herrera, Alastair Iain Johnston, and Rose McDermott. “Identity as a Variable.”

Perspectives on Politics 4, no. 4 (2006): 696

¹⁹³ Adam B. Lerner, “What's It like to Be a State? An Argument for State Consciousness.” *International Theory* (2020): 1–27.

¹⁹⁴ Alexander Wendt. “The state as person in international theory.” *Review of international Studies* 30, no.2 (2004), 309-310

¹⁹⁵ Alexander Wendt. “Collective identity formation and the international state.” *American political science review* 88, no.2 (1994): 385

¹⁹⁶ Ibid

¹⁹⁷ Valerie M. Hudson “Foreign policy analysis: Actor-specific theory and the ground of international relations.” *Foreign policy analysis* (2005): 1-30.

¹⁹⁸ Brent E. Sasley “Theorizing states’ emotions.” *International Studies Review* 13, no. 3 (2011): 453

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 454

²⁰⁰ Ibid

²⁰¹ Wendt. “Collective identity formation and the international state.”, 385 and Mattern. *Ordering international politics: identity, crisis and representational force*, 4

²⁰² Ibid

personality, but is instead represented by a collection of agents who have united around a group identity, and whose self-understandings and motivations to a great extent are formed around this identity. This understanding of states also links to the identity/difference problem expressed by Connolly and Campbell who dismiss the notion of the state as an existing and unitary actor but treat states “at the heart of the relationship between personal and collective identity”²⁰³. In this research, I adopt the approach that states can be treated as group identities. Doing so does not imply that I dismiss the institutional role of states, nor do I dismiss that states can be treated as e.g. organisations. But it implies that I, in this research, seek to emphasise the ideational role of states and particularly how states also function as group identities, as this allows me to unravel the psychological processes that too define the behaviour of states in times of conflict²⁰⁴.

States may thus be treated as group identities that agents perceive themselves or others to belong to. In this sense, states are outcomes of group processes where leaders and citizens come to engage in discursive and social practices that conform with a certain understanding of collective belonging and expressed collective interests²⁰⁵. If one adopts this understandings of states, it may be argued that for states to have a presence and serve as a mobilising factor in times of e.g. conflicts, agents need to first engage in group reification processes where they come to define themselves around this group identity. It is then from this processing that states as group identities have the capacity to shape collective behaviour. Despite this link between states and group processes, there is a tendency in IR to treat states and groups as different concepts, as the group concept is used to define e.g. ethnic groups that reside within a state²⁰⁶. If one adopts the social psychological understanding of groups, one may nevertheless bridge this state/group dichotomy. In social psychology, groups are not units but collective identities that arise from cognitive and emotional processing where agents come to define themselves and others as group members that either share, or do not share, collective commonalities²⁰⁷. This perceived commonality is based on external and/or internal criteria with the external criteria being visible similarities (e.g. similar facial features or a shared language), and internal criteria being an awareness amongst agents that they share a membership and that there is a certain value attached to this membership²⁰⁸. Hence, rather than being physical beings per se, groups are discursive and social practices that agents engage with in times where there is a need for a collective

²⁰³ David Campbell. "Identity, difference, and the global: William Connolly's international theory." In *The new pluralism: William Connolly and the contemporary global condition*, 289-304. Ed. By David Campbell and Morton Schoolman (2008), 293.

²⁰⁴ Sasley. "Theorizing states' emotions", 454

²⁰⁵ Robert Oprisko and Kristopher Kaliher. "The State as a Person?: Anthropomorphic Personification vs. Concrete Durational Being." *Journal of International and Global Studies* 6, no. 1 (2014): 30

²⁰⁶ Jackson. "Constructivism and Conflict", 178

²⁰⁷ Henri Tajfel. "Social psychology of intergroup relations." *Annual review of psychology* 33, no 1 (1982): 2

²⁰⁸ Ibid

identification²⁰⁹. While agents may communicate a seemingly fixed and physical existence of a group, this is as stated by McSweeney “never more than a provisional and fluid image of ourselves as we want to be”²¹⁰. When I approach states/non-states as group identities it is therefore not an attempt to group agents into units. It is an expression of the ideational nature of states and an accentuation of the group forming processes that lead to an understanding that states exist. The emphasis on states as group identities is also an attempt to bridge the individual/collective divide in IR, where scholars tend to dismiss any further exploration of how collectives are formed by individuals, and how individuals can mobilise collectives. This link is enhanced with the focus on how states are shaped from group forming processes and maintained through group identity practices. The group identity approach is also rooted in the work of Neumann who points to how the study of the self/other nexus from a group identity management perspective, offers an opportunity to better understand “who ‘the actors’ are, how they are constituted, how they maintain themselves, and under which preconditions they may thrive”²¹¹.

In this research, I explore how the state actors in the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts cognitively process the situation and those involved, and how this understanding shapes their relations. Since I adopt an understanding that states are group identities, this does not imply that I treat states as conscious subjects that engage in group think. As stipulated by Mercer, whereas studying the cognition and emotions of a state per se is useless and similar to studying the cognition and emotions of another non-biological entity, scholars need to study how agents “feel like a state”²¹². To study how agents come to “feel like a state” one may explore the role of social cognitive processing and how it results in group identities. Such processing does, however, not occur in a vacuum. As will be discussed in the next sections and in the method chapter, the construction of group identities is an agent-led process as state leaders manage the group identities their citizens abide to, or should abide to, in a given context. This does not mean that the leaders’ personalities come to form the state/group’s identity and interests per se, but that leaders manage the process of group formation as they provide “the state’s” self/other understanding. This is an important factor as the construction of intergroup relations thus can be traced to the official narratives that leaders communicate. It is therefore that I focus on the leaders’ identity management in this research. To this one should also add the role of non-state actors. In my research, I will approach the state and non-state conflict parties as of similar origin – i.e. non-states are also group identities that agents in certain situations perceive themselves or others to belong to, and subsequently behave and think on behalf of. To analyse relations

²⁰⁹ Bill McSweeney. *Security, identity and interests: a sociology of international relations. Vol. 69.* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 76-77; and Bill McSweeney. "Identity, Interest and the Good Friday Agreement." *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 9 (1998): 94; and Benedict Anderson. *Imagined communities.* (Routledge, 2006), 6

²¹⁰ McSweeney. "Identity, Interest and the Good Friday Agreement", 94

²¹¹ Neumann "Self and other in international relations.", 168

²¹² McSweeney. "Identity, Interest and the Good Friday Agreement.", 94

between the Ukraine and Georgia conflict parties, there is a need to move beyond the state/non-state divide that tends to define research conducted on these conflicts. This is not to legalize the actions of the non-state actors nor to advocate for their recognition as states. It is an analytical choice taken to avoid the often legalistic-approach towards these conflicts, which constructs parties as of differing origin based on whether they have been internationally recognised as states or not. This, I believe, may significantly hamper our ability to understand the dynamics that shape the conflicts' protraction. It also blurs the agency which arguably exists within states and non-states. The focus on non-states and states as group identities is equally rooted in the protracted social conflict theory outlined by Azar who emphasised the need to move beyond the state-to-state analysis, and engage in a level of analysis that could emphasise how the perceived presence of different parties shapes conflict dynamics²¹³. It is thus by approaching states and non-states as group identities that one may reach a common analytical framework, which is currently neglected in the literature on the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts. The focus on states/non-states as group identities is also of value to the study of conflict protraction where conflict parties find themselves in a conflict shaped by continuously opposed self/other understandings. To understand why such a deadlock has come about it is beneficial to retreat a few steps back and explore the social cognitive processes that shape these group identities, as this allows one to explore where contestation and protraction may derive from.

3.2 Intergroup Relations in Times of Protracted Conflict

Conflicts are an inevitable part of human life. They occur in day-to-day interactions between spouses, colleagues, parents and children and they are, in most cases, handled in a quick and non-violent manner²¹⁴. Conflicts can, however, also take on a collective nature as they can occur between communities, institutions, states etc. In these instances, conflicts may take the form of violent interactions and whereas some of them are resolved, others sustain²¹⁵. There is a plethora of research in the field of conflict studies, IR, and social psychology that focuses on how and why collective conflicts occur, and the steps that must be taken to solve them. This is a herculean task as scholars agree that conflicts are not one-dimensional but multifaceted and ever-evolving, hereby making it difficult to pin-point their characteristics and the areas in need of conflict resolution efforts²¹⁶. Multiple factors such as material interests, systemic developments, and ideational factors intertwine to create complex situations. Since it is often impossible for a single research

²¹³ Edward E. Azar "Protracted International Conflicts: Ten Propositions." In *Conflict: Readings in Management and Resolution*, Ed. John Burton, Frank Dukes. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), 148

²¹⁴ Daniel Bar-tal, *Intractable Conflicts: Socio-Psychological Foundations and Dynamics*. (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 4

²¹⁵ Ho-Won Jeong. *Understanding conflict and conflict analysis*. (Sage, 2008), 3

²¹⁶ This is amongst other visible in the literature on the Georgia and Ukraine conflicts where scholars do not agree on what kind of conflicts they are, who is involved, and the characteristics that define and shape these conflicts

to address all aspects of conflicts, there is a need to pin-point the gap that the existing literature has yet to explore. It is then by adding the missing element that one may gain a more comprehensive understanding of the forces that shape conflicts. In this research, focus is on a particular aspect of the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts, namely their protraction and how social cognitive processes and intergroup dynamics may contribute to this protraction. Although there is no general definition of protracted conflicts²¹⁷, it is agreed that protracted conflicts are conflicts that have yet to be resolved and situations where conflict parties continue to dismiss efforts aimed at resolving their dispute²¹⁸. A central element of studying protracted conflicts is to explore how come conflict parties continue to engage in negative interactions. In social psychology and social constructivism, protracted conflicts, and the negative interactions that shape them, are approached as an outcome of the understandings that conflict parties construct and resort to. This does not mean that other factors are rendered mute. It means that this is the target area that these fields emphasise. The aspect that social constructivists and social psychologists explain is how conflicts arise and sustain from the understandings that conflict parties attach to the situation, self and other. As Bar-Tal states:

A conflict [is] a situation in which two or more parties perceive their goals, intentions, and actions as being mutually incompatible and act in accordance to this perception[...]Conflict, as a situation with observable consequences, should be considered only when the perception of the situation is followed by behaviors that reflect this perception²¹⁹

From a social psychological and social constructivist perspective, conflicts emerge from opposed self/other understandings. This does not imply that opposed self/other understandings automatically generate conflicts. Rather, for a conflict to exist, all conflict parties need to agree that there is a conflict and act from this understanding²²⁰. It is then from this intersubjective understanding that a conflict gains its existence. This implies that to understand the ideational aspect of conflicts, one must explore how conflict parties reach opposed self/other understandings followed by an exploration of how these understandings interact to form the conflict²²¹.

²¹⁷ To the debate on how to define protracted conflicts is a debate on what to call them. Whereas e.g. Azar calls such conflicts “protracted conflicts”, others define them as “frozen” or “intractable”. In the end the different wording points to similar definitions namely that protracted/frozen/intractable conflicts are conflicts that have yet to be resolved. I have chosen protracted conflicts as it links to Azar’s protracted conflict theory. I could also have chosen intractable conflicts as I equally use Bar-tal’s theories on intractable conflicts. I did, however, decide to exclude the use of the word “frozen”, as it implies that the conflicts are static, which is a definition that does not correlate with my emphasis on processes and interactions.

²¹⁸ Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela R. Aall. *Grasping the nettle: Analyzing cases of intractable conflict*. (US Institute of Peace Press, 2005), 5

²¹⁹ Bar-tal, *Intractable Conflicts: Socio-Psychological Foundations and Dynamics*, 5

²²⁰ Ibid

²²¹ Marilynn B. Brewer “Ingroup Identification and Intergroup Conflict” in *Social Identity, Intergroup Conflict, and Conflict Reduction*. Ed. Richard D. Ashmore, Lee Jussim, and David Wilder (Oxford University Press, 2001), 24; and Tajfel, *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations. 7th edition*, 285

To explore how opposed self/other understandings occur, one may engage with the cognitive processes that shape intergroup relations. Intergroup relations refer to: “any aspect of human interaction that involves individuals perceiving themselves as members of a social category, or being perceived by others as belonging to a social category”²²². Intergroup relations are relations where agents act and think from the basis of group identities, and it is thus relations shaped around the process of group reification²²³. Group reification refers to the tendency to take bounded groups as basic constituents of social life²²⁴. According to Brubaker, there is a tendency in social situations to take groups as something that is ‘real’ and to treat groups as actors to which one may attribute agency and interests²²⁵. There is hence a taken-for-granted assumption that situations such as conflicts, where parties claim to act from a frame of ethnicity or statehood, should be approached as struggles between ethnic groups or states²²⁶. What this results in is the tendency amongst conflict parties to cognitively systematize the conflict through a group-prism and treat these groups as the protagonist and antagonist²²⁷. Conflicts constructed around an ethnic or state frame are, however, not conflicts between ethnic groups or states per se. They are conflicts between agents who have come to associate themselves and others with a group identity, and who have come to understand the conflict through these social categories. Despite this, there is also a tendency in research (including the literature on the Georgia and Ukraine conflicts) to uncritically adopt the reification of groups as scholars analyse how states or ethnic groups have come into conflict. Groups, regardless of their construct being in a state or ethnic frame, are unquestionably treated as units of analysis. However, as Brubaker states, groups are not units that scholars should use to explain a phenomenon with, as this merely reinforces these groups and neglects the factors that have led to the conflict²²⁸. The tendency to partition the social world and situations into homogenous groups is a *process* that scholars should try to explain²²⁹. Instead of conceptualising groups as something tangible, bounded, and in possession of agency there is a need to think of groups in relational and processual terms²³⁰.

A group is thus not an actor but a “contextually fluctuating conceptual variable” that derives from and manifests into cognitive schemas, discursive practices, organisational routines, political projects etc.²³¹. It is in the form of e.g. discursive practices that group identities come to inform the decisions and

²²² Donald M. Taylor and Fathali M. Moghaddam. *Theories of Intergroup Relations: International Social Psychological Perspectives*. (Greenwood Publishing Group, 1994), 6

²²³ Ibid, 7

²²⁴ Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Harvard University Press, 2004), 8

²²⁵ Ibid

²²⁶ Rogers Brubaker, “Neither Individualism nor ‘Groupism’: A Reply to Craig Calhoun.” *Ethnicities* 3, no. 4 (December 2003): 554

²²⁷ Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, 8

²²⁸ Ibid

²²⁹ Ibid

²³⁰ Rogers Brubaker, “Neither Individualism nor ‘Groupism’: A Reply to Craig Calhoun.”, 555

²³¹ Ibid

behaviour conflict parties engage in²³². Collective behaviour as seen in times of conflict amongst other occurs as agents mobilise around, as well as validate their actions from, a discourse that calls for the protection of their group identity and interests²³³. Rather than being mobilised from “group think”, groups are mobilised as speech acts that members adopt and feed into. This function of discursive practices has e.g. been addressed in the work of Giddens and Steele, where focus has been on “biographical narratives” and how states talk of their actions in identity terms to acquire meaning and present actions/reactions as relevant²³⁴. In such situations, a group identity functions as meaning attached to actions, and actions are decided in relation to their influence on self-identity²³⁵. When certain group identities have emerged and inform discursive practices, conflicts may occur as “the groups” come to compare themselves. According to Gries, conflicts occur when groups socially compare themselves with other groups and perceive their existence and/or objectives as incompatible²³⁶. As he argues “it is only when comparisons are made with salient others, are consequential and are framed in zero-sum terms that intergroup competition may ensue”²³⁷. Intergroup relations therefore derive from group reification processes and group practices, and intergroup conflicts occur from a social comparison between groups and the understanding that these groups and their interests are incompatible.

Since the processes that shape intergroup relations may explain the occurrence of conflicts, these may also explain why conflicts become protracted. However, as stated in the literature review, the causes of conflict outbreak and conflict protraction are seldomly the same. In conflict protraction theories, it is generally acknowledged that conflict protraction occurs when group practices become cemented. As stated by Ramsbotham, conflict protraction occurs because of continuously clashing discourses. Also called a radical disagreement, he argues that protracted conflicts are situations where conflict parties continue to have opposed understandings of the conflict situation and those involved²³⁸. This is also argued by Bar-Tal who points to how conflicts become protracted when clashing self/other understandings are cemented and institutionalized²³⁹. This leads to a stagnated situation where the conflict parties’ negative self/other

²³² Alexander Wendt. "Collective identity formation and the international state." *American political science review* 88, no.2 (1994): 384-396; and Bernd Simon and Bert Klandermans. "Politicized collective identity: A social psychological analysis." *American psychologist* 56, no. 4 (2001), 320

²³³ Alexander Wendt. "Collective identity formation and the international state." *American political science review* 88, no.2 (1994), 386; and Lene Hansen "Images, identity and security." *Nordicom Review* 29, no.2 (2008), 54

²³⁴ Brent J. Steele, *Ontological security in international relations: Self-identity and the IR state*. (Routledge, 2008), 10

²³⁵ *Ibid*, 6

²³⁶ Peter Hays Gries, “Social Psychology and the Identity-Conflict Debate: Is a ‘China Threat’ Inevitable?” *European Journal of International Relations* 11, no. 2 (2005): 245

²³⁷ *Ibid*

²³⁸ Oliver Ramsbotham, Hugh Miall, and Tom Woodhouse. *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*. (Polity, 2011), 378

²³⁹ Daniel Bar-Tal, *Intractable Conflicts: Socio-Psychological Foundations and Dynamics*. (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 247; and Daniel Bar-Tal, Neta Oren, and Rafi Nets-Zehngut. "Sociopsychological analysis of conflict-supporting narratives: A general framework." *Journal of Peace Research* 51.5 (2014): 662

understandings do not merely shape the conflict situation. These institutionalised understandings also feed into continuously negative relations, as societies e.g. pass these understandings on to the next generations and continue to validate these understandings by shaping various policies around them²⁴⁰. The manifestation of these negative self/other understandings eventually generate conflict supporting narratives, which refer to an overall narrative of the conflict and those involved²⁴¹. This narrative comes to play a key role in sustaining conflicts as it satisfies a social psychological need of justifying and explaining a situation that involves chronic stress and distress²⁴². In protracted conflicts, conflict parties will develop opposing narratives and they seek to maintain “the dominance of their own narratives among the in-group members and also make efforts to persuade other groups of their narratives’ truthfulness”²⁴³. The construction of conflict supporting narratives contribute to conflict protraction as they serve as an ideational foundation from which the conflict parties will continue to process information and hereof think and act²⁴⁴. In the work of both Ramsbotham and Bar-Tal, protracted conflicts are thus times of cemented self/other understandings, where conflict parties struggle over who gets to “provide the lens through which the conflict is viewed”²⁴⁵. To change protracted conflicts in a direction more favourable for resolution, there is a need to change the conflicting narratives involved and encourage the creation of new and/or more peace-supporting self/other understandings²⁴⁶.

In the protracted conflict theories, focus is on how groups act/react towards each other based on their understanding of each other²⁴⁷. This may also be defined as intergroup dynamics, which refers to trends or developments that form group behaviour and group relations²⁴⁸. In the above-mentioned theories, the intergroup dynamics that shape conflict protraction are defined as stagnated discursive practices, which prevent conflict parties from changing their relations. Conflicts are hence protracted because groups’ self/other understandings and narratives about the conflicts do not change. In this research, I will, however, not focus on how self/other understandings manifest in societies. I will focus on the social cognitive processes that the conflict parties apply to reach their self/other understandings. I thus take a step back to

²⁴⁰ Bar-Tal, Oren, and Nets-Zehngut. "Sociopsychological analysis of conflict-supporting narratives: A general framework." 663

²⁴¹ Ibid

²⁴² Ibid

²⁴³ Ibid

²⁴⁴ Ibid

²⁴⁵ Oliver Ramsbotham, Hugh Miall, and Tom Woodhouse. *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*. (Polity, 2011), 378

²⁴⁶ Bar-Tal, Oren, and Nets-Zehngut. "Sociopsychological analysis of conflict-supporting narratives: A general framework." 663; Ülkü D. Demirdöğen. "A Social-Psychological Approach To Conflict Resolution: Interactive Problem Solving." *International Journal of Social Inquiry* 4, no.1 (2011): 217; and Brent J. Steele. "Ontological security in international relations: Self-identity and the IR state". (Routledge, 2008), 2.

²⁴⁷ Donelson R. Forsyth *Group Dynamics*. (Cengage Learning, 2009), 14

²⁴⁸ Tom Casier. "From Logic of Competition to Conflict: Understanding the Dynamics of EU–Russia Relations." *Contemporary Politics* 22, no. 3 (2016): 380

explore the processes that may have led to the protracted intergroup relations. The reason for this is because I wish to explore whether there are differences and similarities in how the conflict parties reach their opposed self/other understandings. Instead of focusing on institutionalised self/other understandings, I explore how these understandings arise and sustain from the stimuli that occur in the conflict situations. Focus is therefore on how self/other understandings occur but also how they are sustained through the processes used when social information arises in the conflict parties' interactions. This will give me an insight into the link between group reification and intergroup relations. It will also allow me to explore whether conflict protraction may be found in the conflict parties' social cognitive processing, rather than merely in their established self/other understandings. To this end, I thus direct my attention to how social cognitive processing arises, and how it results in group identity and interest formation.

3.3 Social Cognitive Processing

Social cognitive processing refers to information processing about “people, including the self, and about the norms and procedures of the social world”²⁴⁹. It is a mental process that agents engage with to make sense of something/someone, and a process that leads to structured understandings of a situation, self, and other²⁵⁰. A central concept that assists in driving social cognitive processing is agency, which refers to the human ability to explore, interpret, store, and respond towards stimuli received when engaging in a situation²⁵¹. Stimuli refers to any social information agents experience²⁵². It may e.g. be words someone has uttered or behaviour which has occurred. Stimuli is social information that requires processing for the agent to understand what is going on, and to get a sense of how it should think, act, or react in a situation. The reason why agency is of importance in terms of social cognitive processing, is because it grants agents the ability to influence their own functioning and life circumstances through active and conscious engagement with the world around them²⁵³. Agency entails the ability to be consciously aware about the environment and the ability to evaluate, and based on this evaluation, react towards the stimuli the environment may produce²⁵⁴. Agency is a unique feature of humanity that has developed over time through evolution, and it is a feature that has allowed human beings to become sentient - hereby replacing the “aimless environmental selection” with purposeful agency²⁵⁵. Unlike animals who react instinctively to stimuli they encounter in

²⁴⁹ Jennifer S. Beer, and Kevin N. Ochsner. "Social cognition: a multi level analysis." *Brain research* 1079, no 1 (2006): 98

²⁵⁰ Ibid

²⁵¹ Albert Bandura “Toward a Psychology of Human Agency”, *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 1 (2006): 164

²⁵² Mark J. Landau, Brian P. Meier, and Lucas A. Keefer. “A Metaphor-Enriched Social Cognition.” *Psychological Bulletin* 136, no 6 (2010): 1045.

²⁵³ Bandura “Toward a Psychology of Human Agency”, 164

²⁵⁴ Ibid

²⁵⁵ Ibid

the environment, agents have the “ability to reason and to process information about the causes of events”²⁵⁶. Agency is thus the ability to consciously determine why something is happening, or has happened, who one is, and who others are²⁵⁷.

A central feature of social cognitive processing is to make sense of what is happening in a situation. Social cognitive processing does, however, not merely allow agents to make sense of situations, but also make sense of who is present and the extent to which self and other have an influence on the situation. The reason why agents seek to make sense of others is because thinking about others is the foundation for interacting with them²⁵⁸. Social cognitive processing revolves around “collecting data” about others, but this data also reflects the active role of the observer²⁵⁹. When interacting or confronted with others, agents will reflect and infer about who the other is, what the other does, what it feels, what it wants, and what it is about to do²⁶⁰. Social cognitive processing is hence as much about making sense of another as it is about acquiring (often a false feeling) that one is two steps ahead of the other because it has got the other one ‘figured out’. This sense making of others includes the sense making of one-self as the understanding of others creates the assumption that one has a cognitive framework to operate within. The construction of an other-understanding thus offers a cognitive systematization from which one may position one’s self-understanding²⁶¹. As Neumann points out: “the formation of self is inextricably intertwined with that of its others”²⁶². Social cognitive processing leads to an understanding about a situation but also an understanding of who self and other is in this situation, and how one should think and react based on this social knowledge²⁶³. The reason why agents seek to cognitively position themselves and others within a situation is because they want to ensure a goal. According to Padilla et.al “thinking is doing” and with social cognitive processing comes the motivation of wanting to ensure a certain outcome²⁶⁴. The exploration of social cognitive processing should thus be rooted in the understanding that sense making is goal driven²⁶⁵. Such goals may be material, ideational, or normative and so a goal may be to simply understand what or who caused a situation, or it may be to influence the situation and change the behaviour that occurs to

²⁵⁶ Moskowitz, *Social Cognition: Understanding Self and Others*, 1

²⁵⁷ Ibid

²⁵⁸ Fiske, *Social Beings: Core Motives in Social Psychology*, 127

²⁵⁹ Ibid, 130

²⁶⁰ Ibid, 131

²⁶¹ Ibid, 130

²⁶² Iver B. Neumann "Self and other in international relations." *European Journal of International Relations* 2, no.2 (1996), 166

²⁶³ Brian Greenhill. "Recognition and collective identity formation in international politics." *European Journal of International Relations* 14, no. 2 (2008), 355

²⁶⁴ Amado M. Padilla and William Perez. “Acculturation, Social Identity, and Social Cognition: A New Perspective.”, 41

²⁶⁵ Henk Aarts, “Goals, Motivated Social Cognition and Behavior.” In *The SAGE Handbook of Social Cognition*, Ed. Susan T Fiske and C Neil Macrae. (SAGE, 2012), 77

ensure a favourable end-point for one-self²⁶⁶. Goals are desired outcomes that may be physical (e.g. acquiring territory or wealth) or psychological (e.g. changing interactions or gaining power)²⁶⁷. These desired outcomes play a role in social cognitive processing as they assist in forming the outlook from which understandings of self and other originate²⁶⁸. As Wendt states, behaviour is not merely driven by identities nor interests alone, as interests presuppose identities because “an actor cannot know what it wants until it knows who it is”²⁶⁹. Identities do therefore not in and off themselves explain situations such as a conflict, as “being is not the same thing as wanting, and we cannot read off the latter from the former”²⁷⁰. Identities provide the direction for interests, and interests provide the motivational force for identities, and so there is a need to explore how interests and identities work as interlinked processes that form self/other understandings²⁷¹.

Although social cognitive processing may result in an understanding about a situation, self and other, this is rarely static. In social cognition, scholars such as Bandura point to agents’ ability to self-regulate and self-reflect, as agents will monitor and regulate their understandings to reflect on their adequacy²⁷². Agents possess “self-reflective and self-reactive capabilities”, which allow them to, to some extent, control their “thoughts, feelings, motivation, and actions”²⁷³. Instead of merely adopting a fixed understanding about a situation, self, and other, agents will reflect on their understanding vis-à-vis new incoming stimuli, which may cause them to regulate this understanding²⁷⁴. Social cognitive processing is thus also shaped around a process of feedback control or monitoring²⁷⁵. Despite such abilities, agents will seek to reach a somewhat consistent cognitive systematization of a situation, self, and other, as this offers them a structured and simplified understanding of who they and others are, and how they are to respond to certain situations²⁷⁶. As stated by Bandura:

When people observe their thought patterns, emotional reactions, and behaviour and the conditions under which these occur, they begin to notice recurrent patterns. By analysing regularities in the covariation

²⁶⁶ Ibid

²⁶⁷ Ibid

²⁶⁸ Fiske, *Social Beings: Core Motives in Social Psychology*, 164

²⁶⁹ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 231

²⁷⁰ Ibid, 231

²⁷¹ Ibid

²⁷² Albert Bandura. “Social Cognitive Theory.” In *Handbook of Social Psychological Theories*. Ed. Paul A. M. Kruglanski, A. W. van Lange and E. T. Higgins. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2011), 358

²⁷³ Albert Bandura. “Social Cognitive Theory of Self-Regulation.” *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50 (1991): 249

²⁷⁴ Ibid

²⁷⁵ Charles S. Carver and Michael F. Scheier. *On the Self-Regulation of Behavior*. (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2

²⁷⁶ Zoe Liberman, Amanda L. Woodward, and Katherine D. Kinzler. “The Origins of Social Categorization.” *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 21, no. 7 (2017): 556

between situations and their thought and actions, people can identify the psychologically significant features of their social environment that lead them to behave in certain ways²⁷⁷.

The result of social cognitive processing is the establishment of a social cognitive framework, which refers to a cognitive structure that agents refer to and rely on when making sense of self and others and the situation they find themselves in²⁷⁸. Social cognitive frameworks are context-specific cognitive roadmaps that come to function as the underlying component of the conflict narratives presented in the previous section²⁷⁹.

In this respect, agents seek through social cognitive processing to reach, as stated by Heider: “in some measure what a science is supposed to achieve: an adequate description of the subject matter which makes prediction possible”²⁸⁰. Since social cognitive frameworks are socially constructed, however, they are often tainted by beliefs, world views, goals and other biases that make up the human conscious. They are subjective evaluations of reality rather than adequate descriptions of self, situations, and others. But regardless of this, social cognitive frameworks function as ways to make sense of what a situation is about, who is present within it, and the type of responses that should be made and outcomes that should be reached, based on the understanding of what characterises the situation and those present. By emphasising these human capabilities, scholars such as Bandura stress that agents do not unconsciously react to an environment, nor are they unconsciously steered by the past or by set future goals²⁸¹. Rather, agents construct their social cognitive processing around various abilities, which will result in understandings that are constantly monitored²⁸². To understand a situation there is hence a need to explore agents’ social cognitive processing, how this occurs, what the resulting social cognitive frameworks constitute of, and how such frameworks interact to form the situation. This is also the aim of this research as focus will be on how the conflict parties in Ukraine and Georgia cognitively process the conflict and the conflict parties involved, and how they cognitively systematise and compartmentalise stimuli into social cognitive frameworks that come to form their interactions. The exploration of how the conflict parties reach social cognitive frameworks will eventually give an insight into the intergroup dynamics that shape the conflict parties’ relations. To explore the conflict parties’ social cognitive framework there is, however, a need to further unravel the cognitive processes that shape group identities and interests, and how these processes result in structured understandings of situations, self, and other.

²⁷⁷ Bandura, “Social Cognitive Theory of Self-Regulation”, 250

²⁷⁸ Moskowitz, *Social Cognition: Understanding Self and Others*, 3

²⁷⁹ Fiske, *Social Beings: Core Motives in Social Psychology*, 128

²⁸⁰ Heider, *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations*, 5

²⁸¹ Albert Bandura, “Social Cognitive Theory. In *Annals of Child Development. Vol. 6. Six Theories of Child Development*. Ed. R. Vasta. (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1989), 39

²⁸² Ibid

3.3.1 Constructing Group Identities

In social constructivism, identities are treated as social constructs. However, as Guillaume states, despite this many IR scholars do not focus on identity construction but on the impact that socially constructed identities have on issues in international politics²⁸³. To understand the function of identities there is, however, also need to explore the processes that lead to their construction. According to Guillaume, identities emerge from dialogue²⁸⁴. Identities are thus not finite as they are relative to their position in the world, and they occur as a result of interactions²⁸⁵. This is also emphasised by Connolly who points to how identities are relational as there is no identity without difference, and so “everything” can be traced to how this identity/difference is negotiated²⁸⁶. This relational view of identity is equally found in social psychology where Tajfel argues that identities are “at the same time separate and unavoidably shackled together (in a sense that the fate of each of them depends, to a large extent, upon the nature of its relations with the others)”²⁸⁷. Identities are thus interdependent social constructs as their construction is reliant on the presence of other identities. In social psychology, the construction of identities is linked to the cognitive process of social categorization²⁸⁸. Social categorization is a cognitive process that involves classifying agents into groups based on perceived similar characteristics and trademarks these agents are thought to share²⁸⁹. These trademarks can be many including appearance, culture, religion, sex, age etc. From this process, the agent can cognitively systematise situations, as social categorisation allows the agent to establish who it is, who the others are, and how these groups of agents relate to each other. Social categorization is thus, according to Lilli and Rehm, an important part of forming self/other understandings²⁹⁰ as it allows them to reason, as further stated by Liberman: “about the likely thoughts, beliefs, actions, and interactions of others, as guided by group membership”²⁹¹. Social categorization identifies classes of stimuli that share important properties, which allows the observer to bring order and coherence to agents, objects, and events it encounters²⁹². Social

²⁸³ Xavier Guillaume. "Foreign policy and the politics of alterity: a dialogical understanding of international relations." *Millennium* 31, no. 1 (2002): 6

²⁸⁴ *Ibid*

²⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 6-7

²⁸⁶ William E. Connolly. *The ethos of pluralization*. (University of Minnesota Press, 1995), xx-xxi; and Campbell, David. "Identity, difference, and the global: William Connolly's international theory." In *The new pluralism: William Connolly and the contemporary global condition*. Ed. By David Campbell and Morton Schoolman (2008), 290

²⁸⁷ Henri Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology*. (CUP Archive, 1981), 223

²⁸⁸ Galen v. Bodenhausen, Sonia K. Kang, and Destiny Peery. "Social Categorization and the Perception of Social Groups." In *The SAGE Handbook of Social Cognition*, (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2012), 318

²⁸⁹ Zoe Liberman, Amanda L. Woodward, and Katherine D. Kinzler. "The Origins of Social Categorization." *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 21, no. 7 (2017): 556

²⁹⁰ Waldemar Lilli and Jürgen Rehm. "Judgmental Processes as Bases of Intergroup Conflict." In *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Conflict*, Ed. Stroebe W., Kruglanski A.W., Bar-Tal D. and Hewstone M. (Springer, 1988), 29

²⁹¹ Liberman, Woodward, and Kinzler. "The Origins of Social Categorization", 556

²⁹² Bodenhausen, Kang, and Peery. "Social Categorization and the Perception of Social Groups", 318

categorization thus assists in forming agents' social cognitive frameworks as it provides a cognitive structure from which social information becomes more relatable and manageable²⁹³. Social categorization also allows the observer to differentiate between agents as the observer can speak of categorical representations, rather than having to separately name and treat each individual within this representation “as a wholly unprecedented and hence unpredictable entity”²⁹⁴. Through social categorisation the agent can approach e.g. a conflict as a situation involving “Ukrainians and Russians”, instead of a situation that unfolds between individuals who interact in accordance with inter-personal identities and interests²⁹⁵. A consequence of this categorization is that situations become more cognitively structured. It may, however, also lead to a perception that agents associated with the same category are more similar than is usually the case, whilst agents associated with outside categories are perceived as more dissimilar²⁹⁶. Social categorisation therefore also involves the construction of in- and out-groups, where the in-group is the group the observer belongs to and out-groups are categories the observer does not belong to²⁹⁷.

To socially categorise is to make sense of self and other and to predict what is likely to guide behaviour and how relations should or will unfold in a social situation. Social categorization does, however, not merely structure situations in accordance with categorical representations, as it also functions as the foundation for constructing group identities. According to Tajfel, a group or social identity is a cognitive construct of who one is in a social situation and it is linked to social categories as the understanding of who is who is based on group membership²⁹⁸. Group identities are identities, which manifest as discursive practices. Group identities are therefore not “things” that agents possess²⁹⁹. A group identity is the understanding that one belongs to a group³⁰⁰. Such identities are not universal but rooted in situationism as an agent's group identity varies in accordance with the situation it finds itself in³⁰¹. One may hence think and act from e.g. an identity of being a woman in one situation and think and act from the identity of being a Ukrainian in another. Group identities differ from interpersonal identities as interpersonal identities refer to personalized bonds of attachment (formed through close dyadic relations such as family or other face-to-face groups), and group identities are bonds deriving from common identifications with a social

²⁹³ Ibid

²⁹⁴ Ibid, 318-319

²⁹⁵ Ibid

²⁹⁶ Lilli and Rehm. “Judgmental Processes as Bases of Intergroup Conflict”, 30

²⁹⁷ Liberman, Woodward, and Kinzler. “The Origins of Social Categorization”, 556

²⁹⁸ Henri Tajfel, *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations. 7th edition*. Cambridge University Press, 2010, 2

²⁹⁹ Richard Jenkins. *Social identity*. (Routledge, 2014), 10

³⁰⁰ Dominic Abrams and Hogg, Michael A. “An introduction to the social identity approach”. In *Social Identity Theory: Constructive and Critical Advances*. Ed. Dominic Abrams and Michael A. Hogg. (Harvester-Wheatsheaf, 1990), 2

³⁰¹ Jenkins. *Social identity*, 7

category³⁰². Group identities do not require personal relations but are depersonalized senses of self where the understanding of self is an interchangeable example of a social category, rather than a “perception of self as a unique person”³⁰³. Group identities are thus defined as a “connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution. It is a perception of a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly”³⁰⁴. Linking this back to the theory of group reification it may hence be argued that group identities are outcomes of group reification processes, which occur because of social categorisation³⁰⁵.

Since group identities are cognitive constructs, they are not visible in the environment but are invoked through social interactions and specific artefacts assigned to them (such as clothing, territory, etc)³⁰⁶. Group identities are also invoked through shared understandings of belonging, a perceived historical connection between group members, and by the identities being “embedded in coherent and integrative social practices”³⁰⁷. Group identities are formed around cognitions and emotions that members come to share, which play a part in making these identities seem “real”³⁰⁸. Group identities are thus social constructs or “sets of meanings” agents attribute to self and others³⁰⁹. Despite the cognitive nature of identities, agents often treat group identities as real or as “social objects”³¹⁰. This may also be referred to what Tajfel called “differentiation between social groups”, which refers to a tendency amongst agents to highlight their differences to obtain a clearer distinctiveness between them³¹¹. This distinctiveness may be expressed by pointing at physical differences, such as appearance or territory associated with a group, but also psychological differences, such as the dispositions associated with a certain group. When making sense of a situation, agents will hence resort to social categorization where they first determine who is present in the situation. This will be linked to a group identity where agents will further elaborate and construct the in-group and out-group’s social distinctiveness, which then functions as a cognitive framework for interactions. The process of constructing group identities is of interest as it allows me to explore how the Ukraine and Georgia conflict parties cognitively systematise the conflict situations. The theory on social

³⁰² Marilyn B. Brewer and Wendi Gardner. “Who Is This ‘We’? Levels of Collective Identity and Self Representations.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 71, no. 1 (1996): 83

³⁰³ Ibid

³⁰⁴ Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper. “Collective Identity and Social Movements.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (2001): 285; and Wendt, “Collective Identity Formation and the International State”, 386

³⁰⁵ Polletta and Jasper. “Collective Identity and Social Movements.”, 283

³⁰⁶ Korostelina, *Social Identity and Conflict: Structures, Dynamics, and Implications*, 16

³⁰⁷ Ibid

³⁰⁸ Mercer, “Feeling like a State: Social Emotion and Identity”, 522

³⁰⁹ Wendt. “Collective Identity Formation and the International State”, 385

³¹⁰ Ibid

³¹¹ Henri Tajfel, *Differentiation between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. (Academic Press, 1978), 2

identity and social categorization will thus allow me to explain how the conflict parties systematize the conflict and parties involved around identity boundaries.

3.3.2 Constructing Group Interests

A social cognitive framework is not merely rooted in group identities as such frameworks also arise from an understanding of what agents want in a situation. Another central element of social cognitive processing is therefore attribution processing where agents will try to establish the group interests that drive those present in a situation by inferring the causes of their behaviour³¹². To “attribute” is to interpret the cause behind one’s own and the behaviour of others³¹³. According to Bertram et.al, social interactions require agents to infer and avow their own intentions and to interpret and establish the intentions of others, as this provides the understanding of motivations that guide behaviour³¹⁴. Whereas identification establishes who is present, attribution establishes what these actors want. When an agent is confronted with stimulus, it will experience this as a disruption in its environment which requires an explanation³¹⁵. Agents will thus engage in a process of determining the causes behind a stimulus, which involves establishing who or what caused it and why³¹⁶. As stated by Gordon Moskowitz, one of the most important changes to our environment, which will cause us to search for explanations, are stimuli caused by interactions with others³¹⁷. Attribution theory therefore focuses on how agents process the causes of behaviour to make sense of the stimuli they encounter as well as judge these and act on them³¹⁸. Attribution processing is linked to an epistemic need as attributing behaviour fulfils the need to identify, understand, and make predictions about self and others³¹⁹. This allows agents to discern a situation and the stimuli that occurs, and it enables agents to decide upon their actions and responses³²⁰. The conclusions reached following the attribution processing provides a feeling of being in control and a sense of well-being, as it creates the perception that agents can “predict” outcomes and position themselves in a strategic manner within the situation³²¹. Establishing the interests of self and others allows agents to bring order to the often-chaotic occurrence of behaviour by constructing a

³¹² Brian H. Spitzberg and Valerie Manusov. “Attribution Theory.” In *Engaging Theories in Interpersonal Communication: Multiple Perspectives*, Ed. Dawn O. Braithwaite and Paul Schrodt. (Sage Publications, 2014), 38

³¹³ Ibid

³¹⁴ Bertram F. Malle, Louis J. Moses, and Dare A. Baldwin. *Intentions and Intentionality: Foundations of Social Cognition*. (MIT Press, 2001),1

³¹⁵ Moskowitz, *Social Cognition: Understanding Self and Others*, 2

³¹⁶ Ibid, 1

³¹⁷ Ibid, 2

³¹⁸ Spitzberg and Manusov. “Attribution Theory”, 37-38

³¹⁹ Moskowitz, *Social Cognition: Understanding Self and Others*, 7

³²⁰ Ibid

³²¹ Ibid

relatively stable knowledge around it³²². In this sense, attribution is a fundamental aspect of intergroup relations as it explains how observation and interpretation of behaviour functions as a means for engagement³²³.

Although a highly subjective process, attribution processing is often experienced as the pursuit of facts and based on an assumption that agents can accurately assess the behaviour under observation³²⁴. In attribution processing, the observer nevertheless produces its own truth about the observed, which may lead to biases³²⁵. When processing information, agents will arrive at what they believe is the cause or intent of a given behaviour. These causes may be many, but they tend to be divided into personal and situational causality³²⁶. Personal causality is an attribution linked to an agent's disposition, its motives, goals, and sentiments³²⁷. Behaviour explained around personal causality is regarded as intentional as an agent is thought to behave in a certain manner due to its character³²⁸. To arrive at personal causality, agents will observe how consistent a behaviour is (stability) and the extent to which an agent is in control of its behaviour (controllability)³²⁹. This implies that the behaviour of an agent is attributed to its character if the behaviour is regarded as "typical" for this agent, and if the agent is perceived as being in control of what it is doing. The situational causality, on the other hand, refers to the external circumstances that have forced an agent to act in a certain manner³³⁰. Here behaviour is perceived as unintentional as it is caused by forces beyond the agent's control³³¹. Often when agents seek to prescribe the causes of other's behaviour there is more focus on personal than situational factors³³². This is also termed the fundamental attribution error, which is the tendency to underestimate situational factors and overestimate personal factors when attributing the causes of other's behaviour³³³. As argued by Smith, there is a difference in attribution processing depending on whether these are directed at oneself or others³³⁴. In attributing one's own

³²² Malle and Baldwin. *Intentions and Intentionality: Foundations of Social Cognition*, 1; and Jean-Claude Deschamps. "Attribution or Explanations in Everyday Life." *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 6, no. 1 (1997): 8-9

³²³ Robert Jervis. *Perception and Misperception in International Politics: New Edition*. (Princeton University Press, 2017), 32

³²⁴ Moskowitz, *Social Cognition: Understanding Self and Others*, 11

³²⁵ Ibid

³²⁶ Ibid, 235

³²⁷ Ibid

³²⁸ Ibid

³²⁹ Spitzberg and Manusov. "Attribution Theory", 38

³³⁰ Moskowitz, *Social Cognition: Understanding Self and Others*, 237

³³¹ Ibid

³³² Ibid

³³³ Maio and Augoustinos. "Attitudes, Attributions and Social Cognitions", 371

³³⁴ Eliot R. Smith "Attributions and Other Inferences: Processing Information about the Self versus Others." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 20, no 2 (1984): 99

behaviour there tends to be focus on situational causality, as this often supports a more positive self-understanding³³⁵.

The study of attribution processing has mainly been conducted on interpersonal relations where an individual's behaviour is attributed to either its personality or the situation it finds itself in. According to Yzerbyt et.al, attribution is, however, not only linked to interpersonal relations as agents may also refer to social categories as an invariant factor that shapes behaviour³³⁶. This means that social categories are, in certain interactions, regarded as stable causal factors, which can be used to explain behaviour that occurs³³⁷. Linked to the theory of social identity, it is argued that group membership is not merely a "background factor" but an important dispositional aspect³³⁸. This is particularly the case in conflicts perceived as group mediated. In these contexts, individual attributions are substituted with social attributions, as behaviour is explained from the social category self and others are perceived to belong to³³⁹. In this context, personal and situational attributions still apply, however, as stated by Yzerbyt et.al, if "members of a group take a particular line of action and that group is perceived to be a coherent social entity, perceivers may well underestimate the causal role of the environment and credit instead some underlying disposition of the group"³⁴⁰. In times of conflicts, groups are thus often perceived as "a person", which can be identified by certain shared characteristics or "a personality"³⁴¹. When seeking to make sense of who is present in a conflict and what they want, agents may thus also engage in social attribution where the perceived group and its members are understood as behaving and thinking in a consistent manner because they make up a species of their own³⁴². This tendency may result in an attribution bias called "group attribution error", where the characteristics and attitude of a group member is perceived to reflect the characteristics and attitude of the whole group this agent belongs to³⁴³. The theory on attribution processing is of interest as it allows me to explain how the Ukraine and Georgia conflict parties make sense of the agents present in the conflicts by granting them associated group traits and interests through the attribution

³³⁵ Ibid

³³⁶ Vincent Yzerbyt, Anouk Rogier, and Susan T. Fiske. "Group Entitativity and Social Attribution: On Translating Situational Constraints into Stereotypes." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 24 (1998): 1090; Tajfel, *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, 112

³³⁷ Susan T. Fiske, Steven L. Neuberg, Ann E. Beattie, and Sandra J. Milberg. "Category-Based and Attribute-Based Reactions to Others: Some Informational Conditions of Stereotyping and Individuating Processes." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 23, no. 5 (1987): 400

³³⁸ Rogier Yzerbyt and Fiske. "Group Entitativity and Social Attribution: On Translating Situational Constraints into Stereotypes", 1090

³³⁹ Ibid

³⁴⁰ Ibid

³⁴¹ Ibid, 1092

³⁴² Fiske, Neuberg, Beattie, and Milberg. "Category-Based and Attribute-Based Reactions to Others: Some Informational Conditions of Stereotyping and Individuating Processes", 400

³⁴³ Scott T. Allison and David M. Messick. "The Group Attribution Error." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 21, no. 6 (November 1985): 564; Maio and Augoustinos. "Attitudes, Attributions and Social Cognitions", 372

of behaviour. Attribution theory will therefore allow me to explain how the conflict parties make sense of the factors that motivate themselves and the others in the conflict. Attribution theory will also allow me to explain the biases that may occur in social cognitive processing and how intergroup dynamics arise from such biases. Finally, the concepts and theories dealing with group identity and interest construction will assist me in exploring and explaining how the Ukraine and Georgia conflict parties reach social cognitive frameworks, which come to define their interactions. It is then by comparing these frameworks and the processes that constitute them that I will be able to locate the intergroup dynamics that contribute to the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts' protraction.

3.4 Theoretical Constraints

In this research, it is argued that social cognitive processes, and the interaction between them, are vital aspects to include if we are to better understand why conflict parties continue to engage in violence and deny conflict resolution efforts. This research thus seeks to complement the literature on the conflicts in the post-Soviet space, as it focuses on the role intergroup dynamics play in times of conflict protraction. It more specifically seeks to explore how the conflict parties process stimuli in the conflict contexts, and how such processing leads to and sustains the self/other understandings that they rely on in their interactions. This does not imply that there are no constraints when using the theoretical framework established in the previous sections. A constraint of this approach is that it re-directs attention from the material motivations for behaviour and how these may generate conflict protraction. In the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts there are inevitably a plethora of interests that need to be addressed for the conflicts to be resolved. Adding to this is also that interests may play a role in shaping behaviour. The understanding among conflict parties that interests are not addressed in current agreements may e.g. be a cause for the continued dismissal of conflict resolution efforts. Similarly, negative behaviour may be undertaken as conflict parties believe that interests are better fulfilled through violence. Here the aid of Russia for the non-state actors, as well as the support the non-state actors grant Russia's actions, may function as a motivation for the conflict parties to continue their pursuit of certain interests. As stated in the literature review, the material aspect of the conflicts is of essence in understanding why they occurred and to some extent why they continue. If one however takes Wendt's account that interests and identities are mutually constitutive, the pure emphasis on material interests does not provide the full picture of the factors that shape the conflicts' protraction³⁴⁴. This is hence were the focus on cognition and how this shapes self/other understandings has merits, although I do acknowledge the constraints this approach has in determining motivations for behaviour.

³⁴⁴ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 231

This also leads to the question of interpretation and the various forces that may shape these. In this research, emphasis is on how the processing of stimuli in specific contexts leads to group identity and group interest management. To understand why conflicts occur and become protracted, one should, however, also address the role of power. According to Guzzini and Guillaume, there is a tendency in social constructivism to exclude power from the equation of interpretations and interactions³⁴⁵. As Guzzini states, power functions as the “reflexive link between observation and action”³⁴⁶. This is not something that this research denies as power is inevitably linked to cognition and it relates to how the conflict parties seek to position themselves within the conflicts and how they interact. The focus of this research is, however, not on the role power plays in generating interpretations, but the role that intergroup dynamics play in shaping continued negative interactions. A power analysis is of great value for understanding the factors that may have caused the conflicts to occur, the power relations that may keep the Ukraine and Georgia conflict parties in a deadlock, and why conflict parties e.g. benefit from the continuation of a certain social system³⁴⁷. This, however, is not the chosen emphasis of this research, as I seek to explore and explain how intergroup dynamics form relations conducive for conflict protraction. This is something which has yet to be addressed and it is the gap in the literature that I seek to fill.

This research also excludes a historical focus and how collective memories have assisted in shaping, maintaining, and changing understandings of self and other³⁴⁸. This does not imply that this research refutes the influence of history and collective memories, as these too greatly shape the self/other understandings that the conflict parties rely on³⁴⁹. As there has already been written a great amount of literature on the role history and collective memory plays in the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts, this is not the focus of this research. Furthermore, as this research focuses on the factors that contribute to conflict protraction, I have found it of more value to focus on contextuality and how self/other understandings are sustained through the processing of occurring stimuli. Stated differently, this research addresses identities and interests as a continued dialogue that too needs to be unravelled to explore the forces at play in Ukraine

³⁴⁵ Stefano Guzzini. "A reconstruction of constructivism in international relations." *European journal of international relations* 6, no.2 (2000), 150; and Xavier Guillaume "From process to politics." *International Political Sociology* 3, no.1 (2009), 71

³⁴⁶ Ibid, 156

³⁴⁷ Ibid, 171

³⁴⁸ Lene Hansen. "Slovenian identity: State-building on the Balkan border." *Alternatives* 21, no.4 (1996): 473-496.

³⁴⁹ Bar-Tal, Daniel. "Collective memory of physical violence: Its contribution to the culture of violence." In *The role of memory in ethnic conflict*, 77-93. Ed. Daniel Bar-Tal (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2003); and Paez, Dario R., and James Hou Fu Liu. "Collective Memory of Conflicts." In *Intergroup Conflicts and Their Resolution: A Social Psychological Perspective*, 105-124. Ed. Daniel Bar-tal. (Psychology Press, 2011); and Mälksoo, Maria. "'Memory must be defended': Beyond the politics of mnemonical security." *Security dialogue* 46, no.3 (2015): 221-237; and Ilya Prizel. *National identity and foreign policy: nationalism and leadership in Poland, Russia and Ukraine. Vol. 103.* (Cambridge University Press, 1998)

and Georgia³⁵⁰. Although this research excludes history and memory, this does not imply that the approach taken is a-historical. In social psychology, self/other understandings are equally treated as “conventions of knowing that we have acquired over time”³⁵¹, as self/other understandings are both outcomes of contextual factors as well as pre-set assumptions of self and other. But it does imply that I have decided to focus on the interactional aspect of knowledge production to unravel the dynamics that shape conflict protraction specifically. What this research cannot account for is thus how self/other understandings arise from power struggles or how they sustain because of larger knowledge structures generated over time. It can, however, account for is how these understandings sustain from contextual interactions. It is then by combining the findings of this research with that of the existing literature that we may gain a more holistic understanding of the social knowledge that shapes the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts.

The focus on intergroup relations is another aspect that needs to be addressed as it leaves out the internal dynamics within states/non-states, which may also have a role to play in shaping interpretations. Since this research explores how the conflict parties construct group identities and interests, and how these processes interact, it portrays the understanding that citizens and leaders unite around a given group identity and interest construct. Reality is, however, more diverse as there are social identities within states/non-states that collide and equally feed into the conflicts³⁵². This should be acknowledged but it should also be stated that it has been a conscious decision to exclude the study of intragroup dynamics, as this would expand the scope of this research. In future research it would nevertheless be of value to address how intragroup dynamics generate or complicate the construction and maintenance of certain group identities and interests, and how this shapes intergroup relations. As will be seen in the analysis, this research does seek to move beyond the notion that group identities and interests are unified. Hence, although it draws out social cognitive frameworks to reach an insight into the intergroup dynamics that shape the conflicts’ protraction, these frameworks are approached as dynamic. The findings are thus not final conclusions on the group identities and interests present in the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts, but are used as a means for discovering the intergroup processes that shape the dynamics at play. This theoretical framework is thus not exhaustive but seeks to offer a specific lens that explores not merely the often-neglected intergroup dynamics in times of conflict, but also how interpretations arise from interactions. It is then by exploring this that one may explore how social cognitive processes and intergroup dynamics contribute to the protraction of the Georgia and Ukraine conflicts.

³⁵⁰ Guillaume "Foreign policy and the politics of alterity: a dialogical understanding of international relations", 12

³⁵¹ Richard Devetak. "Post-structuralism." In *Theories of international relations*. Eds. S. Burchill, R. Devetak, A. Linklater, M. Paterson, C. Reus-Smit and J. True, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 188

³⁵² Simon, Bernd, and Stefan Stürmer. "Respect for group members: Intragroup determinants of collective identification and group-serving behavior." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 29, no.2 (2003): 183-193.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the theories and concepts which will be applied in the analysis of how social cognitive processes and intergroup dynamics contribute to the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts' protraction. To this end, this research applies a multidisciplinary approach, which combines social constructivism with social psychology. Whereas social constructivism is used as the lens to inform how agents and structures are co-constitutive, and the role identities and narratives play in shaping relations, social psychological theories are used to inform how self/other understandings arise and change as a result of cognitive processes. In this research, I also apply the social psychological sub-field of social cognition, which draws in the aspect of contextuality and addresses how self/other understandings arise from the continued interpretation of stimuli that arises in given situations. It is with this as the point of departure that this research seeks to explore how the Ukraine and Georgia conflict parties' cognitive processing forms, sustains, and changes their self/other understandings, and how such processes may lead to conflict protraction.

To explore this, there is a need to develop a common analytical framework for the study of states and non-states. To do so, this research uses a group approach, which focuses on how states/non-states as group identities form from group reification processes. To approach states/non-states as group identities does not imply that they are units that engage in group think. Instead it emphasises the nature of states and non-states as ideational processes where agents come to form group identities and interests, which shape their collective behaviour in times of conflict. It is from this understanding that the theoretical chapter proceeded to present how self/other understandings arise from social categorisation, social identity formation, and attribution. This section presented how conflicts derive from group reification processes that result in group identities and interests, and how intergroup relations arise from social comparison between groups. It also addressed the theory on protracted conflicts, which argues that conflict protraction occurs as the result of cemented self/other understandings. However, rather than merely focusing on how conflict protraction occurs as the result of cemented understandings, this research takes a step back to focus on how the conflict parties reach their self/other understandings and whether their processing may equally contribute to conflict protraction.

This research therefore takes the point of departure that to understand why the conflicts in Ukraine and Georgia continue to persist there is a need to explore the intergroup dynamics that arise between the conflict parties as a result of their interacting social cognitive processes. To establish these dynamics, one may explore how the Ukraine and Georgia conflict parties partition the conflicts into specific groups, with specific identities and interests, and the social cognitive frameworks that arise from this. It is then from these frameworks that one may analyse the processes that the conflict parties utilize when seeking to make sense of and act/react to the stimuli they encounter when interacting with others from a foundation

of group reification. By establishing these dynamics, one may gain a better understanding of why the conflict parties continue to pursue detrimental behaviour and continue to insist on upholding specific understandings of the situation, self, and other.

4.0. Methods for Analysing Intergroup Dynamics

In this chapter I present the methods and data used to analyse the Georgia and Ukraine conflict parties' social cognitive processing and the intergroup dynamics that may derive from this. To this end, this chapter will address how social cognitive processing relates to groups, and the role group leaders play in constructing understandings about the situation, self, and other through their capacity as identity managers. It will also explain why the two case studies have been chosen, how the methods of frame and thematic analysis can be used to analyse social cognitive processes and intergroup dynamics, and how data has been collected.

4.1 Group Identities, Identity Managers, and Conflict Narratives

The objective of the analysis is to explore how the conflict parties in Ukraine and Georgia reach understandings about the conflict situation, self, and other through social cognitive processing, and the intergroup dynamics that occur from these interacting processes. Focus is thus on conscious processes³⁵³. Unlike psychoanalytical research, which explores unconscious processes such as emotions and how these steer behaviour³⁵⁴, this research explores how agents consciously make sense of something and someone³⁵⁵. To explore such processing, I direct my attention to the conflict parties' conflict narratives. More specifically, the objective is to analyse what the conflict parties are saying and how they structure what they are saying, as this gives insight into the processes they apply when seeking to reach structured understandings of the situation, self, and other. As stated in the theory chapter, social cognitive processing is a human experience that individuals engage in. From the perspective of this research, however, conflicts are not only individual experiences, but a collective engagement rooted in intergroup relations where agents think and act from a group-prism. Before going into details regarding the methods and data used in this research, there is therefore a need to dig into how social cognitive processing relates to group identities and particularly group leaders.

In social psychology there is a general agreement that to experience and produce cognition there must be a physical body³⁵⁶. Since cognition occurs as a process within an individual it is argued that it is not possible for groups to experience this. Mercer, however, states that psychological processes, such as cognition and emotions, do take place in collective settings, but rather than taking place as a bodily

³⁵³ Piotr Winkielman and J Schooler. "Unconscious, Conscious, and Metaconscious in Social Cognition." In *Social Cognition: The Basis of Human Interaction*. Ed. Fritz Strack and Jens Förster. (Psychology Press, 2008), 49

³⁵⁴ Margaret Wetherell. "Unconscious conflict or everyday accountability?." *British Journal of Social Psychology* 44, no 2 (2005): 169-175.

³⁵⁵ Winkielman and Schooler. "Unconscious, Conscious, and Metaconscious in Social Cognition", 49

³⁵⁶ Mercer, "Feeling like a State: Social Emotion and Identity", 522

experience they occur as social relations³⁵⁷. Drawing on social categorization theory, he argues that cognition is not only connected to the biological body but also to the social categories that agents use to define themselves and others with³⁵⁸. Therefore, even though cognitive processing depends on a biological body to exist, it is not reducible to the body³⁵⁹. Rather, social categorization and social identity is strongly linked to cognition as identification is based on a perception of belonging. A shared understanding is what make social constructs such as group identities seem “real” and of importance³⁶⁰. A group is therefore not a biological body nor a collectively assembled organ capable of producing a thought or feeling, which instinctively transcends to all agents within this constellation³⁶¹. Rather, in a group context, cognitions are socially contagious processes that occur when agents discover that events and issues impinge on their group identity and its attached values and norms³⁶². To reach collective cognitions, group members rely on group structures (such as group roles and norms), which give them the ability to think, feel, and behave collectively³⁶³. One of such structures is the reliance on group leaders to produce a dominant narrative about a situation, including an understanding of who the group is within the situation, who it is confronted with, and thus how in-group members should think and act. In this sense, cognition becomes a structural engagement as group leaders reach a collective interpretation on behalf of a group, based on the expressed group identity and interests thought to unite them and their group members. In situations of collective action, cognition hence still arises within the individual. However, here leaders will communicate and compare cognitions to reach a collective understanding of a given situation and of how it should be approached.

Such an approach is also found in IR where scholars point to how leaders utilize identity discourses in times of e.g. conflict³⁶⁴. This approach is often rooted in the understanding that there is a hierarchy between leaders and citizens, as leaders construct the self-understanding that citizens of a state abide to³⁶⁵. In social psychology, however, identity construction is not an outcome that derives from a hierarchical relationship between leaders and members but from a reciprocal relationship. What this implies is that group identities are not constructed in isolation but in connection to the actual, imagined, and implied presence of others. This may also be referred to as the dialogical process where leaders as “identity

³⁵⁷ Ibid

³⁵⁸ Ibid

³⁵⁹ Ibid

³⁶⁰ Ibid

³⁶¹ Eliot R. Smith, Charles R. Seger, and Diane M. Mackie. “Can Emotions Be Truly Group Level? Evidence Regarding Four Conceptual Criteria.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 93, no 3. (2007): 431

³⁶² Ibid

³⁶³ Georg Theiner, Colin Allen, and Robert L. Goldstone. “Recognizing Group Cognition.” *Cognitive Systems Research* 11, no. 4 (2010): 379; and Daniel Bar-tal, *Group beliefs: A conception for analyzing group structure, processes, and behavior*. (Springer Science & Business Media, 2012)

³⁶⁴ Guillaume "Foreign policy and the politics of alterity: a dialogical understanding of international relations", 12

³⁶⁵ Ibid

producer[...]tries to consolidate both an external and internal self through the creation of an identity discourse aimed equally at individuals within the state and other state-identities surrounding it”³⁶⁶. The construction of a group identity is not the sole outcome of leaders’ cognitive processing. It is an interactive process where leaders construct sense making through the processing of stimuli that their group members and others generate, whilst group members adopt or reinforce this sense making by processing the stimuli that their leaders and others generate. As Lührmann and Eberl state, this also means that group identities and interests are rarely the sole outcome of leaders’ actions or personal identities³⁶⁷. Leaders instead seek to match or enhance a social identity that they perceive exists within a society³⁶⁸. Sense making about a situation, self, and other forms from a leadership-member relationship, where both leaders and members seek to reinforce the prototypes associated with the group identity that has been mobilized in the situation³⁶⁹. The construction of groups is therefore a somewhat mutual endeavour which is managed (and not dictated) by leaders³⁷⁰.

This understanding links to the work of Anstee who focuses on the role political elites as representatives of their states play in shaping and managing identities³⁷¹. In her work, Anstee points to how a state does not abide to one identity but inhabits and represents transnational identities and a compilation of domestic identity constructs³⁷². There are multiple social identities that can shape understandings of self and other, and so it becomes the role of leaders to manage the cognitive systematization that they and their members should abide to when making sense of a situation³⁷³. This implies that identity management involves the reification of groups as leaders will point to which group identities are of “contextual relevance”, resulting in specific social identities becoming more salient in certain situations³⁷⁴. Identity management is about internal power as leaders do not necessarily seek to manage the behaviour of members per se but manage the members’ understanding of self and other³⁷⁵. It thus becomes the role of leaders to manage in-group members through the establishment of the official discourse surrounding a situation³⁷⁶.

³⁶⁶ Ibid

³⁶⁷ Thomas Lührmann and Peter Eberl. "Leadership and identity construction: Reframing the leader-follower interaction from an identity theory perspective." *Leadership* 3, no. 1 (2007): 115-116

³⁶⁸ Ibid

³⁶⁹ Ibid

³⁷⁰ Ibid, 116

³⁷¹ Jodie Anstee. “Norms and the Management of Identities: The Case for Engagement between Constructivism and the Social Identity Approach” in *Psychology and Constructivism in International Relations: An Ideational Alliance*, Ed. Vaughn P. Shannon and Paul A. Kowert. (University of Michigan Press, 2012), 79

³⁷² Ibid

³⁷³ Ibid, 82

³⁷⁴ Ibid, 80

³⁷⁵ Lührmann and Eberl. "Leadership and identity construction: Reframing the leader-follower interaction from an identity theory perspective", 116

³⁷⁶ Jodie Anstee. “Norms and the Management of Identities: The Case for Engagement between Constructivism and the Social Identity Approach”, 83-86

From a conflict perspective, this links to the understanding that conflicts are collective endeavours which involve, as well as rely on, an interaction between leaders and members. As Bar-Tal states:

Although leaders often make the decisions, society members are an inherent part of these conflicts as they have been mobilized for participation[...]Leaders and their followers thus form a socio-psychological repertoire[...]that lead to conflicts and their escalation, and both must change in order to deescalate and terminate the conflicts³⁷⁷

To explore how and why conflicts become protracted there is a need to approach these situations as collective situations and acknowledge that leaders are not agents who automatically steer the thoughts and behaviour of their citizens. Leaders are group identity managers who manage the official discourse connected to the conflict, and through this sets the ideational foundation for citizens' understanding of the conflict, self, and other. This ideational foundation then plays a significant role in guiding leaders' and citizens' thoughts and behaviour. Group identity management is hence an essential aspect of conflicts because as further stated by Bar-Tal: "The fundamental point thus in understanding the dynamics of conflicts is not their eruption but the way they are handled"³⁷⁸. The focus on identity managers is also of relevance in this research, as this concept presents "who" is speaking and where cognition arises from. Hence, rather than treating social cognitive processing as the outcome of group think, this research draws emphasis on leaders and how they come to think on behalf of, and to some extent construct, the groups that they claim to represent. The concept of identity managers allows me to explore who is processing stimuli and who to a great extent is upholding certain structured understandings of a situation, self, and other. It also allows me to approach the construction of understandings as a mutual endeavour between leaders and citizens, as citizens adopt (or are meant to adopt) the understandings their leaders produce and/or feed into these understandings through the stimuli that the citizens themselves produce. This research hence approaches social cognitive processing, and the social cognitive frameworks that arise and sustain, as managed processes.

Leaders play a pivotal part in conflicts as it becomes their role to cognitively systematise the conflict and provide a narrative that justifies and explains the occurrence and continuation of the conflict. A narrative refers to "a story about an event or events that has a plot with a clear starting point and end-point, providing sequential and causal coherence about the world and/or a group's experience"³⁷⁹. When studying narratives, scholars have done so from amongst other the individual level where focus is on the life stories that provide a sense of meaning and offers a chronological overview and purpose to an

³⁷⁷ Daniel Bar-Tal, *Intractable Conflicts: Socio-Psychological Foundations and Dynamics*. (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 3

³⁷⁸ Ibid, 7.

³⁷⁹ Bar-Tal, Oren, and Nets-Zehngut. "Sociopsychological analysis of conflict-supporting narratives: A general framework.", 663

individual's life³⁸⁰. On the group level, narratives are treated as social constructs consisting of interrelated events, which account for a group's collective experience and represents the shared identity³⁸¹. Such narratives assist in creating and negotiating reality and they construct agents as socially specific persons from which they understand themselves³⁸². This is also a reason for the complexity of changing narratives as these pertain to both a group identity's existence but also an individual's self-understanding³⁸³. This research takes the group approach to narratives as focus is on how leaders form and sustain conflict narratives that their citizens come to think and act in accordance with. As stated, this does not mean that I approach citizens as agents who automatically abide to these narratives. As Bar-Tal states, there is often an element of narrative engagement as citizens navigate several narratives and as a result may challenge the narrative their leaders communicate³⁸⁴. However, rather than exploring how narratives are contested within a group identity, I draw attention to how leaders of the Ukraine and Georgia conflict parties' construct social cognitive frameworks, and how these form conflict narratives that shape continued negative interactions between the conflict parties. This also means that I explore the official conflict narratives. Emphasis is not on a leader's personal beliefs nor is the aim to explore if a conflict narrative is true or false, or if it derives from personal interests. Focus is on the role leaders play in shaping official narratives and how such narratives may contribute to conflict protraction. To this end, I explore what the leaders are saying as this gives an insight into the processes they use to reach an understanding about the situation, self, and other, and the processes that come to shape the conflict parties' intergroup dynamics.

4.2 Analysing the Steps of Social Cognitive Processing

To analyse the social cognitive processes that lead to conflict narratives, one must explore the cognitive steps that allow identity managers to process and compartmentalise stimuli they encounter. As established, when engaging in a situation, agents will be confronted by various stimuli (social information such as words uttered, behaviour performed etc), which they need to decipher to position themselves and others in a cognitive framework from which they can act/react. In social cognitive research, the processing of stimuli is approached as a series of steps. When confronted with stimulus, an observer will first seek to deconstruct this stimulus by breaking it into nodes. These nodes will then be compartmentalised into schemas, which

³⁸⁰ Ibid

³⁸¹ Brent J. Steele, *Ontological security in international relations: Self-identity and the IR state*. (Routledge, 2008), 10; and Bar-Tal, Oren, and Nets-Zehngut. "Sociopsychological analysis of conflict-supporting narratives: A general framework.", 663

³⁸² Bar-Tal, Oren, and Nets-Zehngut. "Sociopsychological analysis of conflict-supporting narratives: A general framework.", 663

³⁸³ Ibid

³⁸⁴ Ibid

function as the components that shape the social cognitive frameworks³⁸⁵. According to Huesmann, the human memory is a network of nodes and links, which represent certain encoded propositions that become activated when an agent is confronted with stimulus³⁸⁶. These nodes and links refer to concepts that agents activate and use to make sense of what they are confronted with³⁸⁷. A node may e.g. be a social category such as “Russians”, it may be a topic such as “genocide”, and it may be a feature such as “hostile”. Links are determinants that link these concepts together such as “are” or “is not”. The nodes that an agent activates may derive from previous experiences, or knowledge, and so some may be pre-used concepts that the agent once again applies for sense making³⁸⁸. The social category “a Russian” may e.g. be a node that has gained its characteristics over the years and one that is constantly reused for sense making. The topic of “genocide” may only have arisen into consciousness in recent years, as the agent has been exposed to or experienced certain types of behaviour, which it now can characterise as genocide. An agent can, however, also construct new nodes in a situation if what it is confronted with does not correlate with anything it has seen/experienced before³⁸⁹. In such a case an agent may rely on social categorisation in order to group stimuli into specific concepts. Nodes can hence be pre-set concepts that are reactivated, or they may be new concepts that agents form by processing the stimuli they encounter. Once a node has been activated this may spread to other nodes through various links³⁹⁰. The initial step of social cognitive processing thus involves the identification of stimuli traits, which allows the observer to interpret what is going on and who or what it is confronted with³⁹¹. Although node activation occurs from linked concepts, there is no hierarchy between them as they make up a web³⁹².

From the activation of nodes, the observer will compartmentalise these nodes into schemas, which are mental frameworks agents rely on to interpret and organise information. According to Huesmann, a schema refers to any “macro knowledge structure[...]that represents substantial knowledge about a concept, its attributes, and its relations to other concepts”³⁹³. Schemas constitute of interlinked nodes and they are used to infer about situation, self, and others where they are referred to as a self-schema, situation-

³⁸⁵ L. Rowell Huesmann, “The Role of Social Information Processing and Cognitive Schema in the Acquisition and Maintenance of Habitual Aggressive Behavior.” In *Human Aggression. Theories, Research, and Implications for Social Policy*, Ed. Russell G. Geen and Edward Donnerstein. (Elsevier, 1998), 80

³⁸⁶ Ibid, 79

³⁸⁷ Ziva Kunda, *Social Cognition: Making Sense of People*. (MIT Press, 1999), 46

³⁸⁸ Susan T. Fiske and Linda M. Dyer. "Structure and development of social schemata: Evidence from positive and negative transfer effects." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 48, no.4 (1985), 840

³⁸⁹ Ibid

³⁹⁰ Kunda, *Social Cognition: Making Sense of People*, 46-47

³⁹¹ Huesmann, “The Role of Social Information Processing and Cognitive Schema in the Acquisition and Maintenance of Habitual Aggressive Behavior.”, 79-80

³⁹² Kunda, *Social Cognition: Making Sense of People*, 46-47

³⁹³ Huesmann, “The Role of Social Information Processing and Cognitive Schema in the Acquisition and Maintenance of Habitual Aggressive Behavior.”, 79

schema³⁹⁴ and other-schema³⁹⁵. Schemas are organized knowledge rooted in generalisations or propositions about the concept being observed and inferred about (e.g. a self-schema may be rooted in a proposition that “I am friendly”)³⁹⁶. They are thus not merely an understanding of a given concept but are also used in times of attribution processing as attributions are influenced by existing schemas³⁹⁷. Schemas form a packaged knowledge about someone or something and they are used to inform agents about what to expect from a certain individual/group and/or situation³⁹⁸. When a string of schemas (such as a situation-schema, self-schema, and other-schema) are activated in relation to each other, this results in a social cognitive framework, which refers to both declarative and procedural knowledge³⁹⁹. A social cognitive framework is a constellation of schemas that combined serve as a script for how agents should think and act in a situation⁴⁰⁰. The steps linked to social cognitive processing may thus be presented as follows:

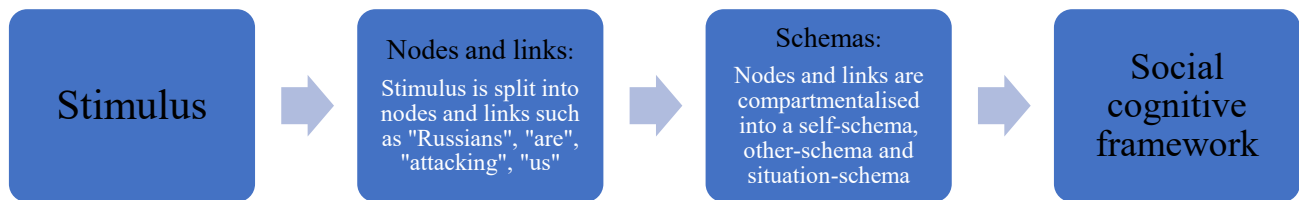


Figure 1: The steps of social cognitive processing and the construction of a social cognitive framework

To understand how conflict parties process stimuli, one may explore what kind of nodes and links the identity managers activate in their conflict narratives, and the schemas and frameworks they construct from these nodes and their compartmentalisation. This reveals the processes used for reaching structured meanings of a conflict, self, and other. These processes and how they interact can then be explored to unravel the dynamics that shape the conflict parties’ relations. This is also the objective of my analysis as I apply a thematic and frame analysis to explore the cognitive steps that form the conflict narratives communicated in the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts.

³⁹⁴ Ibid, 79-80

³⁹⁵ Charles G. Lord, “Schemas and Images as Memory Aids: Two Modes of Processing Social Information.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 38, no. 2 (1980): 258

³⁹⁶ Lord, “Schemas and Images as Memory Aids: Two Modes of Processing Social Information”, 258

³⁹⁷ Huesmann, “The Role of Social Information Processing and Cognitive Schema in the Acquisition and Maintenance of Habitual Aggressive Behavior”, 80

³⁹⁸ Lord, “Schemas and Images as Memory Aids: Two Modes of Processing Social Information”, 258

³⁹⁹ Huesmann, “The Role of Social Information Processing and Cognitive Schema in the Acquisition and Maintenance of Habitual Aggressive Behavior.”, 80

⁴⁰⁰ Jean-Claude Deschamps, “Attribution or Explanations in Everyday Life.” *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 6, no. 1 (1997): 10-11

4.2.1 Thematic Analysis

A central feature when analysing social cognitive processes is to infer what kind of nodes are activated in the processing of stimuli. Since nodes relate to concepts, one may approach these as “themes”. When exploring which nodes are activated as part of a conflict party’s social cognitive processing, one may focus on which themes run as patterned meaning through the conflict party’s conflict narrative. To do so, one may apply a thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a qualitative method that has been widely applied in psychology as a tool for exploring how agents cognitively process the social world⁴⁰¹. According to Braun and Clarke, a thematic analysis “is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data”⁴⁰². Such an analysis is used for exploring patterns in verbal communication for the purpose of unfolding sense making. The use of a thematic analysis may be either inductive or theoretical⁴⁰³. If used inductively the themes located will function as part of theory development⁴⁰⁴. A theoretical thematic analysis is, on the other hand, rooted in a theoretical framework, where discovered themes are explained through the chosen theoretical prism⁴⁰⁵. This research is based on the latter as it explains the conflict parties’ social cognitive processing by situating the themes explored, within the theories and concepts discussed in the theory chapter.

The aim of a thematic analysis is to “locate” themes within a given text. According to Boyatzis: “A theme is a pattern found in the information that at minimum describes and organizes the possible observations and at a maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon”⁴⁰⁶. When exploring themes, the researcher goes through three phases, which are: 1) recognising an “important moment” in the text 2) encoding this moment and 3) interpreting its meaning and function⁴⁰⁷. A theme is not necessarily located through the occurrence of a word. It may also be recognised by reading a sentence or a paragraph, and interpreting what the overall theme or topic of this paragraph is. An example of this is from the dataset of this research and a quote from the Russian Foreign Ministry’s Information and Press Department regarding the election day for the Russian Duma in September 2016. In this paragraph the department stated that: “Kiev’s attempts to present ultimatums to Russia and to tie up the opening of polling stations in Ukraine to elections in Crimea are ridiculous. Crimea is an inalienable part of Russia, and any decision to hold elections there is the exclusive right of the Russian Federation”⁴⁰⁸. In this paragraph one may interpret the overall

⁴⁰¹ Jonathan A Smith, *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. (SAGE, 2015), 222

⁴⁰² Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke. “Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology.” *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 79

⁴⁰³ Braun and Clarke. “Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology”, 83

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid

⁴⁰⁶ R. Boyatzis, “Thematic Analysis and Code Development” *Transforming Qualitative Information*. (SAGE, 1998), 4

⁴⁰⁷ Boyatzis, “Thematic Analysis and Code Development”, 1

⁴⁰⁸ RFM-152 (Appendix 6)

theme as “belonging” since the Russian identity managers refer to how Crimea rightfully belongs to Russia and how, from this understanding of belonging, Russia may engage in certain behaviour within this territory. Another theme is the “disruption of truth” as the Russian identity managers process the Ukrainian identity managers as wrongfully trying to present the opening of polling stations in Crimea as similar to opening them in Ukraine. The Russian identity managers hence process the Ukrainian identity managers as agents who are trying to distort the truth about who Crimea belongs to, and how one should interpret the behaviour that occurs in the context of the election based on this understanding. Themes may thus be located in words, sentences, and paragraphs and regardless of their ‘origin’ the overall function is that they present a, in the case of this research, given understanding about the conflict and conflict parties involved.

When exploring themes, I only look for themes related to the conflict situation (how did the conflict occur, who is involved, and how to solve it), the conflict parties understanding of self (who are we and what motivates us in the conflict) and their understanding of the other (who are they and what motivates them in the conflict). The thematic analysis will focus on how the conflict parties use language to shape and maintain a narrative about the conflict, self, and other in this context, and it proceeds as follows:

1. First, I read a text to familiarise myself with it and get an overview of themes immediately visible⁴⁰⁹. This is done to familiarise myself with how a text proceeds and to prevent “reading in” themes, which do not correspond with the sentences and paragraphs that emerge further down the page. It is also done to see whether a text addresses issues concerning the conflict and sense making of the situation, self, and other. If there are not any locatable references to this, the text is discarded.
2. If a text deals with the conflict and/or the conflict parties, I proceed to exploring what themes can be interpreted from the different words, sentences, and paragraphs within the text. Such themes may e.g. be: “intergroup conflict”, “genocide”, “belonging”, “history”. The themes are coded using the Nvivo 11 pro software, which is the software used to store texts, analyse directly into these texts, and generate an overview of the themes analysed.
3. Once I have analysed all texts within the dataset, I streamline the themes. This is done to delete themes which have only occurred once within the dataset, and to amalgamate themes that are similar. Each theme is given a short description.

From this analysis, I gain an overview of the various themes that run through the conflict parties’ conflict narratives and an understanding of the nodes that the identity managers activate when processing stimuli. The exploration of nodes eventually offers a foundation for exploring the schemas that constitute the conflict parties’ social cognitive frameworks. The result of the thematic analyses can be found in appendix 7 (Thematic Analysis Georgia – Themes) and appendix 8 (Thematic Analysis Ukraine – Themes).

⁴⁰⁹ Please refer to the section on “primary data” for a more elaborate description of how texts were selected for the thematic and frame analysis.

4.2.2 Frame Analysis

To explore the final steps of the conflict parties' social cognitive processing, I analyse how they compartmentalise nodes into situation-, self-, and other-schemas. To explore the conflict parties' schemas, I focus on how they construct frames using their most salient themes⁴¹⁰. In the field of social cognition, frames are treated as a system of classifications "that allow us to 'locate, perceive, identify and label' the diverse phenomena we encounter through the course of our lives"⁴¹¹. Framing thus refers to the schematisation of stimulus and it is a daily activity as agents "frame reality in order to negotiate it, manage it, comprehend it, and choose appropriate repertoires of cognition and action"⁴¹². The use of frames allows an agent to structure social information, so this information becomes more tangible. To explore frames is therefore to explore how the conflict parties structure conflict stimulus into schemas, which come to function as the social cognitive framework that constitute their conflict narratives:



Figure 2: The link between themes, frames, and schemas

Despite the academic agreement that frames shape cognition, there is a disagreement in both IR and social psychological literature whether frames are interactive or structural. Within the literature on cognition, frames are often treated as cognitive structures stored in memory⁴¹³. From this, frames are pre-given understandings that agents apply or activate when making sense of various situations⁴¹⁴. In sociology and

⁴¹⁰ The most salient themes are themes that have emerged most often in the conflict parties' conflict narratives. I decided to draw my attention to the most salient themes as their continued occurrence implies that they hold a central place within the conflict parties' sense making. The selection of salient themes may, however, be susceptible to personal biases, which is elaborated in the methodological constraint section.

⁴¹¹ Jenny Kitzinger. "Framing and frame analysis." in *Media studies: Key issues and debates*. Ed. Eoin Devereux. (Sage, 2007), 135

⁴¹² Ibid

⁴¹³ Hank Johnston. "A Methodology for Frame Analysis: From Discourse to Cognitive Schemata." In *Social Movements and Culture 4th ed*, 217-246. Edited by Hank Johnston. University of Minnesota Press, 1995. 217

⁴¹⁴ Ibid

anthropology, frames are interactional as they are negotiated and formed in interactions with others⁴¹⁵. Unlike structured frames, interactive frames arise within given situations and so instead of being pre-given understandings, such frames function as contextual understandings⁴¹⁶. In this research, frames will be approached as a combination of both interactive and structural systems of classifications, as it may be argued that frames are formed from both ideational structures and contextual encounters. If one applies this to the conflicts in Ukraine and Georgia, this implies that when processing stimuli, identity managers will not merely rely on pre-set understandings generated from stored memory and shared understandings (such as norms and past experiences), but also form understandings based on the interactions they have with others in the conflicts. This also correlates with the focus on the social cognitive processing steps, where agents activate (construct or re-use) certain nodes that either derive from memory or from the compartmentalisation of stimuli in the context they find themselves. In this research, frames are hence both interactive and structural as behaviour is an outcome of the co-constitution between structures and agents.

To unravel how the conflict parties construct schemas, I could have applied several methods including discourse analysis. Frame analysis and discourse analysis draw on many similarities and frame analysis may be viewed as a type of discourse analysis⁴¹⁷. Both methods pertain to the analysis of discourse and both are used to explore “how ideas, culture, and ideology are used, interpreted, and spliced together with certain situations or phenomena in order to construct particular ideative patterns through which the world is understood by audiences”⁴¹⁸. From the outset, both methods are of use when analysing sense making and how sense making results in constructed social realities⁴¹⁹. Where they differ is that discourse analysis is primarily used to study how texts reproduce or challenge dominant understandings of reality⁴²⁰. Frame analysis is used to analyse how agents “locate, perceive, identify and label” the stimuli that they encounter⁴²¹. Whereas discourse analysis generally is used to explore the components of pre-set understandings, frame analysis allows me to explore the processes that lead to understandings, as frame analysis can pin-point how stimuli is sorted into cognitive schemas⁴²². It hence allows me to interpret how

⁴¹⁵ Art Dewulf, Barbara Gray, Linda Putnam, Roy Lewicki, Noelle Aarts, Rene Bouwen and Cees van Woerkum. "Disentangling approaches to framing in conflict and negotiation research: A meta-paradigmatic perspective." *Human relations* 62, no 2 (2009): 156

⁴¹⁶ Deborah Tannen and Cynthia Wallat. "Interactive frames and knowledge schemas in interaction: Examples from a medical examination/interview." *Social psychology quarterly* 50, no. 2 (1987): 206

⁴¹⁷ Lasse Lindekilde "Discourse and Frame Analysis" in *Methodological Practices in Social Movement Research*, Ed. Donatella della Port (Oxford University Press, 2014), 195

⁴¹⁸ Lindekilde "Discourse and Frame Analysis", 196

⁴¹⁹ Lindekilde "Discourse and Frame Analysis", 200; and Amy Lynn Fletcher, "Clearing the Air: The Contribution of Frame Analysis to Understanding Climate Policy in the United States." *Environmental Politics* 18, no 5 (2009): 802

⁴²⁰ Lindekilde "Discourse and Frame Analysis", 198

⁴²¹ Jenny Kitzinger. "Framing and frame analysis." in *Media studies: Key issues and debates*. Ed. Eoin Devereux. (Sage, 2007), 135

⁴²² Johnston, "A Methodology for Frame Analysis: From Discourse to Cognitive Schemata", *Ibid*, 219

the conflict parties compartmentalise salient themes/nodes into frames/schemas. Framing also allows me to gain an insight into how discourses are used with the aim of mobilising others. According to Entman, to frame is to “select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text”⁴²³. Such salience may be pursued from various objectives, albeit the primary one is to reach a cognitive systematisation of something/someone to have a social cognitive framework from which one may think and act. Adding to this is also, as Lindekilde states, that frames tend to be used to convince audiences of adopting a certain interpretation⁴²⁴. Framing is therefore not an unconscious endeavour but a conscious activity that is context and goal directed⁴²⁵. This correlates with this research’s emphasis on identity managers and how state/non-state leaders construct conflict narratives, which are meant to mobilise their members and justify and explain behaviour in the conflict contexts.

To analyse how the conflict parties compartmentalise their most salient themes into frames, I focus on what they are saying when they use certain themes. Focus is on how e.g. the conflict parties combine themes such as “annexation” and “intergroup conflict” to interpret what is going on and who they are confronted with. The aim of the frame analysis is therefore not to explore how the conflict parties make sense of a theme per se, but how they combine themes to form a schematic understanding of the situation, self, and other. An example of this is from the Ukraine data set where Petro Poroshenko on May 2018 stated that: “We hate the stereotype, as if we are part of the Soviet or Russian empire. Our past is related to Europe. We are trying to get back to the European family right now”⁴²⁶. Here themes such as “history”, “belonging”, and “Russification” are combined to form an understanding of who Ukrainians are and what they want. In this quote, Poroshenko is speaking on behalf of the agents who identify as Ukrainian in the conflict, but he is also managing the Ukrainian identity as he presents the social origin of this identity, and the general ambitions that drive agents who identify as Ukrainian. In this sentence, the Ukraine identity is framed as one which for years has been mis-identified as part of the Russian identity, and it is through these combined themes that Poroshenko points to how Ukrainians now have an ambition of ridding themselves of this false Russian identification. A frame analysis may therefore be used to gain an insight into how nodes are combined into schemas. It is then by combining these schemas that I get an understanding of the social cognitive frameworks that are used for interpretation and narrative production in the conflicts⁴²⁷. By focusing on how the conflict parties reach their social cognitive frameworks through node activation and

⁴²³ Robert M. Entman, “Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm.” *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 52

⁴²⁴ Lindekilde “Discourse and Frame Analysis”, 202

⁴²⁵ Hank Johnston, “A Methodology for Frame Analysis: From Discourse to Cognitive Schemata.” In *Social Movements and Culture 4th ed*, Ed. Hank Johnston. (University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 218; and Johnston, “A Methodology for Frame Analysis: From Discourse to Cognitive Schemata”, 217

⁴²⁶ UP-61 (Appendix 6)

⁴²⁷ Johnston, “A Methodology for Frame Analysis: From Discourse to Cognitive Schemata”, 234

schema production, I will eventually be able to locate the processes that they rely on. It is then by exploring the processes from each conflict party, and how these interact, that I may define the intergroup dynamics that shape the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts:

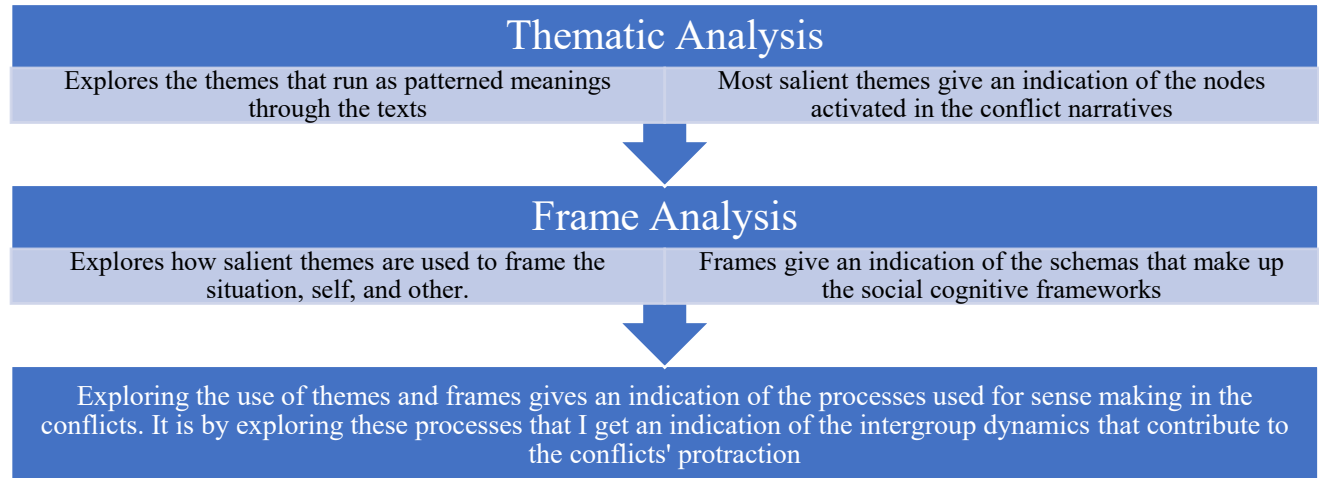


Figure 3: The Analysis Steps of this Research

Since the frame analysis refers to the analysis chapters of this dissertation, they can be found on page 87-155 (Ukraine conflict case) and page 156-218 (Georgia conflict case). For a codebook of the frame analysis please consult appendix 9 (codebook for Georgia analysis) and appendix 10 (codebook for Ukraine analysis)

4.3 Conflict Cases and Conflict Parties

This research focuses on two case studies: the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts. Here, a case study is treated as “not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied”, which is defined by the “boundaries around places and time”⁴²⁸. A case study is hence a choice of topic. Focus is more specifically on cases of protracted conflicts that are bound by the timeframe from when these conflicts occurred, and up until the end-point of data collection for this research (for Ukraine it is 2014-2018 and for Georgia it is 1990-2018). They are also bound by the geographical places where they take place (Ukraine and Georgian/South Ossetian territory). The use of case studies is not meant to be theory building but explanatory, as focus is on how come the conflicts are protracted. The cases are also rooted in deductive reasoning as they are approached from the understanding that the forces that shape conflict protraction, may amongst other be found by unravelling the conflict parties’ social cognitive processing. The aim of the analysis is then to

⁴²⁸ Gary Thomas “A Typology for the Case Study in Social Science Following a Review of Definition, Discourse, and Structure” *Qualitative Inquiry* 17, no. 6 (2011), 512

explore how such processing occurs and interacts and how this may contribute to the conflicts' protraction. Although I have decided to focus on two cases, this research could have been based on a single case study, which would have allowed for a more in-depth analysis of the processes at play in the specific case. I, however, chose to engage with two case studies who share certain similarities to draw out commonalities of conflict protraction⁴²⁹. This does not imply that I seek to draw out general dynamics of protracted conflicts but that each conflict case offers insights into how processes shape conflicting and opposed self/other understandings. The reason for choosing these two cases is that they represent cases of protracted conflicts that have occurred within the post-Soviet space. They hence speak to a personal interest in this area and in protracted conflicts, but they also form an opportunity to add to the growing literature on conflicts in this area by exploring their less-explored dynamics. There are several conflicts in the post-Soviet space that could be subject to this analysis, such as the one between Moldova and Transnistria⁴³⁰. The reason for choosing Ukraine and Georgia is that these conflicts have experienced the most recent outbursts of violence and direct Russian interference (Georgia in 2008⁴³¹ and Ukraine in 2014⁴³²). They thus offer new data on conflicts in the post-Soviet space and new data on how relations have developed between Russia and the other conflict parties. Additionally, the recent outbursts of violence have occurred during a time when the conflict parties have been connected via online media. Compared to conflicts which saw significant developments primarily in the early 1990s, there is in the Ukraine and Georgia cases a range of accessible online data, which may give a "fresh" insight into the conflict parties' social cognitive processing. The choice of case studies was thus based on access to data and from an observation that the two cases offer an opportunity to dig deeper into protracted conflicts, which continue to shape developments in the post-Soviet space.

The conflict parties chosen are the Ukraine government, Russian government, Georgian government, de-facto South Ossetian government, and the Donetsk People's Republic. These have been selected because they are the ones who lay claim to certain physical spaces, needs and rights, and they are the ones with the most consistent presence in the conflicts. This does not imply that there are not any other parties with a role to play in shaping the conflicts. But it does imply that these parties are the ones that have the most leverage in shaping the conflict situation, as it is amongst other their actions and cooperation which

⁴²⁹ Jack S. Levy "Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference" *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25 (2018), 8

⁴³⁰ Helge Blakkisrud and Pål Kolstø. "From Secessionist Conflict toward a Functioning State: Processes of State- and Nation-Building in Transnistria." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 27, no. 2 (2011): 178-210; Behlül Özkan, "Who Gains from the 'No War No Peace' Situation? A Critical Analysis of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict." *Geopolitics* 13, no. 3 (2008): 572-599.

⁴³¹ King, Charles. "The Five-Day War: Managing Moscow After the Georgia Crisis." *Foreign Affairs* 87, (2008): 2

⁴³² Henrik Boesen Lindbo Larsen, "Great Power Politics and the Ukrainian Crisis: NATO, EU and Russia after 2014." DiiS report (2014). Retrieved on October 15, 2019: <https://www.forskningsdatabasen.dk/en/catalog/2439568477>

is required for the conflicts to end. Choosing which conflict parties to analyse thus meant the decision to exclude others. In the Ukraine case, I decided to exclude the Luhansk Peoples Republic. This was driven by the difficulty to locate English content from the Luhansk representatives, which would enable me to produce a substantial argument about their social cognitive processing. I also decided to exclude the Crimean representatives as this areas' inclusion/annexation under the Russian Federation questions the extent to which the Crimean representatives speak on behalf of Crimea⁴³³. The decision to exclude Crimea was also made as I wanted to focus on violent behaviour as seen between Russia, Ukraine, and the non-state actors in Donbass. In the Georgia case, I decided to exclude Abkhazia as Georgia often treats the conflicts with Abkhazia and South Ossetia as the same, making Georgia's social cognitive processing around the two non-states intertwined⁴³⁴. This Georgian tendency questions the possibility of acquiring insights which would not be locatable in an exclusive analysis of South Ossetia. This does not imply that I regard Abkhazia and South Ossetia as conflict parties that act from a similar social cognitive framework. Rather, it is an analytical choice made to make the analysis more concise and avoid expanding my research with a case, which would not provide any substantial new insight into intergroup dynamics in Georgia.

Another party excluded, and which arguably assists in shaping the conflicts, is the EU⁴³⁵. When exploring how Georgia and Ukraine make sense of the EU, it becomes noticeable that the EU is treated in a similar way as the non-state actors in Donbass and South Ossetia treat Russia, namely as an external party whose assistance is vital for identity construction. Where the EU and Russia, however, differ is that Russia is treated as a conflict party by Georgia and Ukraine. The EU, on the other hand, is not treated as a conflict party by any of the Georgia and Ukraine conflict parties but largely as an external negotiation partner. As I wish to focus on conflict parties, and not third parties, the EU has thus been excluded. Others excluded include non-state actors in Ukraine such as the Right Sector⁴³⁶, Azov Battalion⁴³⁷, and the Berkut units⁴³⁸ (this pertains to both the Berkut units which were active during Maidan, but later dissolved by the interim government, and the Berkut units which defected to Crimea⁴³⁹). Although these play a significant role in the conflict's development, it may be argued that they are not conflict parties per se but non-state actors that support specific conflict parties. They hence represent additional tracks in the conflict, and they

⁴³³ Yuri Teper, "Official Russian Identity Discourse in Light of the Annexation of Crimea: National or Imperial?" *Post-Soviet Affairs* 32, no 4 (2016): 378-396

⁴³⁴ GP-65 (5)

⁴³⁵ Whitman and Wolff. "The EU as a Conflict Manager? The Case of Georgia and Its Implications."

⁴³⁶ Anton Shekhovtsov and Andreas Umland. "The Maidan and Beyond: Ukraine's Radical Right." *Journal of Democracy* 25, no. 3 (2014): 58-63.

⁴³⁷ Rosaria Puglisi, *Heroes Or Villains?: Volunteer Battalions in Post-Maidan Ukraine*. Istituto affari internazionali, 2015.

⁴³⁸ Chris Kaspar de Ploeg, *Ukraine in the Crossfire*. SCB Distributors, 2017.

⁴³⁹ Michael Kofman, Katya Migacheva, Brian Nichiporuk, Andrew Radin Tkacheva, and Jenny Oberholtzer. *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*. (Rand Corporation, 2017), 10

are of relevance if we are to understand how the official conflict narrative in Ukraine has formed. Since focus here, however, is not on how identity managers construct narratives in regards to the expressed grievances or beliefs that occur within their society, but how the official understanding of the situation, self, and other interacts with the other conflict parties sense making, these groups are also excluded from my research. An exploration of their social cognitive processing would however be of interest in future studies pertaining to how intragroup dynamics shape developments within Ukraine. The choice of conflict parties was thus made in relation to those deemed most relevant in terms of shaping and changing conflict dynamics. It was also based on a wish to present a substantial research design which could provide an account of intergroup dynamics in Ukraine and Georgia, whilst staying within the dissertation's word count requirement.

Another consideration made for this research design is “who” the different identity managers are. In this research, I identify identity managers as individuals who officially represent the states and non-state actors that I have, in the previous section, recognised as conflict parties in the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts. Given that focus is on official representatives, the individuals under scrutiny include e.g. Presidents, Prime Ministers, representatives at organisations such as the UN and OSCE, but also institutions such as Foreign Ministries. The identity managers are hence agents and institutions which are connected to a government or de-facto government, and which seek to present the conflict party's official conflict narrative. When talking about Russia's identity managers, e.g. this does not refer to Russian citizens, the Russian opposition, the Russian parliament, nor the Russian civil society. Rather, when analysing Russia, I analyse the narratives e.g. Vladimir Putin and the Russian Foreign Ministry communicate, and I treat their narratives as part of the official narrative “Russia” relies on in the conflict. I do therefore not focus solely on Presidents but on a collection of agents who collectively work together to present a unified and consistent approach towards the conflict. This approach also applies to the non-state actors where identity managers refer to the leaders, ministries, and spokesmen of the South Ossetian de-facto government and the Donetsk People's Republic⁴⁴⁰. In the case of Russia, it could be argued that media such as RT reflect Russia's official narrative and hence there is ground for including such media as identity managers. Since, however, it is difficult to locate “who” is speaking on RT, and the extent to which this media is an extension of the Russian government, or a media that seeks to follow the narrative produced by Russia's government, I have decided not to include this, or any other media, as “identity managers”. Focus is therefore only on sources explicitly linked to a government or a republic.

⁴⁴⁰ This opens a debate about the extent to which e.g. the DPR leaders have been democratically elected by the members they claim to represent. For the sake of not expanding the research design with an analysis of how the different representatives came to power, I will have to rely on the conflict parties' own proclamation of representatives as being their actual leadership.

4.4 Data

Data used for this research have been collected from online sources. One part of the dataset has been collected from the homepage of the conflict party representatives, i.e. Presidents, Foreign Ministries and Republic⁴⁴¹. Another part includes data from media and organisations and conflict timelines produced by the research institutes of CSIS and IISS⁴⁴². All data collected have been produced in English as I do not possess the skills to translate Ukrainian, Georgian, Russian, or Ossetian sources. This has restrained my research, as I have had to exclude the Luhansk People's Republic from my research and had to rely on official translations. These translations have been provided by the conflict parties as they were published on their respective homepages. I thus base my analysis on data written in English by the conflict parties themselves. The reliance on English content has meant that the retrieval of data has been smaller than would be the case if I spoke the conflict parties' languages. I have sought to compensate for this by collecting a substantial amount of data from the conflict parties' own homepages. Also, although the reliance on English versions meant using data that may omit cultural distinctiveness, the fact that the conflict parties have produced these English texts, means that they are equally a part of the official narrative that the parties communicate to the outside world. This does not mean that there cannot be instances of mistranslation or the use of incorrect words. Since English is not the native language of either of the conflict parties, there is a risk that they have mistranslated aspects of their narratives. This has implications for this research as I run the risk of interpreting the conflict parties' narratives, and hereof their social cognitive processing, incorrectly. However, given that I have sought to rely on large amounts of data stretching over a couple of years, this does grant the conflict parties the time to correct any misuse of words/expressions that may have occurred. Also, since I am not seeking to establish what the identity managers, or their represented groups as a collective, "actually think" but how the identity managers communicate their reached understandings, this implies that I am exploring how they present themselves and others to the outside world. I am thus to a great extent relying on the same form of communication that the other conflict parties rely on when they seek to infer the identity and intentions of the other. The official narratives are therefore an essential part from the perspective of understanding the dynamics that occur between the conflict parties in the official conflict setting. Stated differently, whereas Russian or Georgian texts may be regarded as texts targeting group members, the English texts (including mistranslated English texts) target a wider audience including most importantly the other conflict parties.

The timeframe used for my data collection is in the case of Ukraine 2013-2018 and Georgia 1990-2018. The reason for establishing these timeframes is because 2013 and 1990 are generally approached in academia, and by the conflict parties themselves, as the onset of the conflicts. The date for

⁴⁴¹ Elaborated in the section on primary sources

⁴⁴² Elaborated in the section on conflict timelines

the onset of the conflicts are, however, also disputed by some of the conflict parties, which is further discussed in the analysis. Nevertheless, 1990 and 2013 are times when conflict related events began to be reported in the media and on the conflict parties' own homepages. In the Georgia case, 1990 is also the furthest one can go back in terms of online sources, as some of the news articles from these early years have been transferred to online media. Due to the limited access to online sources in the Georgia case from 1990 to approximately 2002, I also rely on reports from media and organisations to get a sense of how the conflict has progressed and the main events reported. It is also due to this that the Georgia analysis primarily focuses on the timeframe from 2008-2018. The year of 2018 is the end year for both datasets, as this is when I ended my data collection. Although several developments and events have occurred following 2018, which are of equal relevance to this study, I have had to limit my collection to this end-date, as 2019 was spent on the analysis and the final writing of the dissertation.

4.4.1 Conflict Timelines

The initial phase of my data collection centred around the construction of an overview of how the conflicts have progressed, as I wanted to get an overview that could provide the necessary context for conducting the thematic and frame analysis. To get an overview of how the conflicts progressed, I directed my attention to the conflict timelines been created by the CSIS⁴⁴³ (Center for Strategic and International Studies) and the Armed Conflict Database⁴⁴⁴ of IISS (International Institute for Strategic Studies). These are timelines which, more or less, give a day-to-day account of the events that have unfolded during the conflicts and insight into other conflict-related information such as number of casualties. Both databases are based on media reporting. Whereas the IISS database offers an overview of the main events that have unfolded within a week or month (based on the analysis of media reporting), the CSIS timeline is a chronological compilation of news articles. Although these timelines give a good overview of how the conflicts have progressed, and the key stimuli to be aware off, they were not always elaborate. I hence supplemented the timelines with my own media monitoring. The timelines established for this research are therefore a compilation of the news reporting that the CSIS and IISS have referred to, as well as news reporting I have located from my own media monitoring. In the initial phase of data collection, I thus relied and expanded on the CSIS and IISS timelines, which resulted in the creation of my own timelines.

Constructing timelines is a sensitive matter as a central issue in the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts is a disagreement over when the conflicts started and what their characteristics are. The reason for

⁴⁴³ "The Ukraine Crisis Timeline." Center for Strategic and International Studies. Accessed October 15, 2019. <http://ukraine.csis.org/>.

⁴⁴⁴ "Armed Conflict Database." International Institute for Strategic Studies. Accessed October 15, 2019. <https://www.iiss.org/publications/armed-conflict-database>.

constructing conflict timelines was not to establish the ‘true’ progression of the conflicts. It was to gain a better overview of e.g. the signing of ceasefires which one needs to know about to understand what agreements the conflict parties have signed but continue to fail in implementing. It was also to gain an understanding of key stimuli such as the events in 2008 in Georgia or the creation of the anti-terror operation in Ukraine, which the conflict parties refer to in their conflict narratives. In this sense, the timelines functioned as a foundation for exploring the stimuli that the conflict parties rely on in their social cognitive processing. The timelines were also used to gain insight into the overall changes that may have occurred within the conflict parties’ conflict narratives, and they offered an opportunity to collect additional “texts” for the analyses. When reading through media sources it was possible to locate quotes that the conflict parties have not replicated in texts published on their own homepages. This offered an opportunity to expand the dataset by e.g. including short statements given to the media following negotiations, or other short reactions made in connection to certain events. Using quotes from media sources runs the risk of including quotes that have been reconstructed or misquoted, hereby making these a false replication of the conflict parties’ conflict narratives. To reduce this risk, I have only included quotes that were directly referenced as quotes (with quotation marks) and have refrained from including quotes paraphrased by the media⁴⁴⁵. Apart from media, I also relied on reporting from different organisations such as the Jamestown Foundation and the OSCE. The reason for relying on organisational reporting was to acquire a better understanding of particularly developments in the Georgia conflict which has, in comparison to the Ukraine conflict, had limited media coverage prior to 2008 and following 2009/2010 where the conflict diminished in terms of news appeal. These reports have not been taken at face value. Such reports have been treated in a similar manner as news reports i.e. they have been used to get an insight into key events and additional quotes made by the conflict representatives.

One also needs to address the issue that the media sources used in my own and the CSIS and IISS timelines are media sources from both the “West” and Russia. When using such media to infer about events that have unfolded, one runs the risk of using media that report from a certain objective. This particularly pertains to media such as TASS, Sputnik news, and Russia Today, which are known to be biased⁴⁴⁶. To avoid expanding the timelines with false reporting, I have sought to use a wide range of media sources and whenever possible verified reporting in one media with another. I have also checked media reporting against academic sources. I could have relied on purely “Western” media but as the objective of

⁴⁴⁵ By using quotes that have been referenced using quotation marks one still runs the risk of including misquotes. To not expand the analysis with a search for whether statements are properly quoted in the media, I have had to place my trust in the correct quotation of the media. As stated, media quotes are not the primary source of this research and their usage in the analysis have therefore been minimum.

⁴⁴⁶ Ilya Yablokov, "Conspiracy theories as a Russian public diplomacy tool: The case of Russia Today (RT)." *Politics* 35, no 3-4 (2015): 301-315

my data collection was to locate the conflict parties' conflict narratives, and not merely the media reporting of their narratives, the reliance on various media allowed me to locate statements from e.g. Russian representatives, which were not quoted in “Western” media such as the BBC but nevertheless in media such as RT. The timelines are thus a compilation of media and organisation reports with the total number of articles used for the timelines being⁴⁴⁷:

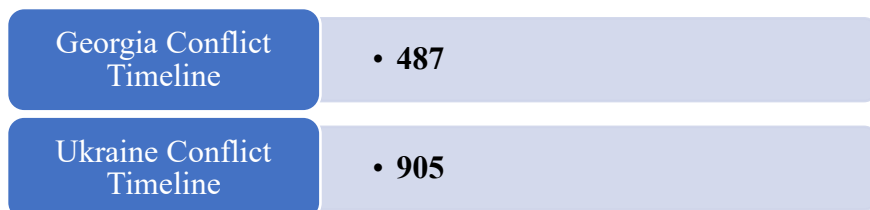


Figure 4: Number of media and organisation sources used for the conflict timelines

The timelines are attached as appendix 1 (Ukraine Conflict Timeline) and appendix 2 (Georgia Conflict Timeline) and the timeline's bibliographies are attached as appendix 3 (Bibliography: Ukraine Conflict Timeline) and appendix 4 (Bibliography: Georgia Conflict Timeline). When referring to the conflict timelines or media/organisation sources in the analyses, I have chosen the referencing system: name-number (appendix). When referencing an article from e.g. a media source, the referencing system may be “Aljazeera-1 (3)”, with “Aljazeera” indicating the name of the source, “1” indicating the number of the Aljazeera article, and “3” indicating the appendix where this reference can be located.

4.4.2 Primary Sources

From the timelines I proceeded to collecting data from the conflict parties' own sources. These sources refer to the homepages of the Presidents⁴⁴⁸, Foreign Ministries⁴⁴⁹ and, in the case of DPR, the Republic⁴⁵⁰. The purpose of collecting data from these sources was to collect data that could be used for the thematic and frame analysis. This meant collecting various kinds of “texts” i.e. written communication the conflict parties have produced about the conflict, self, and other. These texts include speeches, press releases, policy papers, reports, interviews, factsheets, and statements. By relying on these texts for the thematic and frame analysis, I used data that the identity managers have used when communicating their understandings about the conflicts to their members, the other conflict parties, and spectators, and so it is texts that make up their

⁴⁴⁷ For an in-depth insight into which organisation and media sources have been used, and how many articles have been used from each source, please refer to appendix 3 and 4 where this is listed in more detail.

⁴⁴⁸ President of Russia: <http://en.kremlin.ru/> President of Georgia: <https://www.president.gov.ge/mtavari.aspx> and <http://www.saakashviliarchive.info/en/> President of Ukraine: <https://www.president.gov.ua/en>

⁴⁴⁹ Russian Foreign Ministry: http://www.mid.ru/en/main_en Georgia's Foreign Ministry: <http://www.mfa.gov.ge/Home.aspx?lang=en-US> Ukraine's Foreign Ministry: <https://mfa.gov.ua/en> South Ossetia's Foreign Ministry: <http://www.mfa-rso.su/en/>

⁴⁵⁰ People's Council of the Donetsk People's Republic: <https://dnrsovet.su/en/>

official conflict narratives. To seek out the texts most relevant, I only included texts that addressed topics related to the conflicts. This means that the collected texts spoke about the conflict in general (why did it occur, who is involved, what is happening, and how should the conflict be solved), the conflict parties involved (who are we/they and what motivates our/their behaviour) or the texts functioned as responses to specific conflict stimuli (e.g. responses to a military attack, walk out of negotiations, increase in troop presence, statements made by the out-group). To collect these texts, I first went through the “news” pages of the conflict parties’ homepages and collected the different statements, press releases etc. published within the timeframe of my dataset. When collecting these texts, I did a cursory reading of each to see whether they were related to the conflicts and the conflict parties involved. If a text e.g. spoke about Ukraine-Russia relations, it was included in the dataset. If it spoke about Ukraine-Spain relations, it was excluded. When a text had been selected it was exported to Nvivo, where it was later scrutinized to see whether it fit the text-selection criteria mentioned. If deemed so, it was analysed in accordance with the methods mentioned. Apart from exploring the “news sites” of the homepages, I looked if the homepages had any pages specifically pertaining to the conflicts, which was the case for Georgia’s Foreign Ministry that has a page on the “occupied territories”⁴⁵¹, and the Russian Foreign Ministry that has a page on the “situation around Ukraine”⁴⁵². These texts were equally included to the dataset. Finally, I conducted an overall search of the homepages using the search field and words such as “Conflict”, “Donbass”, “Maidan”, “Crimea”, “Russia”, “South Ossetia”, “Georgia”, “Tskhinvali”, “Tbilisi”, “2008”, “2014” etc to locate texts I had missed. The number of texts exported from the conflict parties’ own sources are:

Georgia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President of Georgia: 68 • Georgia's Foreign Ministry: 55
South Ossetia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Ossetia's Foreign Ministry: 97
Russia (Georgia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President of Russia: 19 • Russia's Foreign Ministry: 126
Ukraine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President of Ukraine: 92 • Ukraine's Foreign Ministry: 95
DPR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People's Council of the Donetsk People's Republic: 205
Russia (Ukraine)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President of Russia: 13 • Russia's Foreign Ministry: 206

Figure 5: Number of primary sources used for the analysis

⁴⁵¹ GFM-58 (5)

⁴⁵² RFM-206 (6)

It should be noted that there is a tendency amongst the Georgian and Ukrainian governments to delete the homepages of their previous administrations. Whereas Georgia has provided an archive of the press releases, statements etc. made during the Saakashvili administration⁴⁵³, this has, in time of writing, not been the case for Ukraine as the homepage of Poroshenko has been removed and replaced with that of Zelensky. The primary sources used for the Ukraine and Georgia analysis have, however, been saved in Nvivo (including their original URL and date of publication). In case online access is denied to any of the primary sources referenced in the Georgia primary data bibliography (appendix 5) and the Ukraine primary data bibliography (appendix 6), please consult the Nvivo files provided as links in appendix 11. When referencing primary sources in the analysis, I refer to these as “name-number (appendix)”. This means that in e.g. the Georgia analysis, when using sources from Georgia’s Foreign Ministry, referencing will be GFM-1 (5), with GFM indicating “Georgia’s Foreign Ministry”, 1 indicating the number of the article in the bibliography, and 5 indicating the appendix where this reference can be located. When referring to sources from Presidents the abbreviation is e.g. GP-number indicating “Georgia’s President”. Similar is done for Ukraine and Russia. In terms of the non-state actors, the abbreviations used are DPR, indicating “Donetsk People’s Republic” and SO, indicating “South Ossetia”⁴⁵⁴.

4.5 Methodological Constraints

The purpose of this research is to explore how social cognitive processes and intergroup dynamics contribute to the protraction of the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts. Rather than being theory building, it seeks to explain what is happening in the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts, how, and why⁴⁵⁵. To reach this explanation, I rely on qualitative methods as it allows me to explore how the conflict parties reach interpretations about the situation, self, and other through social cognitive processing, and how these interacting understandings form intergroup dynamics between them. This does not mean that I dismiss the utility and benefits of multi-methods when analysing conflicts. But it does mean that I emphasise the ideational aspect of conflicts, which are factors best explored through qualitative methods as these allow me to unravel how behaviour is formed through relations of differing perceptions and interpretations⁴⁵⁶. As with all methods, there are strength and weaknesses that need to be addressed. Despite the utility of qualitative methods, their weakness is that the analysis findings are to a great extent rooted in the researcher’s interpretations, hereby making topics and data susceptible to over-, under-, or

⁴⁵³ <http://www.saakashviliarchive.info/en/>

⁴⁵⁴ Please consult the appendices page for an overview of the various appendices and their content

⁴⁵⁵ David E. McNabb, *Research Methods for Political Science*, (Routledge, 2015), 3

⁴⁵⁶ Looi Theam Choy “The strengths and weaknesses of research methodology: comparison and complimentary between qualitative and quantitative approaches” *Journal Of Humanities And Social Science* 19, no. 4 (2014), 102

misinterpretation⁴⁵⁷. Such an analysis is also susceptible to personal biases, which may come to the inform the research findings and which in the end are not objectively reifiable⁴⁵⁸. Quantitative methods are, on the other hand, objectively reifiable and the research findings may allow more general evaluations of certain topics⁴⁵⁹. This, however, is also a weakness as it may eradicate contextual specifics and limit human behaviour to statistics, which does not further explain the motives, perceptions, or other human tendencies that have come to drive such statistics⁴⁶⁰. To even out the strengths and weaknesses of the two, it would be useful to apply a mixed-methods approach⁴⁶¹. Since, however, this research emphasises how meanings occur and sustain in the conflict context, rather than how they replicate over broad sets of data, it has been a choice to only engage with qualitative methods to explore the intricacies that shape the conflict parties' social cognitive processing in the conflict contexts.

The methods used have been chosen as they allow me to explore the different steps related to social cognitive processing. This offers the insight needed for establishing the intergroup dynamics that contribute to the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts protraction. The thematic and frame analysis complement each other as they each address an aspect that in combination grants an overview of the ideational factors at play in the conflicts. Despite these methods' complementary nature, there are constraints attached to each of them. The thematic analysis is meant to highlight the themes, or nodes, that run as patterned meanings through the texts. It is hence used to explore which nodes are activated when processing stimuli. The exploration of nodes could equally have been undertaken using quantitative methods such as observational statistical studies⁴⁶². The issue with quantitative methods is, however, that they do not allow the "unpacking of issues of causal direction, measuring concepts in context, and making explanatory or interpretive claims about individual cases"⁴⁶³. In my analysis, I do not merely seek to explore how many times a theme has emerged in a text. I explore which themes can be interpreted from the texts. The themes located are hence both 'implicit and explicit', as they can sometimes be ascribed to a recurring word, and at other times are interpreted as an overarching theme inferred to run through a section of text. The thematic analysis allows me to explore the meanings attached to interactions. Where this method falls short is that such findings cannot be applied to broader contexts as would be the case if using a statistical method⁴⁶⁴. As focus of this research is on specific cases, and particularly the role of contextuality, the aim is, however, not to explore

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid, 103

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid, 102

⁴⁶¹ Andrew Bennett, "Found in translation: Combining discourse analysis with computer assisted content analysis." *Millennium* 43, no.3 (2015), 985

⁴⁶² Andrew Bennett, "Found in translation: Combining discourse analysis with computer assisted content analysis." *Millennium* 43, no.3 (2015), 985

⁴⁶³ Ibid

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid

how specific patterns of nodes replicate in the Georgia or Ukraine conflict, but to explore what kind of patterns pertain to the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts specifically.

Whereas the thematic analysis allows me to explore the activation of nodes, frame analysis allows me to explore the schemas that constitute the social cognitive frameworks. As frame analysis is rooted in discourse analysis, it too points to how social reality is constructed rather than fixed and objective⁴⁶⁵. Due to this, the frame analysis allows one to explore the conflict parties' structured understandings of the situation, self, and other. This method, however, also pulls in the role of the researcher whose ideas may shape the analysis. A constraint of the frame analysis is thus that it is susceptible to the researchers own biases. This is a constraint that defines many interpretivist research methods, as the interpretation of how others interpret social phenomenon may shape the analysis process and findings. The validity of a frame analysis thus to a great extent depends on the researcher's integrity and honesty. To this is also the constraint that the frame analysis will not produce a fixed insight into the problem at hand, as structured understandings change. Meanings are, as stated by Hopf, not fixed. They are not constantly evolving either, as it is possible "to theorize about replicable patterns of social conduct over time"⁴⁶⁶. The frames retrieved from the analysis should therefore not be treated as fixed, as some of these may exist over the course of the conflict, whilst others may be adapted or changed following the incoming of new stimuli. This brings an element of change which the frame analysis in and off itself cannot account for, but which needs to be complemented with an overview of how certain frames have changed over time. This constraint has sought to be accounted for by using the conflict timelines to get an overview of how, and whether, conflict narratives have changed over time. It is then by combining such findings with the frame analysis that I can acquire an understanding of the frames that are "fixed" and those that have had a shorter lifespan in the conflict narratives. Such insight is also of relevance for studying the social cognitive processes at play. Finally, the frame and thematic analysis are deemed of relevance as they each address an aspect of the social cognitive processes that shape understandings in Ukraine and Georgia. Whereas the thematic analysis explores what is being said, the frame analysis explores how something is being said. This allows me to explore the complexity associated with interpretations as it focuses on both processes of meaning and structures of meaning.

When conducting research on conflicts and social cognitive processes there are additional pitfalls that need to be considered. First, when conducting the thematic and frame analysis with the aim of exploring how conflict parties process the conflict and those involved, this may fall subject to my own biases. This includes locating themes and frames that may not represent the conflict parties' understandings

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid, 989

⁴⁶⁶ Ted Hopf, "Discourse and content analysis: Some fundamental incompatibilities." *Qualitative methods* 2, no.1 (2004), 33

or overinterpreting the salience of a theme. To avoid making false assumptions about this, I have taken different steps as part of my analysis process. I have e.g. always read the texts before analysing them to first get an account of the overall narrative before digging into the specifics. This was done to get a sense of what the conflict parties are saying, rather than interpreting the texts based on isolated segments. In terms of the thematic analysis, I have chosen to analyse the most salient themes in order to engage with themes that I continue to encounter in the text. This is done to avoid placing too much emphasis on themes that only feature sparsely and thus may not function as an integrated part of the conflict parties' social cognitive processing. Eventually, locating themes is a subjective endeavour as one researcher may locate themes that it finds of importance, whilst another may point at a different interpretation⁴⁶⁷. The researcher hence has an active role in analysing data. To address this, I have ensured to accompany my analysis with descriptions of how I have reached an interpretation and finding. I have also attached the thematic analysis to the appendix. By taking these steps I have sought to provide a transparent account of my research.

Another aspect to be addressed is the choice of conflict parties. In the process of selecting my cases I had to choose which conflict parties to analyse. Here others may have chosen to focus on parties such as e.g. NATO or the EU. This is a matter of analytical choice and, as mentioned, my choice of conflict parties was based on a consideration of who has the most significant presence in the conflict and leverage in shaping the relations that exist. My choice of conflict parties has, however, also been based on a wish to engage with parties that tend to be neglected in the literature. As stated in the literature review, when exploring the conflicts in Ukraine and Georgia there is a tendency to focus on EU/NATO/Russia relations making the approach highly state-focused. By drawing my attention to both state and non-state actors, it has been my aim to not merely approach these conflicts as an outcome of power politics between Russia and 'Western' states and institutions, but also as contexts shaped between, and by, parties that fight on the ground. Hence, the social cognitive processes that I explore are processes I have chosen to focus on. There are without a doubt more to be included, which could be of interest for future research. Since the research subject is a conflict, there is also a need to consider whether my own understanding of the conflicts and their preferred outcomes may shape the way data is interpreted. As these conflicts have existed for some time, and both have been covered in the media, one will enter the research with a presumption of who caused the conflict, the relations that exist, and how the conflicts should be solved. To avoid this being reflected in the analysis, I have to the best of my ability allowed the data guide me. This implies that I approach data with an open mindset and when discovering something that contradicts my assumption, I have not forced this into my pre-set understanding of the conflicts but explored this as new insight.

⁴⁶⁷ Boyatzis, "Thematic Analysis and Code Development", 1

Another way to avoid including my own understanding has been to avoid providing my own narrative of the conflicts prior to the analyses. Usually in the field of conflict analysis, the researcher will, prior to the analysis, provide ‘basic facts’ about the conflict such as when it arose, between who, and why. Since the aim of this research is to explore the conflict parties’ social cognitive processing, such a preliminary background chapter would constitute as a counter-narrative, or as ‘the correct account of the conflicts’, to which the conflict parties’ narratives are compared. This is contradictory for this research as focus is on how the conflict parties make sense of the conflict and how their social cognitive processing interact to form intergroup dynamics. To this one should then also address the conflict timelines mentioned in the previous section. As stated, the aim of my conflict timelines is to give an overview of key events, and hence conflict stimuli, that the conflict parties refer to. My timelines do therefore not provide an analysis of e.g. why an event happened or why a conflict party said something. They give an overview of events reported in the media/organisational reports. The timelines are thus meant to be objective and they are used as an overview of the progression of events, rather than an evaluation of them. Biases may nevertheless occur when constructing such timelines, as the choice of when to report something may influence how the conflict is overall viewed. To avoid such a bias, I have relied on various media sources to verify that an event did occur on the date provided in a report. I will hence refrain from contributing with my own conflict analysis prior to the analysis of the conflict parties’ narratives. I will, however, in the discussion chapter compare analysis findings to present my account of the dynamics I perceive exist between the conflict parties as a result of their social cognitive processing. This raises the question whether I have understood the conflict parties’ narratives correctly and whether I can represent their version of the truth. As stated, I will to the best of my ability let the data guide me and I will also in the analysis flag any doubts I may have about certain texts or interpretations.

Since all data applied is publicly available and retrieved via a desk-analysis, there are as such no ethical conundrums as to interference with the research subjects. That said, I will treat all data with equal respect and refrain from any subjective evaluation of the characters or goals of the parties involved. The aim is to observe and analyse, not to judge and make recommendations. It should also be added that my research is not a definitive answer to the question about social cognitive processes and intergroup dynamics in times of protracted conflicts. It is instead an attempt to open a discussion about the role these processes play in such conflicts.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the methods and data used to explore the Ukraine and Georgia conflict parties’ social cognitively processing and the intergroup dynamics that arise from their interacting processes. It started by presenting how social cognitive processing is equally a group phenomenon but rather than being a process

that occurs within an individual, it is a shared experience as group members will collectively form understandings when confronted with group-related events. In such times, groups will rely on group structures, which allow them to reach collective understandings. One of these is the reliance on groups leaders, or identity managers, who become responsible for presenting a unified understanding of the situation, self, and other. To explore how intergroup dynamics occur one may thus draw attention to leaders and how these systematize stimuli in accordance with a specific conflict narrative, which they seek to convince their members and others to adopt. In this research, focus is thus on identity managers and how these engage in a series of cognitive steps, which include the activation of nodes and the compartmentalising of such nodes into schemas, which make up a social cognitive framework. To explore these steps, I apply a thematic analysis, which allows me to explore the themes that run as patterned meanings through the conflict parties' narratives. Such an analysis allows me to explore which nodes the identity managers activate when interpreting conflict stimuli. These patterns will be further unravelled through a frame analysis, which will be used to establish the schemas that the identity managers form around the situation, self, and other. The frame analysis will hence allow me to explore how the identity managers compartmentalise nodes into schemas, which come to form an overarching social cognitive framework. To explore the intergroup dynamics, I will eventually focus on how the conflict parties' processes interact. It is then by exploring these interactions that I will get an insight into the dynamics that shape their intergroup relations.

This chapter also explored how and why the conflict cases and conflict parties were chosen and how data was collected. The two case studies have been chosen as they represent cases of protracted conflicts within the post-Soviet space, which have experienced recent developments and thus new stimuli. In comparison to conflicts that saw main developments in the 1990s, the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts also offer access to online data. The conflict parties have been chosen as these are deemed those that have a significant impact on the conflicts' and their continuation. The non-state actors have also been chosen as I wish to include conflict parties that are not usually included in the literature. The chapter also presented the dataset and how data was collected. For the analysis I have divided data into two categories namely media/organisation data and data from the conflict parties' own sources. Media/organisation data was collected from my own media monitoring and from the CSIS and IISS timelines. This resulted in my own conflict timelines, which are meant to provide context and allow for the detection of relevant speech acts/texts required for the core empirical analysis. I also collected primary data, which were used for the frame and thematic analysis. Such data refers to various texts including statements, press releases, interviews, speeches etc. that the conflict parties have published on their homepages. This chapter therefore presented the steps that will be taken to answer the research question of how social cognitive processes and intergroup dynamics contribute to the protraction of the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts.

5.0 Social Cognitive Processing in the Ukraine Conflict

This chapter will analyse the Ukraine conflict and the conflict narratives of the conflict parties: The Russian government, Ukraine government, and the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR). The aim of the analysis is to explore the social cognitive processes the conflict parties rely on when constructing understandings about the situation, self, and other. To do so, I first explored the nodes that the conflict parties activate in their conflict narratives. These findings are attached in the thematic analysis under appendix 8. This chapter will explore how they compartmentalise these nodes into schemas. To this end, it will focus on how the identity managers frame the situation, self, and other, and how these frames constitute schemas that form the conflict parties' social cognitive frameworks. Before digging into the conflict parties' schemas, I will explore how their conflict narratives have developed over the course of the conflict. This is done to see whether narratives are passed on to succeeding identity managers, and whether schemas have changed over time. The findings from each conflict party will eventually be compared in section 5.5 in order to discuss how their social cognitive processes interact.

5.1 Schematic Changes

When exploring the Ukraine conflict parties' conflict narratives, it becomes apparent that they have changed their situation-, self-, and other-schemas over the course of the conflict. Whereas the Ukrainian identity managers have changed their situation- and other-schemas following information about Russian involvement in the conflict, Russian identity managers have sought to adapt information about Russian troop presence in Eastern Ukraine into their existing self-schema. The DPR identity managers have had difficulties establishing their self-schema as it has changed in accordance with the state projects they have proposed over the course of the conflict.

5.1.1 Ukraine

Ukraine's conflict narrative has to a great extent stayed consistent since 2013, which may be explained by the fact that the identity managers have largely stayed the same. There were, however, cognitive changes in the beginning of the conflict as the identity managers briefly struggled to cognitively systematise the events that unfolded and socially categorise the agents involved. In Ukraine's narrative, the conflict is constructed as a Ukraine-Russia conflict⁴⁶⁸. Although this is now a consistent feature of Ukraine's conflict narrative, this understanding was only reached once the identity managers settled on a social category for the non-state actors in Donbass. In the beginning, there was slight confusion about who the non-state actors

⁴⁶⁸ Elaborated further in the section on Ukraine's situation-schema

were. Initially, they were categorised as terrorists who sought to take control over Eastern Ukraine. This was e.g. the understanding in early 2014, when government buildings were seized in the city of Slovyansk and where Ukraine deployed special forces to the area. This led Ukraine's Interior Minister, Arsen Avakov, to state on Facebook in April 2014: "Our response will be very severe[...]There is zero tolerance for armed terrorists"⁴⁶⁹. The initial understanding was hence that the non-state actors represented criminal elements who had seized a part of Ukraine's territory, and thus agents who needed to be removed. The situation was by extension of this defined by lawlessness. As Ukraine's President, Petro Poroshenko, stated in July 2014 in connection to the recapturing of Slovyansk: "This is not a complete victory. But the cleansing of Slovyansk from armed-to-the-teeth gangs of animals has great symbolic importance"⁴⁷⁰. This understanding changed in late 2014 as Ukrainian identity managers changed their social cognitive processing of the situation from an issue of terrorism, to an issue of Russian invasion. This resulted in a social categorical shift as the non-state actors were to a greater extent categorised as Russian proxies. This change largely originated around the time Russia annexed Crimea and information started occurring about Russian troop presence in Eastern Ukraine. With these events, it may be argued, emerged new stimulus that was monitored and which activated nodes such as "war", "annexation", and "Russia". This led the Ukrainian identity managers to change their understanding of the situation and agents involved.

Whereas the non-state actors initially were categorised as lawless elements - but nevertheless as independent agents - they came to be identified as Russians and agents that the Russian identity managers had mobilised. As Poroshenko stated in September 2014 following reports on the presence of a Russian tank battalion near Luhansk: "Direct and undisguised aggression has been launched against Ukraine from a neighboring state. This has changed the situation in the zone of conflict in a radical way"⁴⁷¹. Following late 2014, Ukrainian identity managers therefore shifted their social cognitive processing towards the role of Russia, and they came to argue that Russian leaders had mobilised agents, and deployed Russian troops, in a war against Ukrainians. The situation thus became cognitively systematised around a Russia social category. This led to a new other- and situation-schema as Ukrainian identity managers adopted an understanding that the conflict was an intergroup conflict between Ukraine and Russia. Since Russia became regarded as the antagonist, this also meant that the non-state actors lost their agency⁴⁷². As Poroshenko stated in February 2015 at a ceremony marking the one-year anniversary of Maidan: "Now, it is finally clear that we struggled on Maidan not against Yanukovich. He was just a cruel and obedient marionette[...]Moscow was preparing to the liquidation and tearing Ukraine apart long before the victory

⁴⁶⁹ Aljazeera-4 (3)

⁴⁷⁰ Washington Post-12 (3)

⁴⁷¹ Reuters-41 (3)

⁴⁷² This argument is developed further in the section on Ukraine's understanding of the agents involved in the conflict.

of Maidan. They were expecting the fall of Yanukovich and accelerated the course of events”⁴⁷³. In the beginning, Ukrainian identity managers hence struggled to process the conflict and socially categorise the others present. They eventually reached cognitive systematization by using the Russian social category as the primary category for making sense of the situation and agents involved.

5.1.2 Russia

Russia’s conflict narrative has also stayed consistent since 2013 as Russian identity managers have consistently referred to the ousting of Yanukovich as a coup, which caused a conflict between Ukraine’s central government and agents in Donbass. In Russia’s conflict narrative, the conflict is processed as a result of internal disagreements between Ukrainians⁴⁷⁴. Despite this consistency, the Russian identity managers have changed their self-schema slightly, and particularly their sense making of the role Russians play in the conflict. This is most visible in their explanation for the presence of Russian troops in Eastern Ukraine. In the beginning, Russian identity managers persistently denied any presence of Russian troops in Ukraine and rather socially categorised all agents involved in the conflict as Ukrainians. As Vladimir Putin stated in April 2014 in response to allegations that the protests in Eastern Ukraine were staged by Russia and that Russian armed units had entered the country: “Nonsense. There are no Russian units in eastern Ukraine – no special services, no tactical advisors. All this is being done by the local residents, and the proof of that is the fact that those people have literally removed their masks. So I told my Western partners, “They have nowhere to go, and they won’t leave. This is their land and you need to negotiate with them”⁴⁷⁵. The Russian identity managers hence initially denied that Russians had any physical presence in the conflict, nor that there was any ground for processing the situation through the activation of the Russia social category.

This changed in late 2014 when Vladimir Putin acknowledged the presence of Russian citizens who fought as volunteers in the conflict⁴⁷⁶. A year later Putin regulated this assessment and stated that: “We never said that there weren’t people there dealing with certain tasks, including in the military sphere[...]But that doesn’t mean there are regular Russian forces there. Feel the difference”⁴⁷⁷. Following the incoming information about Russian troop presence in Ukraine, the Russian identity managers were forced to change their self-schema in accordance with this stimulus, and they were also put under pressure to change their situation-schema. Although Russian identity managers have now acknowledged the presence of Russian citizens, they continue to deny any official Russian involvement. Russia’s situation-

⁴⁷³ CNN-23 (3)

⁴⁷⁴ Elaborated further in Russia’s situation-schema

⁴⁷⁵ RP-3 (6)

⁴⁷⁶ Washington Post-20 (3)

⁴⁷⁷ Telegraph-9 (3)

schema has thus stayed the same and Russian identity managers have only altered their self-schema slightly. Because although they acknowledge the presence of Russians on Ukraine territory, these agents are largely categorised as volunteers. By categorising them as such, the identity managers can construct these agents' behaviour as beyond the identity managers' control. Hence, these agents do not act in accordance with the interests the Russian identity managers construct for the Russian group identity. This does not imply that these agents cannot be identified as Russians. But categorising them as volunteers implies that they are Russian group members who act from their own personal interest. Their categorisation as volunteers thus functions as a Russian sub-category, which continues to comply with the self-schema that Russia as a group is a neutral party, and the situation-schema that the conflict is between Ukrainians. As Kremlin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov stated in February 2015 in response to Russia's role in guaranteeing peace in Ukraine: "[Russia] is not a party that has to take action in this matter. We simply cannot do that physically, because Russia is not a participant in this conflict"⁴⁷⁸.

5.1.3 DPR

DPR's conflict narrative has also stayed somewhat consistent since 2013, as the identity managers continue to construct the conflict as one between DPR and the central government in Ukraine⁴⁷⁹. The DPR identity managers consistently construct a situation- and other-schema around the Ukraine social category. Where their processing has wavered, however, is in the construction of their self-schema. When constructing this, the identity managers have had difficulties establishing how DPR as a social category differs from the Russian and Ukrainian social category. This confusion is particularly visible in the different state projects the DPR identity managers have advocated for over the course of the conflict. The establishment of the DPR state was officially declared in April 2014 and with the independence referendum came the expressed plan of a referendum on joining DPR with Russia⁴⁸⁰. As the leader of the DPR, Denis Pushilin, stated following the independence referendum in May 2014: "The people of Donetsk have always been part of the Russian world. For us, the history of Russia is our history[...]Based on the will of the people and on the restoration of historic justice, we ask the Russian Federation to consider the absorption of the Donetsk People's Republic into the Russian Federation"⁴⁸¹. From the expressed interest of uniting DPR with Russia it may be inferred that the DPR identity managers constructed the DPR self-schema around an understanding that the agents in Donetsk belonged to the Russian group identity. In the beginning, the identity managers hence socially categorised the people of DPR as Russians. Russian identity managers

⁴⁷⁸ BBC-55 (3)

⁴⁷⁹ Argument further elaborated in the section on DPR's situation-schema

⁴⁸⁰ The Guardian-9 (3)

⁴⁸¹ Reuters-22 (3)

did, however, not act on the unification referendum although they did acknowledge DPR's independence⁴⁸². With the limited reaction to the DPR ambition of uniting the Russian group members therefore emerged, what may be assumed, a social cognitive conundrum and particularly an identity vacuum where DPR's self-schema had to be changed.

In May 2014, the identity managers of DPR and the Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) declared the restoration of the region "Novorossiia" as a confederation between the two republics⁴⁸³. This confederation was to serve as an independent territory, where agents who belonged to the Russian group identity could co-exist. From this project the DPR and LPR identity managers sought to socially categorise the agents of these areas as "new Russians" i.e. as a group of agents with a Russian heritage. The understanding that certain territories in Eastern Ukraine could be defined as the Novorossiia region was shared with Russian identity managers, as Putin stated in his Direct Line in April 2014: "the region is called Novorossiia. Russia lost these territories for various reasons, but the people remained"⁴⁸⁴. Novorossiia was, however, put on hold in May 2015 when the DPR and LPR identity managers abandoned the project with Alexander Kofman, Foreign Minister of DPR, stating that the: "The Novorossia project is frozen until a new political elite emerges in all these regions that will be able to head the movement. We don't have the right to impose our opinion on [the Ukrainian cities of] Kharkiv, Zaporizhia and Odess"⁴⁸⁵. The project was abandoned as there were not any identity managers in these cities who could, or maybe would want to, represent and unite agents around this group identity. Whereas the failed Russian unification referendum challenged the DPR identity managers' understanding that the agents of DPR could be socially categorised as "Russians", the Novorossiia project challenged their understanding that these agents could be socially categorised as "new Russians". This conundrum was pointed to by the DPR identity managers who expressed disappointment with the Russian identity managers and their lack of ability, or willingness, to support and join the agents of DPR and LPR under a united categorical representation. As Pushilin stated on twitter in July 2014 where he pointed to a perception of being led down by Russia: "What to say. They encouraged us. Encouraged us and abandoned us[...]Putin's words about protecting the Russian people, protecting Novorossiia, they were beautiful. But they were only words"⁴⁸⁶. The project of Novorossiia hence equally failed as an attempt to define the people of DPRs' social identification.

In July 2017 the DPR identity managers proclaimed another state project called "Malorossiia", which was to be, according to the constitution written: "We, the representatives of former

⁴⁸² Ibid

⁴⁸³ John O'Loughlin, Gerard Toal, and Vladimir Kolosov. "The rise and fall of "Novorossiia": examining support for a separatist geopolitical imaginary in southeast Ukraine." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 33, no.2 (2017): 124-144.

⁴⁸⁴ RP-1 (6)

⁴⁸⁵ Moscow Times-26 (3)

⁴⁸⁶ Washington Post-12 (3)

Ukraine, declare the establishment of a new state, Malorossiya, which is a successor state to Ukraine. We agree that the new state's name will be Malorossiya because the very name of Ukraine has discredited itself⁴⁸⁷. Malorossiya was equally an attempt to socially categorise the agents of DPR. However, rather than categorising them as “new Russians”, they were categorised as “little Russians”. In DPR's narrative, this group identity was amongst other granted historical roots to prove its existence. It was, however, to a greater extent meant to function as the cognitive systematization of the conflict situation and the agents involved, because with its creation came the understanding that the conflict was between “Little Russians” and “Ukrainians”. The project was short-lived as Russian identity managers declared it a personal project of the DPR identity managers⁴⁸⁸ and the LPR identity managers dismissed the idea⁴⁸⁹. The failed attempts of establishing a Malorossiya identity thus once again left the DPR identity managers in an identity vacuum, as they struggled to socially define and distinguish between the agents of DPR, Russia, and Ukraine. What has now surfaced in DPR's conflict narrative is a consistent referral to the need of creating a DPR state where DPR as an independent group identity may exist. The DPR identity managers have thus constructed a self-schema around a distinct DPR group identity, which they argue is socially distinct from Ukrainians and Russians⁴⁹⁰.

5.1.4 Schematic Changes

What surfaces when exploring the conflict parties' conflict narratives, is that the identity managers have had difficulties establishing their situation-, self-, and other-schemas. Whereas the Ukrainian identity managers initially struggled to define the situation and the non-state actors, the Russian identity managers have had difficulties adapting information about Russian troops into the existing self-schema of being a neutral party. The DPR identity managers have been through a development of their self-schema, as they have gone from socially categorising the people of DPR as Russians to agents who belong to a DPR group identity. This indicates that the conflict parties have struggled to process behaviour that occurs, and cognitively systematize the agents who are present in the conflict. All of them have eventually arrived at somewhat consistent schemas, which they construct around the perceived presence of definable groups. These schemas will be further unravelled in the following analysis of the Ukraine conflict. From this section it may nevertheless be argued that the conflict parties' group identities are overall adaptive and capable of changing depending on new stimulus. What this finding does it that it challenges the social comparison theory, which argues that intergroup conflicts arise between salient groups. Although the conflict parties

⁴⁸⁷ Global Research-1(3)

⁴⁸⁸ BBC-89 (3)

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid

⁴⁹⁰ Further elaborated in the section on DPR's self-schema

do perceive themselves as opposed and salient groups, their self/other identities are nevertheless mouldable and reactive to stimulus. This implies that although the conflict parties perceive themselves as opposed groups, they do not rely on a stable self/other understanding but may adapt these if certain stimulus arises. This is then a positive finding for conflict resolution, as it implies that the conflict parties may eventually decide to refute their negative inter-group relations, if certain stimulus occurs and if they decide to adapt their identities in accordance with this. As seen in the previous section, this is, however, currently not the case as the conflict parties continue to construct their identities along contrasted and opposed group constructs. This finding will, alongside the findings in the next sections, be further discussed in chapter 7.

5.2 Ukraine's Social Cognitive Framework

The following section will explore how Ukrainian identity managers construct schematic understandings about the situation, self, and other in the Ukraine conflict, and the social cognitive framework that forms from this.

5.2.1 Situation-Schema

5.2.1.1 Conflict Cause

The schema that the Ukrainian identity managers construct when processing the situation is that the conflict is between Russia and Ukraine, and it is a situation that Russia has unilaterally and unprovoked imposed upon Ukraine. When constructing this situation-schema, the identity managers do not categorise Russia and Ukraine as two states per se, nor do they construct the conflict as one between leaders of two countries. When they process who is fighting who and why these agents have come into conflict, they draw on an intergroup prism. The situation and agents within it are thus cognitively systematized in accordance with a Ukrainian and a Russian group identity, hereby making the conflict between two groups - or between an in- and an out-group. As the Foreign Ministry stated in April 2014: "Escalation of the situation in some cities in the East and South of Ukraine is instigated externally and is caused by subversive activities of the Russian Federation"⁴⁹¹. When processing the situation, the Ukrainian identity managers do not point to any behaviour on their, or their group members, behalf which could have caused the conflict. Rather, the conflict is one Russia for long has planned and decided to launch following Maidan. As the Foreign Ministry stated in a fact-sheet published on the Ministry's homepage titled "10 facts you should know about Russian military aggression against Ukraine" (caps lock from original text): "FACT 1: RUSSIA PLANNED MILITARY AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE IN ADVANCE. VICTORY OF THE REVOLUTION

⁴⁹¹ UFM-8 (6)

OF DIGNITY WAS ONLY A CONVENIENT PRETEXT”⁴⁹². The conflict is thus a calculated Russian outcome and so when Ukrainian identity managers make sense of the situation, they draw on a fundamental attribution error as the conflict derives solely from Russian behaviour. The identity managers therefore deny that the conflict is an outcome of situational causality. Instead, they argue that the conflict occurred solely because of Russian intent.

An interesting feature in Ukraine’s situation-schema is that the conflict is not caused by all members of the Russia group. It is a situation that Russian identity managers have instigated and now control, as they are orchestrating the behaviour of their Russian group members who have a presence on Ukraine’s territory. As Ukraine’s OSCE representative stated during the Annual Security Review Conference in June 2017: “Everyday fighting, and military aggression carried out by the Russian hybrid forces take their toll among my fellow Ukrainians”⁴⁹³. There is thus a distinction between Russian identity managers and group members, with the identity managers being those who dictate behaviour, and group members being those who execute the orders they receive. To this understanding is the viewpoint that the conflict has not mobilised all Russian group members, but merely some of the Russian group members. The conflict is hence not one where Ukrainians face hostilities from all Russians. Nor is it one where Ukrainian identity managers are facing hostilities from their in-group members because of these identity managers’ inefficiency to govern. As Ukraine’s Deputy Foreign Minister, Danylo Lubkivsky, stated in July 2014:

The turmoil in Ukraine comes to a logical conclusion. It was not a civil war – as it was brought, instigated and financed from Russia. It was not a liberation movement – as personal liberties were the last thing on the minds of terrorists. It was not an “insurgency” – either by the roots, nature or the scale of destruction. It has been an act of aggression by Russia against Ukraine that began in Crimea and continued in the East⁴⁹⁴.

The conflict is an intergroup conflict that identity managers of an out-group have initiated, and it is a conflict being physically fought by some members of this out-group. Apart from the use of a fundamental attribution error is thus also the use of a group attribution error, as the Russian identity managers’ behaviour and the behaviour of those Russian group members who fight in the conflict is processed as something that generally reflects the attitude of the Russia out-group.

From the processing of conflict stimuli arises the understanding that the conflict is one where Russian identity managers and group members have annexed and now occupy parts of Ukraine’s territory. What is interesting about this understanding is that whereas Ukrainian identity managers for obvious

⁴⁹² UFM-95 (6)

⁴⁹³ UFM-67 (6)

⁴⁹⁴ UFM-23 (6)

reasons use the annexation/occupation node when processing the situation in Crimea, they also process the situation in Donetsk as a matter of occupation. As the Foreign Ministry stated in June 2017 in connection to an attack on the OSCE SMM: “Ukraine strongly condemns pro-Russian militants’ constant provocations, pressure and threats against OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission (SMM)’s observers in the temporarily occupied territories of certain districts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine”⁴⁹⁵. The cognitive foundation for processing the situation in Eastern Ukraine as a matter of occupation, may be found in the social categorisation of the non-state actors. Because, by identifying these agents as Russians, Ukrainian identity managers can construct the situation in Eastern Ukraine as an outcome of Russian occupation. If the non-state actors were categorised as disgruntled Ukrainians, this would question the activation of the occupation node, as occupation is linked to the alien take-over of someone’s territory. By socially categorising the non-state actors as Russians, the identity managers can process the situation as one where an out-group has taken control over Ukrainian territory. What is not elaborated is, however, who these “pro-Russians” are and the extent to which they are Russian citizens sent from Russia or Ukrainian citizens with a Russian heritage/mind-set. It is generally difficult to establish how the Ukrainian identity managers make sense of the agents present in the conflict, and a reason for this is that they do not categorise agents in accordance with citizenship but rely on social categorization.

In Ukraine’s conflict narrative, a “Russian” is not a legal category but a social category. Hence, although it is easy to separate agents into Russian and Ukrainian citizens, Ukrainian identity managers use social categories such as Russian proxies, pro-Russians, hybrid Russian forces, Russian militants etc. The establishment of a Russian presence in Eastern Ukraine is thus a matter of group reification, and the subsequent definition of who is a Russian and who is Ukrainian is something Ukrainian identity managers are responsible for establishing. This leads to blurry social boundaries where the non-state actors are not distinctly Russian citizens, but they are de-facto Russians as their behaviour is orchestrated from Moscow. The groups fighting in the conflict are not citizens of a nation, but agents who identify with a group identity and agents who abide to orders their group identity managers dictate. This has implications as to how Ukrainian identity managers process the situation because eventually it is not only a matter of removing alien citizens from Ukraine’s territory. It is also a matter of regaining control over in-group members. As Poroshenko stated in May 2018 during a military ceremony:

Almost four years ago, when I was elected President, the whole Donbas was under the control of Russian-terrorist troops and their mercenaries, the fifth column inside the country. But I emphasize that in the summer of that year there was a successful military operation, as a result of which the Armed Forces of Ukraine[...]liberated almost two thirds of Donetsk and Luhansk region from the militants⁴⁹⁶.

⁴⁹⁵ UFM-65 (6)

⁴⁹⁶ UP-67 (6)

The situation is thus also defined by clashing identity management, as Ukrainian identity managers point to how Russian occupation means that Russian identity managers have imposed their management on agents in Eastern Ukraine. Russian identity managers are more specifically trying to gain control over territory and agents by sending and mobilising Russian group members in the area. This is a tactic meant to force non-Russians to surrender to Russian identity management, and force Ukrainian identity managers to give up these in-group agents and territory. In the end, although the Ukrainian identity managers try to construct the conflict as a clear-cut intergroup conflict, their conflict narrative is somewhat inconsistent as their use of social categories leads to a confused understanding of who is fighting who and why. Despite this confusion, the identity managers nevertheless seek to present their conflict narrative as consistent, and the conflict as one between clear-cut groups to which certain identities and interests can be assigned.

5.2.1.2 The Agents Involved

The main social cognitive conundrum in Ukraine's conflict narrative is to establish "who" the non-state actors are. As seen in the section on Ukraine's schematic changes, this has to some extent been solved by identifying the non-state actors as Russians. Despite this, Ukrainian identity managers continue to apply various social categories when identifying the non-state actors (such as separatists, pro-Russian, Russian militants, armed gangs etc.). The reason for the confusion regarding the non-state actors' identity, may be because Ukrainian identity managers are struggling to identify the extent to which the non-state actors act from their own interests; whether they are acting on behalf of Russian interests; or whether they are acting together with Russian identity managers to ensure collective interests. Ukrainian identity managers are thus struggling to position the non-state actors' motivation for behaviour, which has implications for how these agents are socially categorised. What this results in is diffuse categorisation where the non-state actors at times are driven by their own interests (but with Russian backing) and at other times they are members of the Russian Armed Forces. As Poroshenko stated in July 2015 on the anniversary of the downing of the Malaysian Airline: "Unfortunately, this civilian aircraft and 298 people on board became a target of a ruthless terrorist attack, launched from a territory occupied by the Russian-backed militants in the East of Ukraine"⁴⁹⁷ and as Ukraine's delegation at the OSCE stated in June 2017: "These forces have been integrated into Russia's military control and command chains and are equipped and trained by Russian officers[...]. It is important to note that contrary to Russian claims the situation in Donbas is something which the Kremlin can and does turn on and off like a tap"⁴⁹⁸. Despite confusion, the dominant understanding is that the non-state actors are acting on behalf of Russian interests. They are thus socially categorised as Russian puppets whom Russian identity managers can mobilise and de-mobilise at their will.

⁴⁹⁷ UFM-29 (6)

⁴⁹⁸ UFM-67 (6)

It is from the processing of the non-state actors' interests that Ukrainian identity managers establish that these agents are not Ukrainians but rather should be identified as Russian group members. As Lubkivsky stated at the Ukraine Crisis Media Centre in April 2014:

They [Russia] stick to the same routine as in Crimea. First, they recruit and arm professional military. Second, they deploy them on Ukrainian territory. Third, they hire local radicals to pose as the “pro-Russian forces”. Fourth, they try to make it look like a turmoil coming from beneath. But it’s not[...]It’s a full-blown foreign aggression on Ukraine[...]One thing is abundantly clear: these are NOT Ukrainians. These are professional Russian militants⁴⁹⁹.

Ukrainian identity managers hence point to the presence of two distinct groups, which define the situation. These two groups are presented as the victim and the aggressor, and they function as encompassing groups to which agents are classified depending on their behaviour in the conflict. As Poroshenko stated in an interview to the Financial Times in March 2018: “We are not the aggressors here. It is Putin who has his troops on our land. And we need nothing more, just please, would you be so kind as to take your troops away? We don’t need anything else”⁵⁰⁰. What is noteworthy is, however, that it is not only the non-state actors who are identified as Russians, as Ukrainian identity managers also point to how the aggressor includes agents who covertly support Russia. As Poroshenko stated in March 2018 at a ceremony celebrating the 4th anniversary of the National Guard of Ukraine:

It is very easy to recognize the enemy on the front with the colorado ribbon of Russian tricolor. It is more difficult to recognize them in the rear, because here, inside Ukraine, the enemy dresses up, camouflages, blends in, acts disguised, insidiously, through the fifth column. He involves in his shameful scenarios politicians who make an entirely pro-Ukrainian impression on the first glance - the words from their mouth sound like patriotic and it is not written on the forehead that sometimes they are not ashamed to take money even from Moscow⁵⁰¹.

Here we again see inconsistent categorisation as it is argued that although someone may look or talk like a Ukrainian, they may be Russian or at least controlled by Russian identity managers. There is hence overall a difficulty in making sense of who the different agents are in the conflict. Ukrainian identity managers have nevertheless sought to cognitively simplify the situation by categorising agents in accordance with two distinct groups defined as Russians and Ukrainians.

5.2.1.3 The Solution

Apart from defining what is going on, who is fighting who, and why, Ukraine’s situation-schema includes an understanding of how the conflict should be solved. Since Russian identity managers caused and now

⁴⁹⁹ UFM-11 (6)

⁵⁰⁰ UP-20 (6)

⁵⁰¹ UP-37 (6)

sustain the conflict through the mobilisation of their group members on Ukraine territory, the conflict can only be resolved if Russian identity managers decide to physically remove their group members from Ukraine. As Poroshenko stated during a visit to Spain in June 2018: “When can peace come? Only when Russian invaders leave the Ukrainian land and when the Ukrainian flag and the Ukrainian national emblem return to the Ukrainian Donbass”⁵⁰². Russian group members also need to stop attacking Ukrainians, which is behaviour only Russian identity managers can change as they are the ones who control these agents. As Ukraine’s Foreign Minister, Pavlo Klimkin, stated at an UNSC meeting on Ukraine in May 2018: “In a nutshell, as everyday developments show, Russia and its ongoing military activity in the occupied territories of Donbas remain the obstacle to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. As soon as Moscow takes the decision to stop violence, the conflict will end”⁵⁰³. Conflict resolution is hence two-fold as it requires Russian identity managers to retrieve their armed forces from Ukraine, and these identity managers must end their management of the non-state actors. Resolution is therefore not merely dependent on the physical removal of Russians but also the removal of Russian social influence. This understanding is linked to the diffuse categorisation of the non-state actors as it is recognised that the pro-Russians fighting in Eastern Ukraine may not only be Russian citizens, but also Ukrainian citizens who have fallen for Russian identity management. As the Advisor to the Head of the Presidential Administration on Information Policy, Natalia Popovych, stated in February 2015: “Each day we are losing the best sons of Ukraine because someone believes in myths, lies and informational manipulations of Russian propagators”⁵⁰⁴. Conflict resolution is also an internal matter as there is a need for all Ukrainians to understand the danger Russian identity managers pose. As Klimkin stated at an OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in December 2017: “We must do more to help our citizens resist Russian propaganda and disinformation – our citizens must now realise that Russia is a State that lies on an industrial scale”⁵⁰⁵. There is hence a need to make Ukrainians socially distance themselves from Russians and to inform them about the hostile intentions these agents, and particularly their identity managers, have towards Ukrainians.

Russian aggression does not merely come in the form of military threats but equally in the form of ideational threats, as the Russian use of propaganda spreads false narratives about the situation and the Russia and Ukraine groups. As Poroshenko stated in the interview to Financial Times in March 2018: “They use a huge army of provocateurs and agents in social media[...]That is why Ukraine stopped Russian TV broadcasting and Russian social media[...]Because they (Russia - ed.) use it for propaganda war”⁵⁰⁶. Because of this Russian intent, one should not regard Ukrainian identity managers’ attempt to oppose the

⁵⁰² UP-85 (6)

⁵⁰³ UFM-94 (6)

⁵⁰⁴ UFM-26 (6)

⁵⁰⁵ UFM-79 (6)

⁵⁰⁶ UP-21 (6)

Russian conflict narrative as something that occurs from negative social dispositions or interests. The Ukrainian identity managers are instead trying to prevent the aggressor from manipulating Ukrainian group members, and the outside world, into believing the falsities Russian identity managers construct around the groups present. The conflict is thus not only fought on the ground but in the minds of agents, and so it is equally an ideational battle between the conflict parties' understanding of themselves, the other, and the situation. As Poroshenko stated at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2018: "It is very important to deliver the truth about the events in Ukraine to protect the world from the fake news that are actively distributed around the world"⁵⁰⁷. Conflict resolution therefore also hinges on the adoption of the Ukrainian identity managers' social cognitive framework and the need to spread their understanding about Russia to prevent others from identifying themselves as Russians, and/or acting in accordance with Russian interests. In the end, adopting the Ukrainian identity managers' truth constitutes a way to remove Russian social influence as it offers a stronger social identification for those who are Ukrainians. In Ukraine's situation-schema there is overall a great emphasis on the group relations that shape the conflict. There is also a sharp division of the group identities and interests that should be included and those that should be excluded to solve the conflict. Ukraine's situation-schema is therefore not merely rooted in an attempt to define "who" Russia is and what this group has done and wants, but also in an attempt to establish what defines Ukrainians and how they are different from Russians. This is of interest as it points to how leaders manage certain group identities and how they construct narratives around these group identities. What this finding, however, also indicates is that the leaders of the conflict parties do not merely seek to manage their own in-group identity but also the identity of the out-group. This points to an element of alien identity management, which will be discussed further in the section on Ukraine's other-schema, as well as in chapter 7.

5.2.2 Self-Schema

5.2.2.1 The Ukraine Group

In Ukraine's self-schema, Ukrainians are reified as a group of agents that have been collectively mobilised in the conflict context. More specifically is the argument that the Russian attack mobilised Ukrainians in a collective pursuit of repelling this aggressor and strengthening their standing vis-à-vis this aggressor in the future. The situation is overall presented as one where Ukrainians are fighting for the retrieval of their territory and the regaining of control over their existence. To reach this understanding, Ukrainian identity managers amongst other point to the events that took place in 2004 and 2013. According to the identity managers, these events served as stimuli where Ukrainians contested the old ways of managing the Ukraine

⁵⁰⁷ UP-1 (6)

group, and the times when the group started moving towards a more equal and correct form of identity management. As Poroshenko stated in a decree in November 2016 where he established the Day of Dignity and Freedom:

Ukraine is a territory of dignity and freedom[...]We became so owing to not one but two revolutions – the Maidan of 2004, which was a Festival of Freedom, and the Revolution of 2013, the Revolution of Dignity. It was an extremely tough challenge for Ukraine when the Ukrainians demonstrated their Europeanness, dignity, their desire for freedom⁵⁰⁸.

From the processing of these events arises the understanding that 2004 and 2013 represents the time when Ukrainians collectively mobilised themselves in order to re-establish their social distinctiveness. Russian identity managers, however, hindered the positive developments that characterised Maidan, as they saw 2013 as an opportunity to launch their long-held plan of destroying Ukraine. In Ukraine's self-schema, Maidan is thus processed as both a time of liberation and as a time where Ukrainians united against a commonly defined out-group. As Poroshenko stated in a press release in January 2018: "Having the bitter experience of anarchy in the period of the Ukrainian national revolution, we repel any attempts to instigate chaos and anarchy in the country. We understand, at least most of us, that the consolidation of all Ukrainians against the backdrop of the most dangerous foreign threat from Russia is the key precondition of our victory"⁵⁰⁹. It is then by comparing the 2004 and 2014 events to the ongoing conflict that Ukrainian identity managers reify Ukrainians as a group of agents who are seeking to uphold their collective existence in the wake of the Russian threat.

When exploring Ukraine's in-group reification, it becomes noticeable that the identity managers use personal and situational causality to distinguish between Ukrainians and Russians. In their conflict narrative, the identity managers e.g. reify Ukraine as a peaceful group, which is merely responding to Russian behaviour. Whereas Ukrainians are responding to the situation, Russians are behaving with intent. To this understanding is also the viewpoint that the behaviour Ukrainians (including their leaders) undertake in the conflict context, is something which has collective Ukrainian validation as it derives from the mobilisation of the Ukraine group in 2004 and 2013. Hence, instead of being behaviour dictated by the Ukrainian identity managers, the behaviour that occurs in the Ukraine conflict is the outcome of Ukrainians' collective cognition, collective engagement, and collective interests. The Ukraine group is thus reified as an entity that behaves in a consistent and collective manner. One of Ukraine's consistent tendencies is to behave in accordance with the agreements made in the conflict. As the Foreign Ministry stated in a press release addressing the situation in Donbas in November 2015: "Ukraine remains committed to the Minsk agreements of 2014 and 2015 as the only efficient instrument of peaceful settlement of the situation in

⁵⁰⁸ UFM-47 (6)

⁵⁰⁹ UP-3 (6)

Donbas and will take all necessary measures for their proper implementation”⁵¹⁰. Ukrainian identity managers reify the Ukraine group as a united group whose identity managers and group members are committed to solving the conflict peacefully and adapting their behaviour in accordance with the various agreements made. This implies that the reason a solution has not yet been reached is due to the stance and behaviour of the other. It is also from this understanding of the situation and the Ukraine group that the Ukrainian identity managers make sense of their military response. According to the identity managers, Ukraine’s military manoeuvring does not derive from any negative Ukrainian dispositions or interests. Rather, this behaviour is caused by the need to defend Ukrainians against the external enemy. As Ukraine’s Prime Minister, Arseny Yatseniuk, stated in February 2015 in an interview to Reuters: “Peace in Europe depends on peace in Ukraine and for us to achieve that peace Ukraine must have the means to defend itself. Not in offensive operations, but in defense operations”⁵¹¹. It is thus also through the use of situational causality that Ukrainian identity managers can construct Ukraine as a peaceful group, as it is argued that Ukrainians’ behaviour in the conflict would not have occurred had it not been for the situation Russian identity managers imposed on them.

Although Ukrainians are forced to take up arms within their own country, this is based on the needs of the Ukrainians held hostage in Eastern Ukraine who seek assistance from their fellow in-group members. As Poroshenko stated in a press release regarding the delayed opening of checkpoints in Zolote in March 2018: “The Head of State emphasizes that Ukrainian border guards and military stay on the checkpoint risking their lives to ensure normal life of citizens[...]He visited this village and local residents met him saying: “Thank God, Ukraine has come here”⁵¹². The wish of the Ukrainians in Eastern Ukraine is to be liberated by those who belong to the Ukraine group and not the Russian group due to the dispositions associated with these two. As Poroshenko further stated about Russia in April 2017 during a TV program titled “Freedom of Speech”: “We are a very responsible nation and we do not let the situation inside the country to be destabilized when they would like to shed blood”⁵¹³. Although this self/other understanding is something the Ukrainian identity managers reach through the cognitive systematisation of the agents involved in the conflict, they argue that they speak the truth about the Ukraine group and the situation it finds itself in. As Poroshenko stated during a meeting with regional media in April 2018: “The war will end with our victory[...]Not only because we have the best Armed Forces[...]But also because the truth is with us and the Lord is with us, so we will surely win”⁵¹⁴. There is therefore only one truth about the conflict in Ukraine, and this is the truth Ukrainian identity managers express in their conflict narrative.

⁵¹⁰ UFM-31 (6)

⁵¹¹ Reuters-83 (3)

⁵¹² UP-30 (6)

⁵¹³ UP-56 (6)

⁵¹⁴ UP-40 (6)

5.2.2.2 Ukraine's Motivation for Behaviour

When reifying the Ukraine group, Ukrainian identity managers construct it as a counter-identity to the Russian identity. They do so by amongst other referring to the hostilities Russian identity managers have imposed upon Ukrainians in the conflict context, but also by referring to the past relations that have existed between the two groups. When processing stimuli that Ukraine and Russia produce in the conflict context, Ukrainian identity managers amongst other emphasise the hierarchical relations that existed between these two groups during the Soviet Union. During this time, Russians enforced their control and interests upon Ukrainians, which led to great suffering. This is a common memory all Ukrainians share and a memory that drives Ukrainians' behaviour in the conflict today. Despite this shared memory, there are remnants from the past, both narratives and historical artefacts, within the Ukraine society which contradict this understanding. The current presentation of history does not correspond with what transpired and the intergroup relations that existed. There is therefore a need to re-establish the correct account of this memory and to re-unite Ukrainians around a shared understanding of right and wrong. As Poroshenko stated during a speech at the ceremony commemorating the victims of political repression in May 2018: "The state is now consistently pursuing a state policy aimed at restoring and preserving the historical memory of the Ukrainian people"⁵¹⁵. The restoration of Ukrainians' collective memory is not merely a matter of uniting those belonging to the Ukraine group and re-establishing the truth about Russia-Ukraine relations. It is also a matter of separating the Ukraine and Russian identities from each other. This was amongst other expressed by Poroshenko in May 2018 during a speech held at a photo exhibition called "Heroes", where he stated that:

The policy of historical memory is becoming Ukrainian again[...]At the end of last month, at my command, Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine Viktor Muzhenko approved[...]measures for the restoration and implementation of national traditions in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The army will be finally cleared of all the dangerous rudiments of the Soviet-Russian ideology, which negatively affect the morale of the Ukrainian army. They mislead us with false propaganda stamps called to keep us in mental orbit of Russia⁵¹⁶.

Hence, although the Ukraine group is reified as unique and unified, Ukrainian identity managers point to how it continues to be cognitively entangled with the Russian identity. There is consequently a need to cognitively separate the two group identities, which includes restoring historical memories about the true intergroup relations and removing "dangerous ideological rudiments", which may confuse the social differentiation between the two groups.

⁵¹⁵ UP-80 (6)

⁵¹⁶ UP-64 (6)

The past is something that has shaped the Ukraine group identity, but it is also something which needs to be re-shaped to fit the current contours of what it is to be, and have been, a Ukrainian. A motivation that drives Ukrainian behaviour in the conflict is thus the re-establishment of a Ukrainian collective memory network and the cognitive separation of the Ukraine identity from the Russian identity, as this symbolises a move from the past towards the future. As the Foreign Ministry stated following the Foreign Minister's attendance at the 7th Kyiv Security Forum in April 2014: "The Foreign Minister stressed that Ukraine does not choose between Europe and Russia. "The only choice is between the past and the future", he said, adding that the Ukrainian people will make that choice on their own, without any guidance from outside"⁵¹⁷. In Ukraine's conflict narrative, is hence also a referral to how the conflict is defined by an interaction between two types of group identities, which are not static but mouldable as Ukrainians are moving away from their past misperceived Soviet/Russian identification. What manifests in Ukraine's self-schema, is a distinct social differentiation between the Ukraine and the Russia/Soviet identities, which are treated as separate groups that have never co-existed peacefully, nor have these identities ever overlapped. Rather, the Ukraine group has temporarily been forced under an identification with Russia, which is a social cognitive wrong that the Ukrainian identity managers are now trying to right.

A central interest that drives Ukrainians in the conflict is the need to strengthen the Ukraine group identity and hereby unify the Ukraine group members, which may be done by spreading the social practices that invoke the Ukraine identity. As Poroshenko put it in a statement published on his homepage in March 2018:

The unity of the country is an absolute priority for everyone and the authorities must take into account this imperative in their language and humanitarian policy. "I don't want the language issue to be on the agenda of the election campaign again[...]Language must unite, not split the state. We shouldn't let the fifth column get a single benefit on the future presidential, parliamentary and local elections[...]Fighting for our Ukrainian language means not only shouting the slogans and putting forward demands to the authorities. It means to buy Ukrainian books. It means to buy tickets and watch Ukrainian movies[...]And the main thing is to speak it. Even if you have been speaking Russian for a lifetime, switch to the Ukrainian language. I think this is the right path"⁵¹⁸.

To reach a unified Ukraine group, Ukrainians must adopt social practices, which the Ukrainian identity managers associate with the Ukraine identity. This implies that those who belong to the Ukraine group are not only identified based on the behaviour they engage with or the position they take in the conflict, but also by e.g. the language they speak. A strong Ukraine identity is, however, not merely rooted in social practices but also in social and political systems, as there is a need for constitutional and administrative changes, which reflect the Ukraine group's unity. Here the identity managers advocate for decentralisation,

⁵¹⁷ UFM-9 (6)

⁵¹⁸ UP-23 (6)

which they compare to the alien federal solution Russian identity managers recommend. As Poroshenko stated during a speech at the Ukrainian Municipal Forum in June 2018:

Decentralization is my child, and I will work hard on this project just as long as the Ukrainian people leave me in power[...]As long as I am President, I will not allow the revision of this course. Because decentralization is in the interests of communities, their residents, and all citizens of Ukraine. And Ukraine becomes stronger when communities become stronger, when nobody raises the voice to offer us separatism and federalization⁵¹⁹.

To restore the Ukraine identity, Ukrainians must engage in social practices that conform with this identity and they must support systems that unite their group members. This entails speaking Ukrainian, advocating decentralization, and disposing the Russian language and the idea of federalism. Those who continue to advocate for the practice of speaking Russian, and the need to establish a federalised state, may be categorised as Russian, or as “others”, as they do not comply with the social practices, world view, and interests associated with the Ukraine group. In Ukraine’s self-schema is hence also a referral to how there is a true and a false constellation of group identities, and how there is a need to retreat to Ukraine’s correct ideational foundation to ensure prosperity amongst group members.

Another interest that motivates Ukrainians in the conflict is the improvement of manager-member relations. In the past, the Ukraine group was defined by a distorted manager-member relationship, which resulted in a distorted Ukraine identity and interests. To reach internal cohesion, and a stronger stance towards Russia in the conflict, there is a need to engage in a dialogue with in-group members and ensure their demands. As Lubkivsky stated at the Ukraine Crisis Media Centre in May 2014:

Dialogue is a pivotal concept in modern Ukraine. Maidan started from a protest of citizens who wanted to be heard by the Government[...]In more than 20 years of Ukraine’s independence, fundamental issues of our nation’s development, ranging from Constitutional basics to language policy, have been largely neglected or cast aside due to political games. Maidan changed that⁵²⁰.

Ukraine’s group members have the wish to be heard by their leaders, and they wish to become a part of defining Ukraine’s identity and interests. In this is a referral to how the former Ukraine government, i.e. the former Ukraine identity managers, failed in including the collective interests of their group members, and instead engaged in identity management that did not correlate with the group’s social distinctiveness and ambitions. Due to the revolutions in 2004 and 2013 (and the inauguration of new identity managers), there has, however, occurred a shift as Ukrainian identity managers are now acting on behalf of the distinctiveness and interests that unite Ukrainians. This also implies that Russian interests, which once steered Ukrainian identity managers, no longer steer the decision-making of the new identity managers.

⁵¹⁹ UP-90 (6)

⁵²⁰ UFM-16 (6)

The Russian group identity and interests will hence no longer direct the course of Ukrainians. As Poroshenko stated in April 2018 during a working trip to Vinnytsia:

I want to remind you that in April, May, June of 2014, the policy of federalization was imposed on us from outside[...]All this was from abroad and they tried to sell it to the Ukrainian nation and Ukrainian society as a way to the development of our state[...]We did not have the right to fool people and our principled position was - Ukraine is a unitary state, Ukrainian people stand together, we will not allow to split the state⁵²¹.

The re-establishment of a unified and unique Ukraine group identity thus also hinges on improved manager-members relations and the establishment of intragroup dialogue. Dialogue does, however, not pertain to those who advocate federalism, separatism, and other Russian demands. As Lubkivsky further stated at the Ukrainian Crisis Media Centre in May 2014: “Dialogue with all regions of Ukraine is underway and must be reinforced. Official Kyiv confirmed several times that it is ready to discuss the future model of local government. However, we will not engage in conversations with terrorists”⁵²². In Ukraine’s self-schema is therefore also a referral to how specific identity invocations need to be complied with for agents to be identified as Ukrainian group members - and hereof for their demands to be heard and acted upon by Ukrainian identity managers. What emerges from the Ukrainian identity managers’ self-schema is hence the tendency to process Ukraine as an entity that behaves and thinks in a consistent manner. To reach this understanding the Ukrainian identity managers apply a group attribution error where they construct Ukraine as a unit that behaves in accordance with the same self/other understanding and interests. This use of a group bias is of interest, because, as will be seen in the next section, the Ukrainian identity managers do not apply the same bias in the processing of Russia. Rather, when they process who Russia is and what this group wants, they apply a leadership bias as they argue that Russia is a manipulated group, whose worldview and interests are fully shaped from the Russian leaderships’ personal characteristics and interests.

5.2.3 Other-Schema

5.2.3.1 *The Russia Group*

Whereas the Ukrainian identity managers construct their self-schema around the Ukraine group identity, they construct their other-schema around the Russian group identity, which is understood as the party that caused and sustains the conflict. As with Ukrainians, Russians are reified as a group of agents who inhabit a certain territory and agents who pursue specific interests in the conflict. What is interesting in Ukraine’s

⁵²¹ UP-39 (6)

⁵²² UFM-15 (6)

other-schema is that unlike the argument that Ukrainians share the same memory network and act in unison in the conflict, Russia's group identity and interests are shaped by the Russian identity managers' personal interests and personal dispositions. In Ukraine's other-schema, "the other" is to a great extent the Russian leadership who are managing the Russian group in a negative way, as they are forcing, encouraging, and/or misleading Russian in-group members into pursuing hostile interests in Ukraine. Russian group mobilisation in the conflict does not derive from a collective Russian experience or memory. Rather, it is a group that the Russian identity managers have mobilised in the conflict in order to pursue particularly Vladimir Putin's personal interests. Russian behaviour is thus not an outcome of collective cognition nor collective interests but behaviour Putin controls from Moscow. It is from this understanding that the Ukrainian identity managers process the conflict as a situation Putin has instigated, as Putin has a desire to sow destruction. As Poroshenko stated in an interview with the German media Bild in February 2018: "Putin is always happy to see any signs of political instability anywhere. Instability is what he is trying to create anywhere where democracy prevails"⁵²³. Putin epitomises the Russia group and the long-held Russian policy of invading Ukraine derives from Putin's interest. This interest is not merely shaped by Putin's wish for instability but linked to Putin's idea that the Russia group, and Putin himself, is of more social value than others. As Klimkin stated at the Human Rights Council in February 2017:

It is quite easy to indicate one common source of this insecurity in Europe — one state that considers himself "more equal than others". A strategy to instigate, participate, support and then derail instead of mediating has been used by this state to create a number of volatile hotspots across our continent⁵²⁴.

To reify the out-group, Ukrainian identity managers use a group attribution error as Putin's behaviour is thought to reflect the general attitude of the Russia group. An interesting feature is, however, that they do not merely present Putin as a prime example of a "Russian". Rather, Putin's personality and personal ambitions are thought to shape Russia's group identity and interests. To the group attribution error is therefore attached, what may be called, a "leadership attribution error", where the out-group's identity and interest is processed as the outcome of the leadership's personality and personal ambition. This Ukrainian use of a group bias when processing its self-understanding and a leadership bias when processing its other-understanding, is of interest as it indicates a cognitive tendency, which leads to clashing group identities. Alongside the adaptability of these group identities, as seen in the section on schematic changes, this indicates an area which potentially may have significant implications for the conflict parties inter-group relations and the nature of the conflict.

⁵²³ UP-5 (6)

⁵²⁴ UFM-59 (6)

Although Ukrainian identity managers process Russian behaviour as something Putin has mobilised and now directs, they also point to how Putin's negative interests are being pursued by Russian in-group members, who either share Putin's negative interest of sowing destruction, or who are oblivious to the consequences their actions have. As Poroshenko stated at the 54th Munich Security Conference in February 2018: "This war has already recruited many different actors, who might not be even aware of their destructive roles. However, the evil behind this war is the same, and he resides in Kremlin"⁵²⁵. Whereas Ukrainian identity managers and group members act and think in unison, Russian identity managers impose their personal identity and interests upon their group members. There is thus not a cooperative relationship between Russian group managers and members when it comes to constructing the Russian group identity. Russian identity managers are rather constructing the Russia group out of their own image. This tendency does not only derive from the current Russian identity managers but is a tendency that the Russian identity managers have taken over from the Soviet identity managers. As it was put in a statement by the Foreign Ministry regarding the "Abduction and illegal detention of Ukrainian citizens by the Russian Federation" in March 2016: "So far the Russian Federation has[...]demonstrated the intention to pursue its illegal practices consistent with the political persecutions of the Soviet times"⁵²⁶. Russia and the Soviet Union are in Ukraine's conflict narrative categorised as similar, as Russian and Soviet identity managers are thought to follow the same behavioural pattern of sustaining a manager-member hierarchy. The Ukrainian identity managers, however, also reify the Russia group by comparing the current Russian behaviour in the conflict to the behaviour of Nazi Germany. As Poroshenko stated in a speech delivered at the National Museum in connection to WW2 commemoration ceremony in May 2018:

Eighty years ago, in the spring of 1938, Führer organized the Austrian Anschluss[...]Wasn't the Ukrainian Crimea annexed under such a scenario? [...]a little bit later, Hitler, under the pretext of alleged protection of the rights of the German-speaking population, occupied the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia[...]Doesn't it look like the Russian occupation of the Ukrainian Donbas?⁵²⁷.

In Ukraine's other-schema, Russian identity managers engage in the same behaviour as e.g. the leaders of Nazi Germany, and so previous events conducted by other groups categorised by a manager-member hierarchy is used to make sense of Russian intent in the Ukraine conflict. By referring to how similarly hostile and hierarchical groups have behaved in the past, Ukrainian identity managers establish "who" Russia is and what this group "wants". They also reach an understanding of what will happen in the conflict, as the past behaviour of e.g. Nazi Germany can be used as a "script" for predicting Russia's future steps.

⁵²⁵ UP-8 (6)

⁵²⁶ UFM-41 (6)

⁵²⁷ UP-68 (6)

Current Russian behaviour is thus processed as a replication of past behaviour, which is typical for negative groups.

In the Ukraine conflict narrative, Russia is generally reified as a negative out-group as it symbolises repression and conflict. The Russian identity managers are not merely replicating former hierarchical and repressive groups, they are abiding to a behavioural tendency of sowing conflicts and failing in solving them. This Russian tendency is something Ukrainian identity managers for long have been aware of. These tendencies were, however, not acted upon by the international community who already in 2008 failed to acknowledge the true content of the Russian identity and interests. As Klimkin stated at the UNSC Ministerial debate in February 2017:

Russian aggression against Georgia in 2008 became a litmus test for European security. It was a warning sign that was not heeded. The aggressor, being just slapped on the hand by the international community, took this as a green light. Had the lessons from the 1938 Munich agreement not been learned? Today it is obvious[...]Appeasement of aggressors and lack of consequences merely encourage more aggression. Since 2014 this state has vigorously activated this strategy in Ukraine.⁵²⁸

Russia is hence a group that inhabits negative social dispositions, which do not comply with the positive dispositions the Ukraine group represents. Whereas Ukrainians are peaceful agents who value freedom, Russian identity managers and group members are agents who continuously engage in warfare and aggression against others. As the Foreign Ministry stated in the conflict factsheet published on their homepage (caps lock from original text): “FACT 9: MILITARY AGGRESSION AND HYBRID WARFARE IS RUSSIA’S STANDARD PRACTICE. Russia’s aggressive policy targets not only Ukraine. Russia violated territorial integrity of Moldova and Georgia, announced its territorial claims and the willingness to “protect” Russian-speaking population in the Baltic States. Russia supports Eurosceptic and radical movements in Europe”⁵²⁹. Warfare is a feature that characterises Russian behaviour and it is a tendency that Russian identity managers justify by arguing for the need to protect their in-group members. However, apart from protecting Russian in-group members present in alien territories, Russian identity managers otherwise inhabit a complete disregard for the life of others. As the OSCE Delegation of Ukraine stated at the Permanent Council in January 2017: “Russia and its proxies in Donbas continue to undermine the peaceful process[...]by pursuing their political objectives through the usual blackmail of the indiscriminate use of force”⁵³⁰. Those who belong to, or are categorised as belonging to, the Russia group are thus hostile and selfish agents who will not aid or spare the lives of others if these do not identify as

⁵²⁸ UFM-58 (6)

⁵²⁹ UFM-95 (6)

⁵³⁰ UFM-54 (6)

Russians. Rather, Russian identity managers and group members have no qualm attacking out-groups in their attempt to reach their negative interests.

Alongside this Russian trait, is the Russian tendency to lie as Russian identity managers misinterpret and misrepresent facts to justify their leadership decisions and their group members' behaviour in the conflict. As Klimkin stated about Russia at a UN Open Debate on international peace and security in February 2015: "To justify its[...]brutal actions, it hides behind barefaced misinterpretation of the relevant documents and its related commitments"⁵³¹. Russian identity managers have a tendency of hiding the truth about the role their in-group members play in the conflict, and they continuously seek to fool others into believing that they do not have any leverage in the conflict. As Ukraine's OSCE representative, Ihor Prokopchuk, stated at the OSCE Permanent Council in January 2018: "It proves Russia's unchanged intention to hide from the international community the mounting evidence of Russia's direct role as a party to the conflict in Ukraine's east, including by supplying heavy weapons, military equipment, regular troops and mercenaries"⁵³². In comparison to Ukrainian identity managers who value the truth, is the counter construction of Russian identity managers who seek to impose false narratives about the situation and agents involved. This accusation of lying is also attributed to the non-state actors who are processed as agents that clothe their true intentions in talks about referendum and rights. As Ukrainian President, Oleksandr Turchynov, stated in May 2014: "That farce the terrorists call a referendum is nothing else but a propagandist cover for killings, kidnapping, violence and other grave crimes"⁵³³. Russian identity managers and group members are hence generally characterised as untrustworthy and hostile agents who do not compare to Ukrainians.

5.2.3.2 Russia's Motivation for Behaviour

Apart from identifying Russians and their social traits, Ukrainian identity managers reify the Russia group by granting it interests based on the interpretations made of Russian behaviour in the conflict. Since Russian identity managers are thought to steer the behaviour of their in-group members, the interests thought to motivate the Russia group in the conflict are interests attributed to the Russian identity managers. From this understanding is the viewpoint that the Russian group members who engage in the conflict, are agents that automatically or uncritically follow the orders their identity managers give them. These orders include the destruction of other groups and forcing them under Russian identity management. As Poroshenko stated during the Munich Security Conference in February 2018: "The "Russian world" turns everything it touches into ruin and decline. Have a look at Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria or occupied Donbas and Crimea.

⁵³¹ UFM-2 (6)

⁵³² UFM-83 (6)

⁵³³ CNN-11 (3)

It seems that according to the “Russian world” doctrine, all the Europe should look like Kaliningrad or Donetsk under occupation, but not vice versa”⁵³⁴. In Ukraine’s other-schema, Russian identity managers are driven by social domination, which includes the removal or conversion of other groups into becoming Russian. An extension of this interest is the wish of annexing territory as it fulfils the objective of gaining power and control over populations. As Poroshenko stated during the meeting of the Military Cabinet in February 2018: “We shouldn’t think that Russia’s goal was Crimea of the east of our state. I am sure that the goal is still the whole Ukraine. Of course, the aggressor didn’t expect the resistance organized from the first days of the aggression by the Ukrainian people”⁵³⁵. Russian behaviour is driven by the ambition of removing other forms of social identification as part of a larger power struggle. Since Ukrainians opposed the Russian attempt to destroy the Ukraine group identity, however, Russian identity managers have been forced to pursue their objectives with other means. As stated in a press release published on the President’s homepage in March 2018: “The Russian aggressor has not changed its plans on the split of Ukraine and continues to support the fifth column and other performers to achieve this goal”⁵³⁶. Russian identity managers’ interests of eradicating the Ukraine group identity is now sought using proxies who seek to undermine the Ukraine social identification by advocating a Russian social belonging, waging a war against Ukrainians, and annexing territory that belongs to those who identify themselves as Ukrainian. This finding is of interest as it also points to how the Ukrainian identity managers see cognitive support as another cause for the conflict. As they argue, the conflict has largely occurred because Russia has convinced the non-state actors that Russia’s narrative is the truth. The conflict, and the inter-group relations that define it, are hence equally made sense off through the processing of whose cognition gets to prevail.

The eradication of the Ukraine group identity is not merely related to the physical destruction of Ukrainians and associated territory. It also involves the removal of social practices and cultural artefacts that invoke the Ukraine group identity within and beyond Ukrainian territory. As Ukraine’s delegation to the OSCE stated at the Permanent Council in October 2015:

Russia’s aggression against Ukraine has taken many forms and manifestations. Yesterday the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine expressed a resolute protest in connection with yesterday’s search by Russian authorities of the premises of the library of Ukrainian literature in Moscow – the single specialised institution designated to meet the cultural, language and information needs of the Ukrainian community.

The search was carried out under the pretext of looking for “russophobic” and “extremist” literature[...]We call on the Russian authorities to stop pressure on this library and put an end to the deliberate policy of eliminating everything Ukrainian⁵³⁷.

⁵³⁴ UP-8 (6)

⁵³⁵ UP-12 (6)

⁵³⁶ UP-34 (6)

⁵³⁷ UFM-30 (6)

The same interest is extended to the non-state actors who by virtue of being socially categorised as Russians are motivated by the objective of destroying the Ukraine group identity. As Lubkivsky stated at the Ukrainian Crisis Media Centre in July 2014: “The Russian terrorists showed that negotiating more rights for Russian language, getting a better representation of the region in central government was not what their fight was about. Their fight was about one and only thing: Ukraine’s dismemberment. Once the Russian involvement is out of the picture – we, Ukrainians, will agree among us”⁵³⁸. Russian identity managers are hence driven by an interest in sowing destruction and splitting Ukrainians in accordance with group belonging, which is part of a long-term ambition of eradicating the Ukraine group identity and replacing it with the Russian group identity.

The Russian identity managers also want to reinstate the Soviet Union, as this will ensure the Russian group identity’s social dominance. As Poroshenko stated at the Munich Security Conference in February 2018: “Yet, it is not Ukraine that is Moscow’s target. Russia has a different goal in mind. Its goal is to satisfy the Kremlin’s ambitions and to avenge the “greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century[...] I am the one to warn you that there are no limits in the Kremlin as regards its hidden agenda”⁵³⁹. The re-establishment of the Soviet Union is rooted in an ambition of creating a system where agents are forced to identify with an alien identity and be managed by alien identity managers. If Russian identity managers reach this interest, it will have fatal consequences as it will lead to collective suffering. As Poroshenko also stated at the Munich Security Conference in February 2018:

Countering Russian aggression is an existential challenge in terms of what our future will be. Will it be a “Russian world of alternative values” or “the Free World of universal values”?[...] First, you need to understand what the “Russian world” is. Examples are many. Just compare the standard of living in former Koenigsberg with the lifestyle in Munich. Or Karelian territories, annexed by Russia 80 years ago, with Finnish Karelia[...] There is a shocking difference between the “Russian world” and the Free World[...] The “Russian world” turns everything it touches into ruin and decline⁵⁴⁰.

The primary Russian interest is to destroy and conquer lands as with the spreading of instability and suppression comes the expansion of the Russian group identity. In Ukraine’s conflict narrative is hence also a referral to how groups should only be managed by members of their in-group. The establishment of who is Ukrainian and Russian is, however, as seen, not given but something Ukrainian identity managers construct through the categorization of agents and subsequent reification of groups. In their conflict narrative, Ukrainian identity managers are hence not merely seeking to manage their in-group’s identity and interests. They also seek to manage the Russian identity and interests as they try to present their account

⁵³⁸ UFM-23 (6)

⁵³⁹ UP-9 (6)

⁵⁴⁰ UP-8 (6)

of Russia as the correct account of the group, which others should adopt and hereof think and act in accordance with.

5.2.4 Ukraine's Social Cognitive Framework

In the previous sections I have analysed how the Ukraine identity managers process stimuli and how they combine nodes into schemas, which come to make up their social cognitive frameworks. This has been done to get an insight into the processing tendencies the Ukrainian identity managers resort to. These findings will in section 5.5. be compared to the tendencies of the other conflict parties. The reason for comparing these tendencies is to explore the intergroup dynamics that exist between the conflict parties and to explore the role their social cognitive processes may play in shaping conflict protraction. In Ukraine's conflict narrative, the identity managers construct a situation-, self-, and other-schema, which combined shapes the social cognitive framework they rely on as the ideational foundation for making sense of and interacting with others in the conflict⁵⁴¹. In this framework, the conflict is processed as an intergroup conflict between Ukraine and Russia. To reach this understanding, the identity managers process stimuli such as the annexation of Crimea, Russia's troop presence in Eastern Ukraine, and the Maidan uprising. It is, however, also an understanding reached by cognitively systematizing the agents present in the conflict in accordance with group identities. When the Ukrainian identity managers make sense of Russia, they do not process Russia as a state or territory per se. Russia is instead reified as a group consisting of managers and members and a group that Russian leadership, particularly Vladimir Putin, is capable of mobilizing and controlling for the reaching of their own objectives. The conflict is thus understood as one where Russian identity managers have mobilized agents in a fight against Ukrainians. What is interesting in Ukraine's social cognitive framework, is that the Russian identity managers are not merely capable of mobilizing Russian citizens. They are also capable of mobilizing agents residing outside of Russian territory, as it is them who have mobilized the non-state actors in Eastern Ukraine. In Ukraine's framework, the non-state actors are categorized as e.g. pro-Russians/hybrid Russian forces, which are blurry social constructs that do not depend on legal categorization, such as citizenship. These agents' identification instead rests on social categorization. According to Ukrainian identity managers, these agents are Russian because they are controlled by the Russian identity managers and because they are driven by the same interests and share the same negative dispositions as Russians. When Ukrainian identity managers speak of 'Russia' they hence refer to Russian identity managers and group members, which includes Russian citizens; Russian leaders; agents who socially identify as Russians; and agents who the Ukrainian identity managers have identified as Russians. Russia is thus a fluid group identity with no clear distinction mark. Rather, since Russia is

⁵⁴¹ Moskowitz, *Social Cognition: Understanding Self and Others*, 3

defined through social categorization, it becomes the role of the Ukrainian identity managers to construct what a Russian is and who is a Russian. This is then a construct the identity managers define through social features such as the way one thinks, talks, and acts in the conflict.

To make sense of the conflict and the agents involved, the Ukrainian identity managers engage in a group reification process, where they construct Russians and Ukrainians as fundamentally different agents that do not share the same interests and dispositions. When referring to interests and dispositions, this does not imply that the Russian identity per se has interests and traits. It is the agents who belong to this group identity who share interests and social dispositions, which come to define their identity. The conflict is hence between two groups whose identities, interests, and social dispositions are so different that they have come into conflict. If we link this to the finding that a Russian and a Ukrainian in the conflict is a social category, this poses the question of how come these groups – which it may be argued all consist of human beings - are different. Eventually, this differentiation falls back to the identity managers who do not merely manage their in-group's interests, but also seek to manage how their group members should understand themselves, others, and the situation they find themselves in. This managerial role of the leaders is to some extent one the Ukrainian identity managers acknowledge in their narrative. However, what is interesting is that whereas this manager-member relationship is highlighted in the case of Russia – as it is argued that it is the Russian identity managers who mobilize Russian group members – it is erased from Ukraine's self-schema. In Ukraine's self-schema, the Ukraine group is processed as an entity that behaves in a uniform and consistent manner, due to amongst other a perfect symbiosis between group managers and members, and a collective memory of past Russian oppression. In the conflict, the Ukrainian identity managers are not mobilizing Ukrainians but instead represent Ukrainians' shared experiences, understandings, and interests. Whereas Russian behaviour is controlled and shaped by the leadership, Ukrainian behaviour is the outcome of collective cognition and engagement. In Ukraine's framework is therefore also a referral to how some groups, when managed correctly, will behave from a uniform ideational foundation where members and managers to some extent become one person.

Despite the identity managers' attempt to construct a clear-cut conflict narrative, they have had difficulties socially categorizing the non-state actors. Initially these agents were categorized as terrorists, but they eventually came to be categorized as Russians or Russian proxies. What this shows is that social partitioning is not given, and that a central aspect of the conflict becomes the need to socially distinguish between those who are present to simplify the situation, and direct thoughts and behaviour. This partitioning is a complex endeavour as it is difficult to make sense of a conflict between agents who are seemingly similar. There is nevertheless a need to arrive at a cognitive simplification to make sense of what is going on, and so it becomes the role of the identity managers to present this systematization. To do so, the identity managers seek to compartmentalize agents in accordance with group identities, which are

treated as fixed and ‘natural’. What the findings indicate is nevertheless that these group identities are fluid and they are constructs the identity managers at times struggle to maintain a clear understanding off. Despite this, the identity managers do try to present clear-cut indications of how to distinguish between a Ukrainian and a Russian, and what this implies is that they are not only seeking to manage the Ukraine group identity but also the Russian group identity. The Ukrainian identity managers are thus in their conflict narrative presenting a constructed social reality which they define is the truth, and which they argue should be the understanding that guides conflict resolution efforts. The problem with this is, however, that their social cognitive framework conflicts with the ones that the Russian and DPR identity managers construct.

5.3 Russia’s Social Cognitive Framework

The following section will explore how the Russian identity managers construct understandings about the situation, self, and other in the Ukraine conflict, and the social cognitive framework that forms from this.

5.3.1 Situation-Schema

5.3.1.1 Conflict Cause

In Russia’s conflict narrative, the conflict is processed as one that was triggered by a coup and the subsequent decision of the new Ukrainian identity managers to disregard the rights and fears of their in-group members in Eastern Ukraine. The Russian identity managers process the situation through an intragroup prism as they categorise agents in accordance with a Ukraine group identity and construct the conflict as one where relations between Ukrainian group managers and members have deteriorated. The conflict is more specifically understood as one where agents who identify as Ukrainians have come into conflict with one another and this is a situation which was triggered by several stimuli. One of such stimuli was Yanukovych’s refusal to sign the EU Association Agreement, which led to public unrest and the illegitimate ousting of him and his government. As Russia’s President, Vladimir Putin, stated in his Direct Line in April 2014: “As you know, President Yanukovych refused to sign the Association Agreement with the EU[...]This provoked public unrest that eventually culminated in an unconstitutional coup, an armed seizure of power”⁵⁴². The removal of the Yanukovych government is processed as a coup where legitimate Ukrainian leaders were removed and illegally replaced with new leaders. The onset of the conflict is hence linked to this event. The conflict’s continuation is, on the other hand, attributed to the new Ukrainian identity managers’ intent and the behaviour they engaged with since Maidan. Because once these identity managers illegally seized the right to manage the Ukraine group, they started excluding Ukrainian in-group

⁵⁴² RP-3 (6)

members who did not fit into their understanding of what it is to be Ukrainian. As Putin further stated in his Direct Line in April 2014:

People in eastern and southeastern regions of Ukraine were worried about their future[...]because they saw a rapid growth of nationalist sentiments, heard threats and saw that [the new authorities] wanted to invalidate some of the ethnic minorities' rights, including the rights of the Russian minority.

On the other hand, this description is relative, because Russians are native persons in Ukraine. But an attempt was made to invalidate all decisions regarding the use of the native language. This alarmed people, of course⁵⁴³.

A central aspect of the conflict is thus that, following Maidan, the new Ukrainian identity managers started changing the Ukraine group identity as they made it an exclusive identity, which did not allow for any dual-identification such as being Ukrainian with a Russian heritage.

This change was not enforced on all Ukrainians as it was supported by Ukrainian group members who the Russian identity managers categorise as “nationalists”. This seems to imply that, in the Russian view, Ukraine was polarised among two groups of which the nationalists claimed unrightfully to represent all Ukrainians. These nationalists started to behave in accordance with the sharp social identification the new Ukrainian identity managers were communicating. This resulted in a situation where agents in Eastern Ukraine increasingly worried for their existence due to the occurrence of hostile attitudes towards them and their identity demands. The rise in nationalist sentiments led to fear amongst these disgruntled Ukrainian group members as nationalists started to threaten them. As Putin concluded in the Direct Line in April 2014:

Meanwhile, nationalist groups did not surrender their weapons, but threatened to use force in the eastern regions. In response, people in the east started arming themselves. Refusing to see that something was badly wrong in the Ukrainian state and to start a dialogue, the government threatened to use military force and even sent tanks and aircraft against civilians⁵⁴⁴.

The new Ukrainian identity managers' negative construct of those who identified as Russian/Ukrainian, or primarily as Russian, lead to the mobilisation of nationalist Ukraine group members who were led to believe that it was justifiable to eradicate Ukrainian in-group members who had a Russian affiliation. The Ukrainian group members who had such an affiliation finally armed themselves, making the conflict a matter of self-defence against nationalists who wished to see them physically eradicated, and self-defence against identity managers who no longer wanted these members to be identified as part of the Ukraine group. The conflict is therefore not between all members of the Ukraine group. It is a situation that the Ukrainian identity managers instigated, and which certain Ukraine in-group members decided to either engage in or contest.

⁵⁴³ Ibid

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid

To understand the conflict, the Russian identity managers point to events around and following Maidan as stimulus that should be processed. Unlike the Ukrainian identity managers who process Maidan as a time where Ukrainians regained control over their existence, the Russian identity managers process Maidan as a time where the Ukraine group was torn apart, as there emerged an internal social differentiation between Ukrainian group members. Whereas Ukraine was once an overarching group identity used to categorise agents of all backgrounds living within the Ukraine territory, the Ukraine group identity was increasingly managed as something exclusive. In Russia's situation-schema there is therefore a referral to how agents previously had the possibility of belonging to a multitude of social identities, as those who identified with the Russian group identity also for long had been able to identify with the Ukrainian group identity. With the onset of the conflict, however, occurred a social cognitive shift as this dual-identification was no longer made possible by the new Ukrainian identity managers. This led to a situation where agents had to decide which group to belong to. The Russian identity managers hence also apply a fundamental attribution error when constructing their situation-schema, as they attribute the onset and continuation of the conflict to the Ukrainian identity managers' intent of changing and dictating their in-group members social identification.

Although the conflict is attributed to the new Ukrainian identity managers' behaviour, the Russian identity managers acknowledge that there did exist a collective wish for change within Ukraine. This particularly pertained to relations between Ukrainian group managers and members as Ukrainian group members, during Maidan, demanded a more inclusive and democratic system where their interests could be heard and acted upon. As Putin stated in a meeting with Russian media representatives in March 2014: "I understand the people on Maidan who are calling for radical change rather than some cosmetic remodelling of power. Why are they demanding this? Because they have grown used to seeing one set of thieves being replaced by another"⁵⁴⁵. The collective interests of change that occurred during Maidan were valid demands, but these reflected a discontent towards the Ukrainian identity managers rather than towards agents who identified with the Russian group identity. Following Maidan, the Ukrainian identity managers nevertheless decided to focus on these agents, rather than on the need to change the distorted relations between them and their members. The Ukrainian identity managers thus made the conflict a matter of group belonging instead of focusing their attention on in-group grievances. The conflict could thus have been avoided had the Ukrainian identity managers reacted to the Ukrainians' collective demands and had the identity managers included their Eastern in-group members' concerns and wishes in the redesigning of the Ukraine group. A dialogue with these agents was, however, disregarded. As Putin stated in his direct line in April 2014: "Instead of starting a dialogue with these people, Kiev appointed new governors –

⁵⁴⁵ RP-1 (6)

oligarchs and billionaires – to these regions. People are suspicious of oligarchs as it is[...]This only added to the public discontent. People chose their own leaders, but what did the new government do to them? They were thrown into prison”⁵⁴⁶. Apart from removing these in-group members right to invoke their Russian identification through amongst other the language they speak, the Ukrainian identity managers also removed these in-group members’ right to decide who should represent and manage their dual-identity.

In Russia’s situation-schema, the identity managers hence dismiss the understanding that the conflict is between a European or a Russian choice, as this is a lie Ukrainian identity managers have created to redirect attention away from their unwillingness to change relations with their in-group members. This redirection has caused a conflict between Ukrainians who seek for either a homogenous or a heterogenic composition of the Ukraine group identity. As Putin stated in 2014 at a ceremony where he received the credentials of foreign diplomats: “The anti-constitutional coup in Kiev and attempts to artificially impose a choice between Europe and Russia on the Ukrainian people have pushed society toward a split and painful confrontation.”⁵⁴⁷ and as Russia’s Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, stated in August 2014 in an interview with Russian media: “I expect Ukrainian authorities to understand that it is absolutely unacceptable, when Ukrainians[...]are forced to fight with their own people”⁵⁴⁸. The conflict is hence not one that an out-group has imposed upon Ukraine, nor is it a question of external ideational belonging. It is a situation that the Ukrainian identity managers have imposed upon themselves and their group members, with the result that the Ukrainian identity managers are now socially and physically splitting the group, and country, into two. As Putin stated in April 2015 in his Direct Line: “To sum up, there are grounds to say that the current Kiev authorities are cutting Donbass from Ukraine themselves”⁵⁴⁹. The conflict is thus a self-imposed internal conflict between group members who are fighting over how to construct the Ukraine group identity.

5.3.1.2 The Agents Involved

Although the Russian identity managers process the conflict as a self-imposed intragroup conflict, they have, like the Ukrainian identity managers, had difficulties establishing who the agents in Eastern Ukraine are and how they are similar to Ukrainians and distinct from Russians. Whereas Ukrainian identity managers have resolved this conundrum by categorising the non-state actors as Russian group members, the Russian identity managers have made sense of the non-state actors by separating the Crimea situation from the Donetsk situation. This allows the identity managers to socially categorise those who live in Donetsk as Ukrainians, and those who live in Crimea as Russians. Despite this distinction, Russian identity

⁵⁴⁶ RP-3 (6)

⁵⁴⁷ New York Times-18 (3)

⁵⁴⁸ Reuters-35 (3)

⁵⁴⁹ RP-9 (6)

managers continue to have difficulties social differentiating the agents in Donetsk from the agents in Crimea. When constructing Crimea, the identity managers point to how Crimea as an area inhabits a diverse demographic. As Putin stated following the signing of the treaty that united Crimea and the Russian Federation in March 2014: “Crimea is a unique blend of different peoples’ cultures and traditions. This makes it similar to Russia as a whole, where not a single ethnic group has been lost over the centuries. Russians and Ukrainians, Crimean Tatars and people of other ethnic groups have lived side by side in Crimea, retaining their own identity, traditions, languages and faith”⁵⁵⁰. Despite this diverse demographic, the Crimean Peninsula is primarily inhabited by Russians and the remaining inhabitants are agents who, as Putin stated in an address to Russian MPs in March 2014, “as the referendum has shown, also lean towards Russia”⁵⁵¹. Donetsk, on the other hand, is an area that in terms of ethnic composition and historical affiliation differs from Crimea. As Putin stated in his Direct Line in April 2014:

First, we must admit that the ethnic composition of Crimea differs from that of southeastern Ukraine. These territories, as I just said, were transferred to Ukraine in the mid-1920s, and in 1954, Crimea was annexed to Ukraine for some reason as well[...]As for what is happening in southeastern Ukraine, we don’t know for sure. But we believe that we ought to do everything we can to help these people defend their rights and determine their fate on their own⁵⁵².

Hence, although Russian identity managers acknowledge that agents in Donetsk and Crimea share many social similarities, they categorise the agents in Crimea as predominantly belonging to the Russian group identity, based on the amount of time this territory has been a part of Ukraine. What socially differentiates the agents in Donetsk and Crimea is thus the amount of time these territories, and agents inhabiting them, have been managed by Ukrainian identity managers.

In Russia’s conflict narrative, the non-state actors are socially categorised as Ukrainians who are defending themselves against their in-group members and managers. As the Foreign Ministry stated in May 2014 regarding the OSCE’s roadmap for settlement of the conflict: “We also request an end to the practice of threatening civilians by the use and threat of the use of force. We expect that if Kiev takes such steps, the leaders of the self-defence force of Donbass and Lugansk will react accordingly”⁵⁵³. To make sense of the who the non-state actors are the Russian identity managers rely on situational causality, as these agents are Ukrainians who are merely reacting to situational forces that seek to take away their group-mediated rights. The agents involved are therefore not categorizable as Ukrainians and Russians, but purely as Ukrainians. Despite this, Ukrainian identity managers seek to construct the situation differently, as they

⁵⁵⁰ RP-2 (6)

⁵⁵¹ Ibid

⁵⁵² RP-3 (6)

⁵⁵³ RFM-57 (6)

socially categorise the non-state actors as alien and as out-group members they may legitimately attack. As the Foreign Ministry stated regarding the situation in Ukraine in April 2014:

We are puzzled by the praise of self-proclaimed Kiev authorities for their allegedly well-considered actions on the implementation of the "operations to restore law and order" in the South-East of Ukraine, which have already led to bloodshed. They say nothing of the anti-constitutional use of armed forces to "appease" their own people, who dare to defend their legal interests and rights, or of the other decisions taken by Kiev clearly aimed at provoking the South-Eastern regions.⁵⁵⁴

The conflict is thus processed as one where Ukrainians are fighting Ukrainians, and one where Ukrainian identity managers are trying to justify their hostile actions against their own in-group members, by constructing the conflict as one between a Russian and Ukrainian group. Like the Ukrainian identity managers, the Russian identity managers are hence also seeking to cognitively systematize the agents present in the conflict by drawing distinct and clear-cut social boundaries between them.

5.3.1.3 The Solution

Since the conflict is an intragroup conflict between Ukrainians, the Russian identity managers argue that there is a need for dialogue and for a federal system, which may represent the diversity associated with the Ukraine group. As Lavrov stated in an article published in *The Guardian* in April 2014: "Russia is doing all it can to promote early stabilisation in Ukraine. We are firmly convinced that this can be achieved through, among other steps: real constitutional reform, which would ensure the legitimate rights of all Ukrainian regions and respond to demands from its south-eastern region to make Russian the state's second official language"⁵⁵⁵. According to Russian identity managers, the solution hinges on the need to acknowledge the diversity associated with the Ukraine group identity, and particularly the need to elevate the value of being Russian inside Ukraine. To ensure this, Ukrainian identity managers must introduce federalism, which will grant the opportunity for unity in diversity and allow for the restoration of peaceful relations between Ukrainians and the Russian/Ukrainians. The Ukrainian identity managers also need to elevate and respect the social practices identified as Russian and include these as equal practices alongside those associated with Ukraine.

To ensure a peaceful outcome to the conflict, Ukrainian identity managers also need to engage in a dialogue with their citizens who fully or partly identify as Russian. As Putin stated in his Direct Line in April 2014:

People in the eastern regions are talking about federalisation, and Kiev has at long last started talking about de-centralisation. But what do they mean? To be able to understand what they mean, they should sit

⁵⁵⁴ RFM-34 (6)

⁵⁵⁵ RFM-28 (6)

down at the negotiating table and search for an acceptable solution. Order in the country can only be restored through dialogue and democratic procedures, rather than with the use of armed force, tanks and aircraft⁵⁵⁶.

The conflicting parties need to engage in a dialogue about what it means to be Ukrainian and how relations between group managers and members should be systematised. To do this, Ukrainian identity managers should acknowledge the presence of the non-state actors and grant them equal influence in the conflict resolution process. As the Foreign Ministry stated at a Geneva meeting on the Ukraine conflict in April 2014: “The Geneva meeting was to send a clear signal to Kiev that the situation can be stabilised only through the launch of a comprehensive dialogue with regions, especially with those, where Russian-speaking population is prevailing and whose opinions should be heard by the central authorities”⁵⁵⁷. There is thus also an argument that the cause for the conflict’s continuation is the Ukrainian identity managers’ tendency of dismissing the social existence of the non-state actors, and hereby the existence of contradicting understandings of the Ukraine group identity.

To solve the conflict, the first step is to acknowledge that the Ukraine group identity is not homogenous but diverse and that this identity needs to encompass agents with different affiliations and social practices. As Putin stated in his 2015 Direct Line: “It is also very important that they observe the legitimate rights and interests of Russians living in Ukraine and those who consider themselves Russian regardless of what their passports say. People who consider Russian their mother tongue and Russian culture their native culture. People who feel an inextricable bond with Russia”⁵⁵⁸. The Russian solution to the conflict is thus for the Ukrainian identity managers to end their attempt to create a homogenous Ukraine group identity, and to retract to the former understanding of this identity as encompassing a wide range of agents, particularly those who have strong affiliations and relations with Russia. In this is then also the argument that the solution to the conflict hinges on Ukrainian identity managers’ adoption of Russia’s social cognitive framework.

5.3.2 Self-Schema

5.3.2.1 *The Russia Group*

In Russia’s self-schema, the identity managers point to the presence of a distinct Russian group identity, which is the identification they use to describe themselves with. What is interesting is that the identity managers do not reify the Russia group as one only they and their citizens belong to. Instead, they argue that the Ukrainian identity draws roots to the Russian identity as both stem from the Soviet Union. Both

⁵⁵⁶ RP-3 (6)

⁵⁵⁷ RFM-40 (6)

⁵⁵⁸ RP-9 (6)

identities originate from an overarching Soviet identification, and so the agents of these two groups have previously co-existed as in-group members. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Ukrainian and Russian identities, however, manifested as their own groups. As Putin stated in his 2015 Direct Line:

Ukraine is an independent state and we must respect this. We alienated all this ourselves at one time when we made a decision on the sovereignty of the Russian Federation in the early 1990s. We made this decision, didn't we? We freed them from us but we took this step. It was our decision. And since we did this, we should treat their independence with respect. It is up to the Ukrainian people to decide how to develop relations⁵⁵⁹.

Although the Russian identity managers point to the similarity between Ukrainians and Russians, what is noteworthy is that the Ukraine and Russia groups are not treated as equals. There is a social hierarchy between them as Russians “decided” to free the Ukrainians and allowed them to define themselves as their own group. The Russian identity managers hence reify Ukraine as a sub-category of the Russian group identity that the Russians decided to release in the early 1990s, and which since then has been a group with the task of socially differentiating itself from Russia. Despite the existence of these two groups, the identity managers reify Russians and Ukrainians as agents who continue to be the same, as they share the same social origin. As Putin stated in his 2015 Direct Line: “I see no difference between Ukrainians and Russians, I believe we are one people”⁵⁶⁰. There are hence overlaps between Ukrainians and Russians, which is noticeable by the fact that the conflict revolves around agents in Ukraine who continue to identify themselves as Russians. Despite the social similarity, the identity managers also refer to how they now primarily have an interest in those who predominantly identify themselves as Russian. As Putin stated in his Direct Line in April 2014:

I would like to remind you that what was called Novorossiia (New Russia) back in the tsarist days[...]were not part of Ukraine back then. These territories were given to Ukraine in the 1920s by the Soviet government. Why? Who knows[...]Russia lost these territories for various reasons, but the people remained. Today, they live in Ukraine, and they should be full citizens of their country. That's what this is all about[...]The key issue is providing guarantees to these people. Our role is to facilitate a solution in Ukraine, to ensure that there are guarantees⁵⁶¹.

Thus, although the Ukraine and Russia groups have control over their own existence, the Russian identity managers continue to provide for those who find themselves in the social categorical crosshair between being Ukrainian and Russian. In Russia's self-schema is hence a referral to the fluidity of identities, as agents may identify as distinctly Russian or Ukrainian, but they may also identify as Ukrainian/Russian, which is a natural outcome of these groups' shared past.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid

⁵⁶¹ RP-3 (6)

Despite this shared past, the Russian identity managers do accept that there is a certain negativity in Ukrainian and Russian group relations due to the Soviet Union's previous attempt of imposing its interests upon Ukrainians. As Putin responded in his 2015 Direct Line to a question regarding the Ukraine tendency of comparing Russia to Nazi Germany: "But in truth, we, or rather our predecessors, gave cause for this. Why? Because after World War II, we tried to impose our own development model on many Eastern European countries, and we did so by force. This has to be admitted. There is nothing good about this and we are feeling the consequences now"⁵⁶². The Russian identity managers construct the Russian group identity as not an identity which originated in its own right, but as the identity successor of the Soviet Union. Whereas the Soviet Union amongst other split into the Russian and Ukraine group, from which the Ukraine group needed to establish its social identification, the Russia group continued to evolve from the Soviet identity. This entails that the Russian group identity at times is compared to the Soviet Union. However, despite Russian affiliation with the Soviet Union, the Russian identity managers distance themselves from some of the interests associated with the former Soviet identity managers. As Putin further stated in 2015: "For all the ugly nature of the Stalin regime, for all the reprisals and even the banishment of entire peoples, the Stalin regime never set the goal of destroying [those] peoples, so the attempt to put an equal sign between the two [Nazism and Stalinism] is absolutely groundless"⁵⁶³. Hence, although Russia may be socially compared to the Soviet Union, Russian identity managers should not be compared to Soviet identity managers who previously distorted some of the interests associated with the Russian/Soviet group. The Russian identity managers are thus selective in how much of the Soviet Union's previous tendencies they associate with the Russia group and the Russian behaviour that occurs in the conflict. A feature which, however, continues to define the Russians is that they are, like the leaders and members of the Soviet Union, an inclusive group which welcomed and welcomes diversity amongst their people. The Russian identity managers hence reify the Russia group as an 'improved' version of the Soviet Union - largely due to the decisions the Russian identity managers have made on behalf of their group members. Like the Ukrainian identity managers, Russian identity managers present an account of how to make sense of the groups present in the conflict, and how these group identities have emerged and continue to relate to each other.

Apart from referring to "who" Russia is and how this group is similar to Ukraine, the identity managers reify the Russia group by constructing social dispositions for it. The primary disposition is that the Russia group is a peaceful and neutral party in the Ukraine conflict. The Russian identity managers did not instigate the conflict, nor do they or their group members play a role in sustaining it. As the Foreign Ministry stated in July 2014 regarding the presence of OSCE observers at the Donetsk and Gukovo checkpoints on the Russian-Ukrainian border: "Our invitation to international observers is another

⁵⁶² RP-9 (6)

⁵⁶³ Ibid

confirmation of Russia' good will, because Russia uses all its efforts to assist the de-escalation of the internal Ukrainian crisis”⁵⁶⁴. The Russia group is amongst other reified through situational causality, as Russian behaviour is not an outcome of intent, but a response to the conflict situation Ukrainian identity managers have caused. It is from this attribution processing that the Russian identity managers reify themselves and their group members as agent who merely want to solve the conflict peacefully. As Putin stated to media questions in March 2014: “We need to be heard by all of Ukraine’s people. We have no enemies in Ukraine. Let me say again that Ukraine is a friendly country. Do you know how many people came from Ukraine to Russia last year? 3.3 million came, and of that number almost 3 million people came to Russia for work[...]This is no joking matter. We welcome all of them[...]They are all equal in our eyes, all brothers to us”⁵⁶⁵. This understanding is further coupled with the argument that the Russian identity managers speak the truth about their group and the conflict. Hence, when Ukrainian identity managers blame the conflict on Russian identity managers, this is processed as an attempt to redirect attention. As the Foreign Ministry expressed in August 2014 to statements by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on Ukraine, who accused Russia of sending weapons to the non-state actors in Eastern Ukraine:

We view this as another confirmation that the accusations of our country in escalation of the conflict in Ukraine are unjustified and precarious. Those who are engaged in the search and spinning of such insinuations instead of this would better show their political will and the influence they have to stop the bloody punitive operation, which is conducted by Kiev in the East of the country⁵⁶⁶.

The Russian identity managers therefore provide counter-schemas to the ones offered by the Ukrainian identity managers, and from the exploration of the two conflict narratives it becomes apparent that they rely on many of the same processing tendencies albeit from a mirror imaging vis-à-vis each other.

Eventually, the Russia group is reified by referring to the manager-member relations that constitute this group. Here, the identity managers argue that they act in confinement with their Russian group members’ social identification and interests. To reach this understanding the identity managers apply a group attribution error, as they argue that their behaviour and cognition is said to reflect the general attitude of all Russians. From this is the argument that, unlike the Ukrainian identity managers, the Russian identity managers are in close connection with their group members and so the Russia group does not experience the same internal divisions and conflicts as Ukraine. As Putin stated in a meeting with media representatives in March 2014: “The real problem is that none of the previous Ukrainian governments gave proper attention to people’s needs. Here in Russia we have many problems, and many of them are similar to those in Ukraine, but they are not as serious as in Ukraine[...]People [in Ukraine] see what is going on,

⁵⁶⁴ RFM-83 (6)

⁵⁶⁵ RP-1 (6)

⁵⁶⁶ RFM-85 (6)

and this creates lack of confidence in the authorities”⁵⁶⁷. There is a perfect symbiosis between Russian identity managers and members, as the group members are fully content with how their identity managers manage their group identity and interests. It is then by coupling situational causality with the group attribution error that the Russian identity managers can reify Russia as a neutral party, which behaves in a peaceful and unified manner in the conflict.

5.3.2.2 Russia’s Motivation for Behaviour

The Russia group is also reified through the construction of interests, which are said to motivate Russian behaviour in the conflict. One of these is to ensure the social inclusion and existence of agents who identify as Russian within Ukrainian territory. As Putin stated in his direct line in April 2014: “The essential issue is how to ensure the legitimate rights and interests of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers in the southeast of Ukraine”⁵⁶⁸. The expressed interest is to ensure a socially united Ukraine, where agents may co-exist despite their social identification, and where those who affiliate themselves with the Russian group identity can express their social belonging. Whereas Ukrainian identity managers are said to dismiss the presence of the non-state actors and dual-identities inside Ukrainian territory, Russian identity managers process themselves as agents who support the non-state actors’ social existence. This support of existence is not rooted in an understanding that DPR represents a different group identity, but that the people of DPR are Ukrainians who have the right to be heard and included. The other interest said to motivate Russian behaviour is thus to assist Ukrainians in ensuring their unity. To ensure this, Russian identity managers will temporarily take over responsibilities that otherwise befall Ukrainian identity managers. As the Foreign Ministry stated in February 2017 following a Presidential Executive Order on allowing agents residing in Donetsk and Luhansk regions to enter the Russian Federation:

This measure is designed to alleviate life in the region that has been affected by the inhumane policies of the Kiev authorities and the thoughtless actions of Ukrainian nationalists. Kiev’s actions[...]have seriously worsened the conditions for the Donbass people who refused to accept the anti-constitutional coup in Ukraine in February 2014[...]Measures stipulated in the Executive Order are temporary and will be effective until the political settlement of the crisis in certain districts of Ukraine’s Donetsk and Lugansk regions pursuant to the Minsk Agreements⁵⁶⁹.

In Russia’s self-schema, the identity managers construct themselves as temporary Ukrainian identity managers who will continue to ensure unity and security in Eastern Ukraine, until the unrightful Ukrainian identity managers live up to their responsibilities. This behaviour does not derive from the identity managers’ intent but is a response to the situation, as Russian identity managers are responding to demands

⁵⁶⁷ RP-1 (6)

⁵⁶⁸ RP-3 (6)

⁵⁶⁹ RFM-156 (6)

that have arisen in Eastern Ukraine. As the Foreign Ministry stated regarding the provision of humanitarian aid to Eastern Ukraine in May 2014: “Russia receives requests from nationals and organisations in the conflict zone in the Eastern regions of Ukraine, where there are casualties and many injured as a result of forceful action”⁵⁷⁰. Once again situational causality is used to process why the Russian identity managers assist the non-state actors in the conflict, and why the identity managers have taken an active role in the conflict despite the proclaimed Russian neutrality.

Eventually, the identity managers process Ukrainians and Russians as agents who share the same collective interests. As Putin stated in his Direct Line 2014: “Russia has always been close to Ukraine and will always remain closely related to it[...]The point is that we have extensive common interests. If we want to succeed, we must cooperate and join efforts. I’m confident that we will understand this despite all the emotional complications we’re seeing today”⁵⁷¹. This understanding is rooted in the social categorisation of the agents present and the reification of the Ukraine and Russia groups as sharing a similar social origin. From this construction of the Russian and Ukrainian group identity comes the understanding that their interests are the same. Russians and Ukrainians may thus act differently in the conflict, but this is an outcome of the new Ukrainian identity managers’ hostile behaviour, rather than a result of incompatible Russian and Ukrainian goals. In Russia’s self-schema the identity managers process themselves as agents who possess the correct understanding of who Ukraine is and what this group wants. This understanding is said to guide the Russian identity managers’ behaviour, as they are working towards re-establishing the true Ukraine group identity through amongst other the advocacy for federalism and support for the non-state actors in Eastern Ukraine. In the end, this Russian behaviour is a necessity because as Lavrov stated in an article published in *The Guardian* in April 2014: “We are not imposing anything on anyone, we just see that if it is not done, Ukraine will continue to spiral into crisis with unpredictable consequences”⁵⁷². The Russian identity managers are hence also indirectly arguing that they do not foresee any end to the conflict until the Ukrainian identity managers reverse to the Ukraine group construct that the Russian identity managers perceive to be the correct one.

5.3.3 Other-Schema

5.3.3.1 *The Ukraine Group*

In Russia’s other-schema, the antagonists are the new Ukrainian identity managers who have launched a conflict against their in-group members in an attempt to create an exclusive Ukraine group identity devoid of any dual-identities. When constructing the other-schema, focus is on the Ukrainian identity managers

⁵⁷⁰ RFM-62 (6)

⁵⁷¹ RP-3 (6)

⁵⁷² RFM-28 (6)

and how these agents are constructing the Ukraine group around their negative personal identities and interests. To make sense of the other, the Russian identity managers thus also apply a leadership attribution error, as they argue that the leaders in Ukraine have started to shape the Ukraine group from their own image. This change has not occurred spontaneously. Rather, the change in the Ukraine group identity from being a diverse social identification into being defined by the Ukrainian identity managers' personality and interests, has occurred with the Ukrainian identity managers' deliberate attempt to change Ukraine's history. To reach this understanding, the Russian identity managers particularly emphasise the Ukrainian identity managers decision to remove historical references and artefacts that previously united Russians and Ukrainians. As the Representative of Russia's Foreign Ministry, Alexander Lukashevich, stated in 2014 in response to a comment by a Ukraine Foreign Ministry Representative who said that self-determination was only the right of indigenous groups, and that the Russian minority was not an indigenous people:

If this statement means that by calling Russians a "diaspora", pointing out their subordinate position with regard to the "indigenous" Ukrainian population of the country, then the investigations of "ethnographers" from Mikhailovsky Square highly resemble the searches of the last century by theorists of Nazism in the 1930's. It seems at least inadequate to propose arbitrarily distorted interpretations of the origin of people, who by some quirk of fate, became related to different geographic parts of Ukraine. The Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs makes a serious mistake, when in this critical situation they hit at the historical memories of millions and millions of Russians and Ukrainians, who have been living together for ages and have made a big joint contribution to the establishment and welfare of historical and modern Ukraine⁵⁷³.

The Ukrainian identity managers are thus in the process of constructing a distorted Ukraine group identity by constructing a false narrative about how the Ukraine identity came to be, who may identify as Ukrainian, and what this group wants.

Although the creation of this distorted Ukraine identity originated with Maidan, the Ukraine group identity has been under construction for a long time. In Russia's other-schema, the confused contours of the Ukraine group identity derive from the past where agents residing in the Ukraine territory were defined through various categorical representations. This confused categorisation has for long led to internal disagreements in Ukraine, and so the current conflict is to some extent merely a continuation of this internal struggle. The current situation is now shaped by Ukrainian identity managers who are trying to impose a specific social differentiation upon those who live in Ukraine. The way they do this is by constructing a false Ukraine group identity around an expressed European belonging, which they advocate is a social identification that has always, and once again should, define the Ukraine group. As Putin stated in his Direct Line in 2014:

⁵⁷³ RFM-17 (6)

Some of these territories were part of Czechoslovakia, some of Hungary, some of Austro-Hungary and some of Poland, where they were never full-fledged citizens. You know, something has always been growing in their heart of hearts. Some people seem to believe that it is this circumstance – because these territories were former possessions of several present-day EU countries – that imbues them with some special European substance. That they were second-rate citizens in those states seems to have been forgotten, but this still lurks in their historical memory, under the crust, deep down in their hearts, see? It's where their nationalism comes from, I think⁵⁷⁴.

The understanding that the Ukraine group identity embodies European traits is misinterpreted as Ukraine's European belonging was defined by a hierarchical social relation. The Ukraine identity also never originated from a European identity. Rather, Ukrainians were forced to socially identify with several different social categories depending on which group had the power over them and their territory. A group that did exist, and which did include Ukrainians on an equal social footing, was the Soviet Union where Ukrainians co-existed peacefully with others. The Ukraine group identity draws roots to a Soviet/Russian social belonging and the longer the Ukrainian identity managers deny this origin, the longer the conflict will continue. As the Foreign Ministry stated in October 2014 in connection to the attempts of introducing constitutional reforms in Ukraine: "All of Kiev's attempts to distort their country's history and to renounce the achievements of the Russian and Soviet past will only deepen the rift in modern Ukrainian society"⁵⁷⁵. The Ukrainian identity managers are thus trying to change history and the social origin of the Ukraine group, which implies that they are trying to change how Ukrainians should socially differentiate themselves, and how they should understand the history and ideational foundation from which they and their identity derive. The Ukrainian identity managers' attempt to construct a European social belonging thus goes against the common memory network that Ukrainians share.

The current Ukraine identity is confused because of both the events following the Soviet Union but also as a result of Ukrainian identity managers' attempt to change the trademarks that define this identity. Nowhere is this confusion more profound than in Eastern Ukraine where the fluid identity between Russian and Ukrainian has created a social identification challenge. As Putin stated in his 2014 Direct Line:

Central, eastern and southeastern Ukraine is another matter. I've just mentioned this area, New Russia, which has intertwined its roots with those of the Russian state. The local people have a somewhat different mentality. They found themselves part of present-day Ukraine, which had been pieced together in the Soviet period. Of course, it is difficult for them to establish proper relations and to understand each other. But we should help them to do so as much as we can⁵⁷⁶.

The confused identification inside Ukraine's territory is not merely propelled by Ukrainian identity managers' behaviour but also by the West, which has failed in countering the nationalist sentiments that

⁵⁷⁴ RP-3 (6)

⁵⁷⁵ RFM-121 (6)

⁵⁷⁶ RP-3 (6)

called for an exclusive Ukraine group identity. As Lavrov, stated during a press conference in February 2014: “I cannot leave aside the responsibility of the West (at least many Western countries), who attempted to interfere with these events in all possible ways[...]they insistently and consistently shied away from any principled assessments of the extremists' actions, including Neo-Nazi and anti-Semitic manifestations”⁵⁷⁷. The Russian identity managers point to how the Ukraine group identity continues to be shaped and adapted in accordance with stimuli produced by external actors. The Ukraine identity is hence an identity under construction, and it is an identity that several parties seek to shape based on their own interests.

In Russia’s other-schema, the identity managers therefore refer to two versions of the Ukraine group identity. Whereas the ‘original’ Ukraine group inhabits positive interests and traits that this group shares with Russia, the ‘new’ Ukraine group is characterised by negative tendencies where Ukrainian identity managers are imposing their personal traits and ambitions on their in-group members. As the Foreign Ministry stated in May 2014 as a reaction to Ukraine’s propositions for settling the conflict: “It is evident that Arseniy Yatsenyuk and his team should talk to the Ukrainian people as a priority and they should not have "top-down" discussions, but discuss it as equals, without ultimatums, of which everyone is becoming tired, and without the criminal use of force”⁵⁷⁸. The current characteristics associated with the Ukraine group is thus that there is a social hierarchy between Ukrainian in-group managers and members. The outcome of this hierarchy is that the Ukrainian identity managers try to suppress the voice of those who seek to counter the managers’ narrative about the Ukraine group identity and the conflict situation. As Lukashevich responded in February 2018 to an attack on the “Federal Agency for the CIS Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation” office in Kiev:

Amidst acute intra-Ukrainian disagreements, political turbulence and social dissatisfaction, Kiev officials are imposing an image of Russia as an external enemy. Crimes against Russian property and Russian nationals in Ukraine are encouraged. The government is supporting persecution of the canonical Orthodox church, Russian language and culture. Freedom of speech is being restricted. Attacks on the media, journalists and bloggers have unfortunately become commonplace.⁵⁷⁹.

The Ukrainian identity managers’ conflict narrative is false, but regardless of this, they continue to advocate this constructed truth. They do, however, not merely lie about the history and social origin of the Ukraine identity. They also lie about Russia and the role managers and members of this group play in the conflict. The Ukrainian identity managers therefore lack the political will to resolve the conflict as they continue to deny the truth about who they are fighting and why. As the Foreign Ministry commented in April 2015 in response to Ukraine’s announcement that it would not engage in a dialogue with the representatives of

⁵⁷⁷ RFM-5 (6)

⁵⁷⁸ RFM-55 (6)

⁵⁷⁹ RFM-192 (6)

Donetsk and Luhansk: “This is yet further evidence of Ukraine’s unconstructive stance, which contradicts the provisions of the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements[...]which says that “questions related to local elections will be discussed and agreed upon with representatives of certain areas of the Donetsk and Lugansk region”⁵⁸⁰. Whereas Russian identity managers abide to agreements made and commit to the peaceful resolution of the conflict, Ukrainian identity managers continue to sabotage the peace process. The Russian identity managers thus also point to how the continuation of the conflict hinges on the other and this antagonist’s interests and dispositions.

5.3.3.2 Ukraine’s Motivation for Behaviour

The Russian identity managers also reify the Ukraine group by processing the motivations that drive Ukrainian identity managers’ behaviour in the conflict. One of these interests is to re-shape the Ukraine group identity, which has become a predominant policy amongst Ukrainian identity managers. To re-shape the Ukraine group identity, there is a need to change previously shared understandings of where the Ukraine group derives from and the role Russia and the Soviet Union played and continues to play in this respect. As the Foreign Ministry responded in April 2015 to Ukraine’s adoption of a law package, which included a law “Condemning the Communist and National-Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes in Ukraine and Banning the Promotion of Their Symbols”:

Moscow is seriously alarmed by the growing struggle against Ukraine’s heroic past waged by the forces that have seized power in the Ukraine. Recently, the Verkhovna Rada adopted a new package of laws aimed at rewriting the history of Ukraine and suppressing political dissent[...]By presenting the years 1917-1991 as a period of struggle for Ukraine’s independence and denouncing the “communist totalitarian government” of that period as “criminal” and “pursuing a policy of state terrorism,” the current Ukrainian authorities are trying to erase from the memory of millions of Ukrainians the real history of their country in the 20th century and its progressive advance as part of the Soviet Union⁵⁸¹.

Ukrainian identity managers’ are driven by the wish to exclude everything Russian including agents who represent, identify, or sympathy with Russia; Russian social practices (such as the Russian language); Russian representations (such as media and cultural centres); and the historical artefacts that have Russian connotations (such as the Soviet Union and memories of the Great War). As the Foreign Ministry stated in October 2017: “It is sad to know that a once friendly nation has adopted a “good” tradition, ignoring the interests of its own people – to wage a frenzied war against everything that is Russian, including the language, printed products, television, radio, press, as well as websites. Now, performing artists are added to this list. What’s next? Will they go as far as making the very word “Russia” illegal?”⁵⁸². According to the

⁵⁸⁰ RFM-122 (6)

⁵⁸¹ RFM-121 (6)

⁵⁸² RFM-175 (6)

Russian identity managers, Ukrainian identity managers are thus motivated from an ambition of ‘Ukrainisation’, which includes the creation of a false understanding that having affiliations with Russia is non-Ukrainian.

Although this is a management goal, it has trickled into the Ukraine group as the removal of anything Russian has become an objective for Ukrainian nationalists. As the Foreign Ministry stated in a response to an incident towards the CIS office in Kiev in April 2017: “Inspired by the Kiev government’s policy of total Ukrainisation, radical Ukrainian nationalists staged yet another anti-Russia provocation on April 8”⁵⁸³. As the Ministry also stated in March 2014: “The proliferation of Neo-Nazi slogans, the glorification of Nazi punishers, the calls for reprisals against the Russian population of Ukraine and Russians in general (i.e. actions having all the signs of ethnic cleansing) must be clearly and unambiguously condemned”⁵⁸⁴. What the Ukrainian identity managers’ conflict narrative and behaviour generates is a split country, as the identity managers are creating an imaginary social distance between those who fully identify themselves as Ukrainians, and those who partly identify themselves as Russians. The Ukrainian identity managers are, however, not merely creating divisions inside Ukraine territory, but also between agents living in Ukraine and Russia. As the Foreign Ministry stated in July 2017 in connection to Ukraine’s plans of changing the rules of entry to Ukraine for Russian citizens:

Thus, Kiev is stubbornly following its vicious line towards severing contacts between millions of people in both countries. This policy is not surprising. For the current Kiev regime the very fact that Ukrainians have numerous relatives, friends and acquaintances in Russia is, evidently, a real threat. Considerable funds are being spent on fighting it - from the construction of Yatsenyuk's 'Great Wall' to banning Russian social networks. By all appearances, Ukraine is ready to build a new 'iron curtain' for the sole purpose of preventing normal human and family communications between citizens of Russia and Ukraine⁵⁸⁵.

The Ukrainian identity managers’ goal is hence the removal of the Russian identity from Ukrainian territory and the removal of the social links that exist between the Ukraine and Russian groups.

In the end, the Ukrainian identity managers’ behaviour are defined by an attempt to misinform Ukrainians and the international community about Ukraine’s ‘Europeaness’. To establish this European social distinctiveness, Ukrainian identity managers need to present Ukraine as a group of agents who are socially divorcing themselves from Russia and their Russian legacy. However, since large segments of the Ukraine group are still united around this past and define themselves through associations with the Russian identity, Ukrainian identity managers need to blindfold their in-group members while leading them in the identity managers’ preferred direction. As the Foreign Ministry put it in May 2017, in

⁵⁸³ RFM-162 (6)

⁵⁸⁴ RFM-15 (6)

⁵⁸⁵ RFM-166 (6)

connection to newly imposed sanctions on Russia: “Obviously eager to finalise its mythical 'divorce from the Russian Empire,' as President Poroshenko said the other day, and hence from centuries of its own history, Kiev will put blinkers on people’s eyes and plugs in their ears to prevent them from getting a picture of the situation in Ukraine and other countries that differs from the one provided by Ukrainian propagandists”⁵⁸⁶. This tendency to mislead Ukrainians and move them towards EU has resulted in a totalitarian Ukrainian leadership. As the Foreign Ministry stated in August 2017 regarding the alleged harassment of a Ukraine journalist accused of disseminating pro-Russia materials: “Regrettably, we have to state that the “European way” in Ukraine’s style amounts to a return to the worst totalitarian practices of suppressing dissent”⁵⁸⁷. EU integration thus has negative consequences for Ukrainians who find themselves in a self-inflicted conflict where they are being told to exclude friends and relatives based on their Russian affiliation. The Russian identity managers therefore point to the same tendencies as the Ukrainian identity managers when constructing the interests of the other in the conflict. Namely that “the other” (out-group leadership) is seeking to dictate the group identity and interests of the in- and out-groups present in order to reach personal gains.

5.3.4 Russia’s Social Cognitive Framework

From the analysis of Russia’s schemas emerges a social cognitive framework. The main aspect of Russia’s framework is that the conflict is an intragroup conflict that the new Ukrainian identity managers (inaugurated following Maidan) have imposed upon themselves and their in-group members, as the identity managers have engaged in a contested process of redefining the Ukraine group identity. This is an understanding that the Russian identity managers reach by amongst other processing the events following Maidan and the policy changes that the Ukrainian identity managers introduced in the wake of this. Like the Ukrainian identity managers, the Russian identity managers do not process ‘Ukraine’ as a state but as a group identity that agents residing in the Ukraine territory belong to. What separates Ukraine and Russia’s framework is that whereas Ukrainian identity managers reify the Ukraine group as one where members share the same understanding of their identity and interests, Russian identity managers reify the Ukraine group as one that consists of competing self-understandings. Russian identity managers hence dismiss the united Ukraine group construct the Ukrainian identity managers present, and instead point to how the Ukraine identity is in the process of changing. In Russia’s framework, the conflict should be understood through this change and particularly as a situation where certain Ukraine in-group members have contested the idea of removing everything Russian-associated from the Ukraine identity. Russian identity managers

⁵⁸⁶ RFM-163 (6)

⁵⁸⁷ RFM-169 (6)

thus point to how there are “true” and “false” identity constellations, and that the cause for the conflict lies in the fact that the new Ukrainian identity managers are retrieving from the correct Ukraine group construct. Russian identity managers also point to the fluidity of identities as they construct the Ukraine and Russian group identities as overlapping and indistinguishable. One is capable of being Russian and Ukrainian at the same time, as these two groups derive from the same social origin (Soviet Union) and share the same interests and social dispositions. The sharp social differentiation that Ukrainian identity managers advocate is hence a falsity, and a construct that goes against the natural phenomenon that Ukrainians and Russians are the same agents who have always co-existed peacefully.

Like the Ukrainian identity managers, the Russian identity managers seek to present a specific cognitive systematisation of the agents involved in the conflict and when doing so they disregard the legal categorization of agents. Rather, they also systematise the agents involved through social categorisation with the conclusions being presented as factual accounts. Despite this, they have nevertheless had difficulties socially categorising the non-state actors. Eventually, these agents are categorised as Ukrainians with a Russian affiliation, which is a construct that correlates with the identity managers’ understanding that Ukrainians and Russians are the same. The identity managers equally try to reify the groups present. Unlike the Ukrainian identity managers, the Russian identity managers do acknowledge that the construction and management of groups rests on relations between group managers and members. Hence, rather than pointing to how Russian behaviour in the conflict is shaped by shared Russian experiences and collective cognition, the identity managers point to how it is their responsibility to manage the Russian group, and that they do so with the blessing of the Russian group members. To this understanding it is then argued that whereas the Ukraine conflict is caused by the mismanagement of the Ukraine identity, the Russian in-group is stable as the current identity management of this group is in confinement with the needs and interests of Russian group members. Whereas Ukrainian identity managers are imposing their will on their group members and distorting the Ukraine group identity in the process, Russian identity managers are experiencing a perfect symbiosis between their management and the wishes of their Russian members. This is then used as another reason why there is a conflict in Ukraine and not in Russia. It is also used as the underlying argument why Russian identity managers should assist Ukrainian identity managers in solving the conflict. What emerges from both Russia and Ukraine’s processing is hence that both conflict parties seek to impose their social partitioning on the conflict, and both seek to manage the categorisation of the agents that lay ground to the primary cognitive confusion - namely the non-state actors in Eastern Ukraine.

5.4 DPR's Social Cognitive Framework

The following section will explore how the DPR identity managers construct understandings about the situation, self, and other in the Ukraine conflict, and the social cognitive framework that forms from this.

5.4.1 Situation-Schema

5.4.1.1 Conflict Cause

In DPR's situation-schema, the conflict is processed as one between the Ukrainian central government and agents in Donetsk, which occurred due to the new Ukrainian identity managers' decision of socially excluding and attacking their in-group members. As the Chairman of the People's Council, Denis Pushilin, stated in a congratulatory message to the inhabitants of the Republic on the anniversary of the DPR proclamation in April 2017: "We did not expect that all the weapons available to Ukraine would be used against us and a full-fledged civil war would be unleashed"⁵⁸⁸. Like the Russian identity managers, the DPR identity managers process the conflict as one between agents of the same social origin and, like Russia, they understand Maidan as a coup, which resulted in the inauguration of new Ukrainian identity managers who tried to force agents in Donetsk into changing their social identification. Where DPR's situation-schema differs from Russia's is that Maidan is not merely processed as the conflict's trigger point. Maidan is also processed as the time when the people of DPR were mobilised. Hence, although the conflict initially was an internal conflict between in-group members, it is processed as one that turned into an intergroup conflict as the people of DPR united around their shared social identification and acted upon the collective understanding that they should move towards independence. As Vladislav Berdichevsky, the DPR People's Council deputy, stated in January 2018:

Four years ago, in the face of the deadly danger in connection with the accomplished armed coup d'état in Ukraine, continuing the centennial tradition of state building and proceeding from the right of self-determination provided for by the UN Charter and other international legal documents, the rights of the Donbass people were declared and in a few months the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republic were created⁵⁸⁹.

In DPR's situation-schema, there is a certain progression in the conflict as it has moved from an intragroup to an intergroup conflict, as the people of DPR collectively agreed that they should no longer identify as Ukrainians. These agents thus decided to consolidate their DPR group identity by moving towards statehood. This was followed by the election of DPR's own identity managers who (according to the identity managers) were able to define and defend the identity and interests associated with the DPR group. In

⁵⁸⁸ DPR-139 (6)

⁵⁸⁹ DPR-95 (6)

DPR's situation-schema, the conflict is hence processed equally as a time of upheaval as well as a time of liberation. DPR's situation-schema thus resembles Ukraine's situation-schema as both construct Maidan as a time where their respective groups reclaimed control over their existence due to the behaviour of an out-group.

A central feature of DPR's situation-schema is the alleged split between Ukrainians and "Donetskians", which is a social division the DPR identity managers use to make sense of the conflict and the agents involved. Rather than being an outcome of the conflict, this split between Ukrainians and Donetskians has for long been under way, as there has always been a tendency within Ukraine to socially exclude those who belonged to the Russian group identity. As Valery Skorokhodov, the DPR People's Council deputy, stated in June 2017:

The rewriting of history in Ukraine began long before the coup d'état in 2014. This process has its roots since the beginning of the 1990s[...]It was then that the scenario of Ukraine's "uniqueness" started with its ethnic exclusivity, which included its own language, culture and, of course, history. Other cultures and peoples have been identified as hostile or neutral. Ukrainian historians were worked tirelessly – they developed national myths, formed a vocabulary and rhetoric, which could dissociate Ukraine from the cultural and historical space with the Russian world[...]In 2014, this process received a new round of development. Ukraine for the fourth year in a row with all the forces has been sculpting the enemy from the Russian people, not realizing that our common history cannot be crossed out, rewritten or reshaped, because it lasts more than 1000 years⁵⁹⁰.

The conflict did hence not emerge with Maidan but is an outcome of amongst other Ukrainian historians' attempt to change Ukraine's history and construct Russians as a negative out-group. This eventually spurred grievances amongst those who socially identified as Russians. These grievances were further accentuated with the new Ukrainian identity managers' attempt to remove the right to invoke the Russian group identity, by removing the right to speak Russian and attend Russian-speaking schools. As Ekaterina Martyanova, DPR People's Council deputy, stated in October 2017:

The Ukrainian authorities and the media under their control regularly assured the Russian-speaking population that there was no and there would not be any oppression. In parallel, the very same media reported officials saying that it would be nice to introduce quotas for broadcasting, reduce the number of Russian-language schools, remove the works of Russian classics from the education programme, stop the publication of books in Russian⁵⁹¹.

Such stimulus was processed as attempts to remove the Russian group identity and enforce people to identify with an alien group. As Miroslav Rudenko, the DPR People's Council deputy, also stated in September 2017 following the adoption of the Law on Education according to which teaching must be done

⁵⁹⁰ DPR-107 (6)

⁵⁹¹ DPR-138 (6)

exclusively in Ukrainian: “The Russian-speaking south of Ukraine quite naturally rejects the artificially imposed alien life rules”⁵⁹².

The split between Ukrainians and the people of DPR is an outcome that the Ukrainian identity managers imposed upon themselves, as the people who identified as Ukrainian/Russian were increasingly viewed and treated as an out-group. As Rudenko further stated in September 2017:

The Kiev’s implementation of consistent policy of Russian culture’s eradication is bearing its poisonous fruits. Ideas for the creation of ghettos for Russian-speaking people are being developed and bills are being drafted for the forced ukrainization of the population[...]The Verkhovna Rada adopted a bill to strengthen the role of the Ukrainian language in all areas of society[...]And it is in addition to the fact that the absolute majority of the citizens of the country prefer to speak Russian language in their daily lives⁵⁹³.

The Ukrainian identity manager’s implementation of e.g. new language policies functioned as stimulus, which led the people of DPR to process the Ukrainian identity managers as having the intent of removing the Russian group identity and enforcing people to identify as fully Ukrainians. The conflict did, however, not merely surface due to disgruntled agents who chose to voice the need to protect their right to speak Russian. It also arose due to the threat from Ukrainian group members who increasingly were opposed to the idea that Ukrainian in-group members could inhabit a dual-identity. As Elena Melnik, DPR People’s Council Deputy, stated in June 2017:

In Ukraine, restrictive measures are routinely applied to citizens for their views[...]As time has shown, as a rule, citizens of Ukraine fall under the repression of the neo-Nazi Kiev regime. It turns out that citizens of one country are destroying their own compatriots. A similar phenomenon is known to the world community under the definition of “civil war”. Many former Ukrainian citizens were forced to leave Ukraine, and the Donbass and the Crimea did this together with their lands⁵⁹⁴.

The suppressing of agents due to their social identification thus led agents of Donbass and Crimea to leave Ukraine and they did so by ‘leaving together with their territories’ – i.e. they opted for an ideational split from the Ukraine group identity and a physical split from the Ukraine territory.

The conflict is also processed as an attempt by Donetskians to expose and defy the ridicule and suppression that Russians and Ukrainian/Russians for long have experienced in Ukraine. Another conflict characteristic that defines the conflict is hence the Donetskian wish of reinstating pride and honour in the ‘Russian world’. To do so, the agents in Crimea and Donbass needed assistance from Russia, which played a decisive role in aiding its fellow compatriots and ensuring that they regained control over their existence. As Alexander Zakharchenko, head of DPR, stated in March 2018 during the anniversary of the unification between Russia and Crimea:

⁵⁹² DPR-86 (6)

⁵⁹³ DPR-61 (6)

⁵⁹⁴ DPR-124 (6)

The Crimean spring is a very big concept. In 2014, Russia said no – to humiliation, no to trampling on rights and yes to the pride, yes to the respect for itself as a country and every citizen of the Russian Federation and the Russian world. The words “Enough!”, “Stop humiliating Russia!” were heard here in 2014 on the Crimean land. The people of the Crimea to the whole world said that it was a date after which no one can ever humiliate Russia⁵⁹⁵.

In their conflict narrative, the DPR identity managers process the Crimean unification as stimulus where Russia and the people in Donbass and Crimea united around the common wish of restoring pride and honour in their shared identity. This understanding is now extended to the Ukraine conflict where the people of DPR continue to fight for the reinstating of pride in the Russian group identity. What emerges in DPR’s conflict narrative is thus that the identity managers share the Russian identity managers’ understanding that agents may be Ukrainians and Russians at the same time. The DPR identity managers equally share the Russian identity managers’ understanding that the conflict arose from an attempt to create a homogenous Ukraine group identity. Where their situation-schemas differ is that the DPR identity managers construct DPR as a group identity that is socially distinct from Ukrainians, whilst the Russian identity managers categorise people in DPR as Ukrainians.

5.4.1.2 The Agents involved

5.4.1.2.1 The West

The DPR identity managers primarily attribute the onset of the conflict to the Ukrainian identity managers. They, however, also to a great extent attribute the onset of the conflict to ‘the West’. The West is processed as a collection of out-group identity managers who wanted the conflict in Ukraine to occur, because they wanted to use the Ukrainian identity managers as puppets for the reaching of their own interests. As Alla Barkhatnova, Deputy of the DPR People’s Council, stated in August 2017:

The idea of Russophobic Ukraine is by no means new, but the West succeeded in an auspicious attempt to realize this project only in 2014. A crimson coup d’état by the hands of Ukrainian neo-Nazis allowed the overthrow of the legitimate authority and the placing in its place of puppets very hungry to the budget of Ukraine and the money of Ukrainian citizens. To date, Ukraine is a state managed from abroad⁵⁹⁶.

The increased trend of “Russophobia” in Ukraine, i.e. the exclusion of the Russian group identity, is a Western imposed phenomenon that Ukrainian identity managers have adopted. This Western-inspired Russophobia is linked to geopolitics as the social exclusion of the Russian group identity is an outcome of the Wests’ attempt to weaken the Russian state. As Vladimir Bidyovka, DPR People’s Council deputy,

⁵⁹⁵ DPR-184 (6)

⁵⁹⁶ DPR-83 (6)

stated in July 2017 regarding Ukraine's wish of joining NATO: "Western curators are willing to fulfill all their large-scale projects to preserve hegemony and weaken Russia as an enemy at the expense of the Ukrainians themselves[...]the state should be built with a focus on the well-being of its citizens, and not on hatred of others"⁵⁹⁷. The West is driven by an interest of excluding the Russian state, which has led to the social exclusion of all members of the Russian group identity in the post-Soviet space. In DPR's situation-schema, the conflict thus also occurred because Ukrainian identity managers adopted the West's other-schema of Russia, which led to societal divisions in Ukraine. As Melnick commented in August 2017 in connection to the nine-year anniversary of the Georgia/South Ossetia conflict: "The Ambassador of Georgia to Russia during the war, stated on November 25, 2008, that a green light for the beginning of the war in South Ossetia was given by U.S. President George Bush. The situation is horribly familiar when the American authorities incite the population of another country to engage in aggressive acts, as was the case on "Maidan" in Kiev"⁵⁹⁸. What may be inferred from this is that the West incites conflicts by imposing its cognitive processing on others. The West's cognitive processing is also one of the causes for the Donetskians' suffering, as the Western conflict narrative does not include any referral to a DPR group identity. According to the West, the people of DPR are devoid of agency and so this group identity does not feature in the West's discourse. This Western discursive dismissal of the DPR group identity is processed as the dismissal of the people of DPR as it is taken to imply that the West indirectly approves of the atrocities the people of DPR experience. As Martyanova stated in November 2017 in a comment criticising Ukraine's "military rhetoric": "The West ignores direct threats of a military nature addressed to us"⁵⁹⁹. In DPR's situation-schema is hence also the argument that some group identities have more social value than others, and that there is a tendency to disregard the presence of agents if they do not identify with what the West perceives to be positive group identities. The agents of DPR are thus in the eyes of the West non-existing, which is another reason for the conflict's occurrence and continuation.

5.4.1.2.2 Russia

In DPR's conflict narrative, Russia is a positive group that not merely assists in instilling pride into the 'Russian world' but assists in advocating the presence of the DPR group members, their welfare, and interests. This is amongst other stated in the context of the conflict negotiations where Russian identity managers are the only agents who express the views and interests of the DPR group. As Skorokhodov stated in September 2017 regarding the peacekeeping mission that DPR refused to accept, which Russia then voiced on behalf of DPR at the UN: "In the near future we will witness how once again the Russian

⁵⁹⁷ DPR-157 (6)

⁵⁹⁸ DPR-162 (6)

⁵⁹⁹ DPR-108 (6)

Federation will defend the interests of the inhabitants of our region on the international platform”⁶⁰⁰. Russian identity managers socially validate the people of DPR, as Russian identity managers argue for the need to acknowledge the presence of this group. In this understanding is also the argument that Russia as a group is not a conflict party, but a third party that supports the DPR identity managers’ understandings and ambitions. As Makeyeva stated in August 2017: “Mr. Kravchuk believes that DNI and LNR should be excluded from it [negation process]. The initiative to change such document unilaterality is extremely unacceptable, especially when the DNI and LPR (rather than the Russian Federation and OSCE) are one of the parties to the conflict”⁶⁰¹. Russian identity managers speak on behalf of DPR until the DPR identity managers are included on an equal footing alongside the other conflict parties. What unites Russia and DPR is hence that Russian identity managers ‘see’ the DPR group members - unlike Western and Ukrainian identity managers who dismiss their social existence. Another common feature between DPR and Russia is that these groups share the same Russian identity. This does, however, not imply that they are the same agents. Rather, the Russian group identity is a borderless identity, which encompasses Russia, the DPR, LPR, and Crimea. As Pushilin stated in December 2016 about the independence of DPR: “It consolidated exactly around the meaning center, which is the foundation of our identity. We united around our traditional values. History, memory, culture, religion, faith, language, awareness of our involvement in that huge and great concept that we call the Russian world, joined us”⁶⁰². The DPR and Russian identities are thus same but different as these groups share the same identity through a shared memory network and shared social practices. The Russian group identity is thus not associated with a state but is a borderless group identity that unites agents from various states. Russian assistance in the conflict is therefore behaviour where in-group members of the Russian group identity came to assist their DPR in-group members in the fight for protecting and restoring pride in the group identity they all share. Despite this, Russia and DPR are nevertheless also processed as two distinct groups, which is a social categorical confusion that will be elaborated further in the section on DPR’s self-schema.

5.4.1.3 The Solution

To solve the conflict, the DPR identity managers point to how Ukrainian identity managers must acknowledge the DPR group’s social equality vis-à-vis the Ukraine group, which implies acknowledging that Donetskians are distinct from Ukrainians. Ukrainian identity managers need to acknowledge that the DPR group identity exists and that the DPR identity managers represent the DPR group members. This is still not the case as Ukrainian identity managers continue to dictate the terms from which the people of

⁶⁰⁰ DPR-72 (6)

⁶⁰¹ DPR-112 (6)

⁶⁰² DPR-41 (6)

DPR should abide. As senior official of the Donetsk Republic, Andrei Purgin, stated in August 2014: “Everything that Kyiv does shows that they have to decide to find agreement but dictate their terms to us”⁶⁰³. The DPR identity’s social validation is a requirement, as the conflict has shown that the DPR group members can no longer be managed peacefully and equally by Ukrainians. As Zavdoveyev also put it in March 2018 in connection to Poroshenko signing the decree on the Joint Forces Operation: “to be led by Kiev means to put our citizens at even greater risk, so the only reasonable way out of the situation is a peaceful dialogue, negotiations and readiness of the parties to stop the war”⁶⁰⁴. In DPR’s situation-schema is thus also the understanding that groups need to be managed by in-group managers to ensure in-group members’ interests. This raises the question of how one distinguishes between a Ukrainian and a Donetskian and who gets to decide this distinction. It also points to a DPR understanding that the Ukrainian identity managers need to adopt the DPR identity managers’ cognitive systematisation of the agents present if the conflict is to end. For the conflict to end, Ukrainian identity managers need to acknowledge that DPR is a group identity, which should be applied in the sense making of contexts such as the conflict in Ukraine and beyond.

The Minsk Agreements are presented as conducive for this social validation, as the agreements acknowledges the people of DPR’s existence. As Pushilin stated following the signing of the Minsk agreement in September 2016: “This is a great political victory for us. Before the signing of the Minsk agreements we were considered “terrorists” and “separatists”. With the signing of the Minsk agreements we become the subjects of the negotiation process. For us, this is a great chance to speak out in the international arena”⁶⁰⁵. The Minsk Agreements are imperative as they point to the existence of the DPR group identity and they create an opening for the subsequent social validation of this group. According to the DPR identity managers, the Minsk agreements validate DPR’s self-schema. The expressed support for the agreements is, however, not only rooted in the chance to exercise control over the DPR identity and the group’s existence. It is also linked to the opportunity of preventing a scenario where Ukrainian identity managers impose their cognitive systematisation upon the negotiation process. As Pushilin stated in April 2017 during a TV program: “We do not intend to quit the Minsk agreements. It would be a gift for Ukraine if we went for such a step. We are doing everything possible to resolve the conflict on this platform”⁶⁰⁶. The solution to the conflict thus hinges on whose social cognitive framework triumphs and in this the DPR identity managers point to the imperative that their self-schema is included to ensure the continued existence of the DPR group and the reaching of this group’s interests.

⁶⁰³ CBC-5 (3)

⁶⁰⁴ DPR-63 (6)

⁶⁰⁵ DPR-69 (6)

⁶⁰⁶ DPR-59 (6)

5.4.2 Self-Schema

5.4.2.1 *The DPR Group*

Like the other conflict parties, the DPR identity managers have had difficulties defining who the people of DPR are and how they are socially distinct from Ukrainians and Russians. This difficulty continues even though the identity managers point to a distinct DPR group identity. Although the DPR group is presented as an independent group identity in the conflict, the identity managers continue to construct DPR and Russia as groups that share many of the same social identifications that define a ‘Russian’. Hence, although DPR is its own group identity, it is also a part of a Russian group identity defined as ‘the Russian world’. In DPR’s self-schema, the Russian world is not processed as the Russian state’s identity, but as an encompassing identity that DPR, LPR, Crimea, and Russia share. There is thus an understanding that group identities may be borderless and overarching and so the Russian group identity is an identification that agents regardless of state-affiliation may belong to. The DPR group is an expression of a borderless Russian group identity and not of the Russian state, which is a distinction that causes social cognitive confusion amongst the remaining conflict parties. This construction also challenges the researcher’s understanding of how the DPR identity managers socially position themselves vis-à-vis the others in the conflict. As will be seen in the following, the DPR identity managers also have difficulties socially separating the people of DPR from Russians. They nevertheless continuously try to construct DPR as an independent group, which should be approached from the terms the DPR identity managers proclaim.

What derives from the analysis is that the referral to an encompassing Russian group identity and the DPR identity managers’ subsequent confused social categorization of the agents in DPR, is an example of how identities evolve and emerge. Because, given that the identity managers initially categorised their group members as belonging to the Russian state, and Russian identity managers refuted this construct, the DPR identity managers have had to determine how to continue to socially define themselves as Russians without belonging to the Russian state. The identity managers have thus landed on an in-between group construct, with one leg in the Russian category and one leg in the DPR category. This confused or in-between social categorization may be an example of a group identity in a “cognitive birth”, where identity managers are not merely mobilising and managing an identity but creating it. Since the DPR group identity spun from the Ukraine conflict, the DPR identity managers are required to make sense of where this group comes from and what kind of interests and dispositions are associated with it. As seen with the DPR identity managers emphasis on the need to be socially validated by the Ukrainian identity managers and others, it may, however, be argued that the full establishment of a group identity does not merely require time and appeal for it to manifest and become an identity that agents perceive themselves to belong to. It also requires a social cognitive validation from others around it. Others also need to “see” the group identity and use it as part of their cognitive processing for the identity to become a social category of

its own. In DPR's self-schema we therefore find an example of how agents are trying to construct a somewhat new group identity from the understandings they have reached when processing stimuli such as Maidan. They are now trying to convince others that this identity exists and a way to do this is to establish a group that represents this identity and elaborate an understanding of "who" this group is and what it "wants".

A central feature of DPR's conflict narrative is thus to reify the DPR group. A way the DPR identity managers do this is by establishing the time this group regained control over its existence, and the time it was mobilised in the conflict. In DPR's self-schema, the DPR group is processed as a group which gained control over its existence following the events that unfolded around Crimea. As Zakharchenko said to Crimea's representatives during the fourth anniversary of Crimea in March 2018: "What you did (in March 2014 – ed.) is a truly historic event. We, on our part, with a shuddering heart, were waiting for this referendum and thought what to expect next. Your act has become an example for us. Your victory inspired our people, too"⁶⁰⁷. Crimea was stimulus which socially validated the DPR group identity and the group's collective interest of becoming independent. Another understanding is that Crimea served as a catalyst for the creation of the DPR group identity, as DPR's identity managers discovered that their social identification and interests were shared with others around them in Donetsk. As Pushilin replied during the Crimea anniversary in March 2018:

I was proud to look at what was happening in the Crimea four years ago, and this gave me strength, and, probably, to everyone who also did not accept the coup that had taken place in Kiev. Both I and Alexander Vladimirovich could tell a lot about the feelings and vibes that we were experiencing when we were watching on television what was happening here[...]But I can say for sure that one of the most memorable and the most important slogans in those days at rallies was "Crimea – Donbass – Russia!"⁶⁰⁸.

Crimea is hence processed as the time when the DPR group emerged and demanded its existence as an independent group devoid of Ukraine. The underlying understanding that permeates DPR's self-schema, and assists in reifying the group, is thus that the DPR group has always existed and that the group members were merely waiting for the right time, and for external approval, to pursue the establishment of their group.

Another way the DPR identity managers reify the DPR group is by referring to how members of this group share a common history. Here the identity managers point to how DPR consists of members who all share the same experience of being ridiculed for their Russian identification, and so the unifying feature of being a 'Donetskian' is the shared experience of being forced into identifying with an alien group identity. As Pushilin stated in his annual message to the DPR's People's Council in December 2016: "For 20 years we have been tried to be depersonalized, devastated morally, combed with the same brush, made

⁶⁰⁷ DPR-184 (6)

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid

the faceless gray mass of. We are different, and this is our strength”⁶⁰⁹. Another trait that validates the historical roots of DPR, is that the DPR group members for long have struggled for control over their existence. This struggle has persisted for decades and so the current DPR group members stand on the shoulders of their ancestors who initiated the fight for freedom. As Zakharchenko stated during the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Donetsk-Krivorozh Republic in February 2018:

Exactly one hundred years ago, our ancestors said yes to equality, freedom, justice and brotherhood, and said no to the West. The Donetsk-Krivorozh Republic was created in a very difficult time: during war, revolution and ruin[...]almost a hundred years later, we, the descendants of these people, picked up their banner. Today, we are also building our Donetsk People’s Republic in difficult times, in times of war[...]A hundred years ago, our ancestors failed, but today we say: “We will not lose!” We are for freedom, equality, brotherhood and the Donetsk People’s Republic!⁶¹⁰.

The DPR group members hence have common ancestors who collectively sought to achieve what they have achieved today. The current conflict is thus nothing new but merely another conflict waged against the DPR group. However, whereas the DPR ancestors were too weak to defend themselves, the current DPR group members are capable of reaching their interests due to their mobilization following Crimea, and the assistance and validation they receive from the rest of the Russian world. The DPR identity managers hence reify the DPR group by amongst other pointing to where DPR comes from and what the DPR group members have in common. Unlike Russian and Ukrainian identity managers who can refer to a longer history of existence, and a stronger foundation of specific social practices and invocations for the agents who identify as Ukrainian and Russian, the DPR identity managers struggle to define what a Donetskian is. The identity managers therefore reify this group from somewhat vague characteristics such as a common struggle for freedom and a shared collective experience of ridicule.

To potentially account for this, the DPR group is also reified through the construction of social dispositions, which are said to distinguish Donetskians from Ukrainians. This is amongst other visible in the identity managers’ processing of behaviour that both Ukrainians and Donetskians are said to undertake in the conflict. As Pushilin stated in connection to the Minsk Agreements in August 2016 regarding the topic of amnesty, which DPR has also advocated for: “In relation to us the word “amnesty” sounds wrong. We simply use the term because it is clear what it is about[...]To be pardoned, it is necessary to plead guilty, but we are not guilty – on the contrary, we consider them guilty”⁶¹¹. Like the Ukrainian identity managers, the DPR identity managers apply a group attribution error when reifying their in-group, which results in an understanding that DPR is an entity that behaves in a consistent manner. Adding to the use of a group attribution error is the use of a fundamental attribution error, which the identity managers

⁶⁰⁹ DPR-41 (6)

⁶¹⁰ DPR-164 (6)

⁶¹¹ DPR-52 (6)

use to construct the DPR group as a victim that merely responds to the situational forces the Ukrainians instigated. Like the other conflict parties, the DPR identity managers also point to how the conflict continues to be sustained due to the other's behaviour. The use of the two attribution errors results in group reification where the DPR group is constructed around positive social dispositions such as the will to solve the conflict. As stated in a comment from the DPR People's Council in March 2018: "Denis Pushilin, expressed doubts that the civil armed conflict in the Donbass will be resolved before the end of this year, provided that the position of the Ukrainian leadership remains unchanged"⁶¹². The attribution errors also result in processing where the DPR identity managers can construct their account of the situation and agents involved as the truth, as their group reification and cognitive systematisation is compared to the "false" claims that Ukrainian identity managers make. As Roman Malyutin, the DPR People's Council deputy, stated in November 2017 in connection to a comment on how the West masks military plans as peace initiatives:

The Ukrainian authorities and their admirers have already come up with numerous terms: they dehumanized us, marginalized, accused of shelling ourselves[...]And now we, local residents who have defended our land, culture and history, have also occupied ourselves. It turns out that by sending weapons to Ukraine, using pejorative terms, inciting hatred with their homebred Russophobia, the curators of Ukraine and their Kiev puppets thus try to establish peace? We, the representatives of the Donbass, perceive all these actions as preparation for military operations and the desire to seize the Donbass by force⁶¹³.

Like the other conflict parties, the DPR identity managers thus also construct their self-schema as factual and they point to how the others need to adopt DPR's social cognitive framework if the conflict is to be resolved.

5.4.2.2 DPR's Motivation for Behaviour

The DPR identity managers do not merely reify the DPR group through the construction of dispositions and shared memories, but through the granting of collective interests. In DPR's self-schema, the DPR group members are agents who are driven by a collective interest of strengthening their group identity through statehood. Here the DPR identity managers do acknowledge that their state project is not supported by the outside world. This, however, is processed as the outcome of anti-Russian sentiments, which for long have run through the international community and denied statehood to those groups that identified themselves with the Russian group identity. As Berdichevsky stated in January 2018:

Twenty-seven years ago, taking advantage of the collapse of the USSR and the actual coup d'état, Ukrainian nationalists instigated the Ukrainian separation and, within the framework of the "Anti-Russia" project supported by the West, were instantly recognized as an independent state. The political forces in

⁶¹² DPR-16 (6)

⁶¹³ DPR-97 (6)

the Donbas were too weak to prevent this[...]And what's wrong, gentlemen deciding which state to be recognized, and which is not? I think that we would be instantly recognized if we acted like Ukraine, Georgia or the Baltic countries – that is, within the framework of the “Anti-Russia” project⁶¹⁴.

To ensure statehood, groups must subscribe to the anti-Russian sentiment. Since the people of DPR, however, share the Russian group identity with the Russian Federation, this is not an option. Another interest that motivates DPR's behaviour is then to ensure, in collaboration with the group members of Crimea and Luhansk, the strengthening of the Russian group identity. This was expressed during the celebration of Crimea's Russian unification where the Head of Crimea, Sergey Aksyonov, presented the Order “For Fidelity to the Duty” to the DPR leaders: “for the maintenance of peace, active work on preserving and strengthening Russian traditions and culture among Russian compatriots in the territory of the DPR”⁶¹⁵. To change the prospect of statehood there is a need to consolidate the Russian group identity and try to change others' understanding of the groups that represent this identity. The DPR identity managers do, however, not elaborate further how the strengthening of the Russian group identity will strengthen the DPR group identity and enhance their prospects of statehood, as strengthening the Russian identity arguably continues to blur DPR's social differentiation vis-à-vis Russia.

Due to the social exclusion the DPR group members have experienced in Ukraine, another interest is the consolidation of a state where the people of DPR may have a free choice when it comes to deciding how they want to identify themselves and who should manage their identity for them. As Pushilin stated in August 2016 on the progress of the Minsk Agreements: “We want people to be able to choose whom they want to choose. Those who are able to protect their interests, who will not impose them which holidays to celebrate, who consider as our grandfathers and fathers, what movies to watch, what books children should study at school”⁶¹⁶. The aim is to create a manager-member relationship within the DPR group where members may express their identity without being socially excluded or told to change their social differentiation. To reach this outcome there is a need to socially distance Donetskians from the distorted relations that characterises Ukrainians. As Pushilin stated in his annual message to the DPR People's Council in December 2017: “Maximum attention should also be paid to the fight against corruption both in the field and in all executive authorities[...]It, like a terrifying serpent, crawled into practice for 20 years, and the Ukrainian government, unfortunately, nourished and cherished this hydra. Our task is to drive it into the swamp from which it crawled out, and if necessary even to throw it to the other side of the frontline”⁶¹⁷. Like the Ukrainian interest of distancing the Ukraine identity from the Russian identity, so too is there an expressed interest in DPR to correct the past trend of mis-identifying the people of DPR as

⁶¹⁴ DPR-95 (6)

⁶¹⁵ DPR-184 (6)

⁶¹⁶ DPR-52 (6)

⁶¹⁷ DPR-41 (6)

belonging to the Ukraine identity - and hereof governing them in accordance to “Ukrainian” social practices. This is of interest because rather than expressing interests not necessarily associated with the conflict (such as the Ukrainian ambition of correcting historical relations with Russia), the DPR interests are to a great extent linked to the conflict and the understandings that have arisen as a result of this situation. This again points to how this group identity somewhat emerged from the conflict as the DPR identity and interests are intrinsically linked with, and to a great extent dependent on, the conflict situation.

Eventually the condition for reaching the DPR interest of consolidating the DPR group identity is that DPR group members continue to be united in the struggle against the Ukrainian antagonist. As Pushilin further stated in his annual message to the DPR People’s Council in December 2017: “But many have no doubt that we’ll win, even our enemies. They feel our victory, they see, but do not want to admit it. Our challenge with you for the near future is to do so that this victory was clearly visible not only to us, those who have no doubts about it, but also to those with whom we are fighting”⁶¹⁸. The identity managers thus point to the ideational nature of DPR and how the existence of this group is dependent on agents’ subscription to and support of it. It is also implied that DPR as an identity will only exist if its’ group members adopt the identity managers’ reification of this group and conflict narrative, and if the DPR identity continues to receive social validation from the rest of the Russian world. As Pushilin stated during the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Donetsk-Krivorozh Republic in February 2018: “And with the support of the entire Russian world, we will be able to build a state we dreamed of in 2014, guided by goals we have set ourselves. We are united, determined, that is why the Donetsk People’s Republic to be and win!”⁶¹⁹. To ensure the consolidation of the DPR group identity, there is a need for both internal and external adoption of the DPR identity managers’ self-schema. Another interesting feature is hence also that, like the Ukrainian identity managers, the DPR identity managers argue for the need to (re)establish the ‘true’ construction of the DPR group identity, which includes an exclusion of social practices and other social invocations associated with the out-group (Ukraine).

5.4.3 Other-Schema

5.4.3.1 The Ukraine Group

Whereas the DPR identity managers have had difficulties establishing who the DPR group members are and where this group comes from, they have a more clear-cut understanding of who Ukraine is and how this group came to exist. As Melnik stated in September 2017 in a response to a speech Poroshenko gave on the “Day of Unity”: “Current Ukrainian politicians ignore the fact that Soviet Russia, in fact, created the

⁶¹⁸ Ibid

⁶¹⁹ DPR-164 (6)

Ukrainian state. However, it is not customary to mention this in the ‘independent’. But even from the lips of hardcore liars the truth breaks through”⁶²⁰. In DPR’s other-schema, the Ukraine group originates from the Soviet Union and so the DPR identity managers share the Russian understanding that the Ukraine and Russian group identities have the same social origin. Russians and Ukrainians are thus the same. Whereas the DPR identity managers and the Russian identity managers are aware of this, Ukrainian identity managers fail to acknowledge this truth, and instead choose to lie about the time Ukrainians and Russians were socially categorised as in-group members. As Berdichevsky commented in August 2017 in response to Poroshenko’s comment on the Soviet Union:

After quoting the former US president Reagan, Poroshenko with particular pleasure declared a break in relations with the ‘evil empire.’ Actually, this expression applied to the Soviet Union. “Association agreement and the visa-free regime. What can be more convincing evidence of our final – de facto and de jure – break with the empire’?! The one that Ronald Reagan called “the evil empire,” Poroshenko said. Any sane person is unlikely to be able to explain how the association with the EU and visa-free travel apply to the Soviet Union. Moreover, Ukraine was part of the USSR at the time of the “empire of evil” cliché, and therefore Reagan’s message related to all those who lived at that time, some of whom today in Ukraine are applauding their insults⁶²¹.

The Soviet Union offered the cognitive foundation for the construction of a Ukraine group identity and Ukraine’s existence stems from this rather than from a European origin. When Ukrainian identity managers denounce the Soviet Union they are, hence, denouncing themselves. Despite this, Ukrainian identity managers are in a process of removing Ukraine’s Soviet origin, and so they are fundamentally changing the Ukraine group identity. In DPR’s other-schema, the DPR identity managers thus reify the Ukraine group by establishing the social traits and history that bind the agents who belong to this group. It is from this foundation that the identity managers denounce the current Ukraine group construct advocated by Ukrainian identity managers, as it is a distorted version of “who” Ukraine is and “where” it comes from. In DPR’s other-schema there is only one true constellation of the Ukraine group and so the DPR identity managers argue that identities need to abide to a certain ideational structure for them to exist. If identity managers dismiss or change this structure, they are creating a false social identification marker with consequences to follow such as the conflict in Ukraine. The current mobilisation of Ukrainians around a pure Ukraine identity is thus a falsity, but it is also something which will fail as others will discover how the conflict is the result of identity tampering. As Melnick stated in July 2017 in a response to the Deputy Minister of Ukraine, who allegedly expressed the wish for the dissolution of Russia as a state:

It is not that easy to plant russophobia in the descendants of the Victory, the Russian-speaking population, and simply among the people with friendly and kindred ties. Fake news is short-lived, and the degree of

⁶²⁰ DPR-195 (6)

⁶²¹ DPR-175 (6)

hatred towards everything Russian related needs to be constantly promoted. But there is one problem. The demand for such rhetoric is falling. Customers, who generously paid for this ‘trend’ previously, are no longer interested in its promotion. This is why the Ukrainian politicians have to make increasingly eccentric statements, drawing attention to themselves⁶²².

There is a correct and a false Ukraine identity and for the Ukrainian identity managers to convince their group members and others that their false construct is correct, they have had to unleash a war against their own group members.

As the two other conflict parties, the DPR identity managers reify the out-group using a leadership attribution error as the Ukrainian identity managers are processed as agents that epitomise the Ukraine group. The DPR identity managers also point to how Ukrainian identity managers do not merely follow prototypical attitudes of the Ukraine group, but that these leaders are shaping the Ukraine group identity and interests out of their own image. As Skorokhodov stated in August 2017 in response to Ukraine’s alleged usage of propaganda:

Pyotr Poroshenko certainly believes firmly that, enriching at the expense of the Ukrainians, he, by his actions, bears the blessings, in his words, for “his own” people[...]. And this is after all that Poroshenko has done for the Ukrainians: queued for visa-free travel, but did not take care for the population to have means to travel to the EU; he achieved an “unprecedented” level of freedom of speech, when for a few phrases without exaggeration the one can be killed in broad daylight; he turned Ukraine from the victorious country into a begging country with neo-Nazi idols[...]. Naturally, some disgruntled people should be fenced off from His Majesty, so as not to interfere with him creating “happiness” for his personal people⁶²³.

It is understood that Poroshenko has, through his narrative and behaviour, convinced Ukrainians that the Russian enemy image is real and that it is justified to attack those who belong to this group. This was amongst other expressed in a comment by Zavdoveyev in March 2017, where he pointed to how Ukrainian authorities covered up the crimes of nationalists: “The fact is that Kiev bets precisely on nationalist battalions and groups of Western mercenaries in order to implement the plan of forceful seizure of the territory of Donbass[...]. Kiev strengthens its position, gives a green light to the acts of violence of radicals and nationalists, and the ordinary people are simply intimidated and continue to remain silent”⁶²⁴. Like Ukraine’s situation- and other-schema, so too do the DPR identity managers point to how the out-group identity managers can mobilise their in-group members in the conflict, as these group members either uncritically adopt and react to their identity managers’ false enemy-image, or share the identity managers’ hostile intentions. In this sense, Poroshenko’s personality and ambitions are increasingly becoming social dispositions associated with the Ukraine group. Eventually, Ukrainian identity managers are not interested

⁶²² DPR-188 (6)

⁶²³ DPR-99 (6)

⁶²⁴ DPR-197 (6)

in negotiating any alternative understanding of the conflict, nor do they wish to ensure a peaceful solution to the conflict. Rather, the conflict situation caters to Ukrainian identity managers' ambition of power and presents a situation where they do not have to change the hierarchical manager-member relations that Ukrainians opposed during Maidan. As Alexander Kostenko, the DPR People's Council deputy, stated in a comment in November 2017 titled "Ukrainian authorities see 'Russian connection' everywhere":

In my view, the first reason for such rhetoric [anti-Russian] is to obtain an official pretext for non-compliance with the Minsk agreements and forcibly occupy Donbass. The second is to explain to the Ukrainians why everything is so bad in the country, putting blame on the Russian Federation for everything that happens[...]Moreover, the revolution in Ukraine has not ended yet, because Kiev (even if it denies) has not implemented the ideas of "Maidan"⁶²⁵.

In DPR's other-schema the conflict is thus attributed to the Ukrainian identity managers who are splitting the country apart due to their anti-Russian narrative, which incites negative behaviour and creates a situation where agents that once co-existed peacefully are encouraged to eradicate each other.

5.4.3.2 Ukraine's Motivation for Behaviour

Since the DPR identity managers process the Ukrainian group identity as distorted by Ukrainian identity managers, they also argue that the collective interests that drive this group derive from the Ukrainian identity managers' personal interests. As Zheynova stated in a comment in June 2017 titled "Ukraine's begging worldwide": "In order to attract the attention of Europeans, the Ukrainian government resorts to such actions as shelling our territory, which then they accuse us of. Like, we provoke them. Such an approach for getting money has been working for a long time"⁶²⁶. The primary motivation that drives Ukrainian identity managers in the conflict is the chance for them to personally enrich themselves. To ensure this, there is a need to continue pursuing the change of the Ukrainian group identity. Because linked to the interest of financial rewards is the need to uphold the façade of being attacked by Russians, and the expressed intent of retreating to a Ukraine group identity devoid of any Russian traits. As Bidyovka stated in May 2017:

It was thanks to work on changing the population's consciousness the Kiev authorities managed to suppress protests in the southeast regions of Ukraine[...]It is very important to tear its inhabitants mentally from the roots of a huge country[...]in order to reverse to the west side, not only calmly, but with enthusiasm, the history of the Soviet period of Ukraine is presented exclusively in a negative way, and today's Russia, the successor of that vast country, is like an enemy⁶²⁷.

⁶²⁵ DPR-71 (6)

⁶²⁶ DPR-150 (6)

⁶²⁷ DPR-182 (6)

To reach personal financial rewards, Ukrainian identity managers need to change the Ukrainians' collective consciousness about where they come from, and the relations they have (had) with the Soviet Union and Russia. What the Ukrainian identity managers do not understand is that the removal of Ukraine's Russian affiliation will result in the destruction of the Ukraine group identity. As Barkhatnova stated in connection to Mariupol's breaking of relations with Russian cities in July 2017: "There will always be a "Russian trace". Dealing with the destruction of what their ancestors built and defended with such pride is, in fact, chop off their roots, without which death is a matter of time"⁶²⁸. Despite this, the Ukrainian goal is to rid the Ukraine group identity of any Russian trait, which means that alongside the changing of consciousness, is the physical eradication of those who identify as Russian. As Zakharchenko stated in October 2015 following the Ukrainian announcement that elections in Donbass were to be held under Ukraine law, which is: "a sign that they have absolutely no idea how the people here really live[...]How can we allow (pro-Kiev) parties take part in the vote when they provided the political cover for the[...]effective genocide of our people"⁶²⁹. This claim of genocide is not supported by any specific times where such an event has taken place, and so one may assume that the genocide node is used to refer to the tendency of removing the possibility to identify as a Russian in Ukraine.

Like the other conflict parties, the DPR identity managers refer to a manager-member hierarchy when explaining the motivations of the other's behaviour. Unlike Ukrainian identity managers who make sense of Russian identity managers by comparing them to leaders of Nazi Germany, the DPR identity managers point to how Ukrainian identity managers have an interest in turning Ukraine into a dictatorship. This understanding is reached by pointing at the distorted manager-member relationship that defines the Ukraine group, and the Ukrainian identity managers' tendency to persuade Ukrainians into hating another group, whilst the identity managers are covertly reconstructing the Ukraine group identity in accordance to their personal interests. As Skorokhodov stated in June 2017 in a commentary accusing Ukraine of rewriting history: "Any fascism begins with the rewriting of history, the creation of new heroes, the inventing of non-existent ancestors, attempts to falsely associate with historical personalities, events or cultural values"⁶³⁰. The changing of the Ukraine group identity signals a shift towards a manager-member relation where Ukrainians are brainwashed into believing that hatred towards Russians and suffering at the expense of leaders' enrichment is normal, or as Melnik expressed it in April 2018 in response to a Facebook post from Ukraine's Acting Minister of Health, Ulyana Suprun:

They are slowly creating in the information field the rationale for what is happening in Ukraine is quite normal[...]This stovepiping is designed for mass consciousness, for an average Ukrainian citizen who

⁶²⁸ DPR-159 (6)

⁶²⁹ Yahoo News-23 (3)

⁶³⁰ DPR-107 (6)

does not understand the essence of the matter and is inclined to trust the authorities. So gradually, ministers[...]become unquestioned authorities[...]When the remnants of the Soviet past are destroyed, they will try to convince the Ukrainian citizen that freezing in cold apartments is useful, starvation and a meagre diet prolong life[...]In this sense, Suprun (read: Dr. Death) clearly fulfils the prescription from Dr. Goebbels: “If you repeat a lie often enough, it becomes the truth”⁶³¹.

The future in the hands of Ukrainian identity managers is thus dystopian as the lives of Ukrainians are disregarded, and agents are indoctrinated into believing everything their identity managers tell them. This outcome has already occurred in Eastern Ukraine where Ukrainian identity managers are engaged in a military offensive against their own group members who dare to stand up against the lies these identity managers are expressing. As Melnik stated in August 2017 in a comment accusing Ukraine of applying a double standard when enforcing laws in Ukraine: “To my friends, everything; to my enemies, the law” – this phrase is attributed to the dictators Francisco Franco and Benito Mussolini[...]In Ukraine, where, as you know, “there is no fascism”, this phrase completely reflects the current state of affairs”⁶³². In this sense, Ukrainian identity managers follow a behavioural pattern which is typical for dictatorships. It is thus also from the processing of past identity managers categorised as “similar” to Ukrainian identity managers that the DPR identity managers make sense of who Ukraine is, what this group wants, and what will happen in the conflict. This processing is then used as an overall justification for DPR’s actions and the continued establishment of the DPR group.

5.4.4 DPR’s Social Cognitive Framework

As with Ukraine and Russia, it is possible in DPR’s conflict narrative to explore a social cognitive framework. What is interesting in DPR’s framework is that the identity managers to a great extent rely on the same understandings as the Russian identity managers. There are, however, also differences and rather in some areas the DPR identity managers’ social cognitive processing more resembles the processing Ukrainian identity managers engage in. In their framework, the DPR identity managers systematise the conflict as an intragroup conflict caused by a change in Ukraine’s group identity (like Russia), but they also argue that the conflict has turned into an intergroup conflict between two distinct groups (like Ukraine). The DPR identity managers also share the Russian understanding that Russians and Ukrainians are the same but unlike Russia, the DPR identity managers reify the Ukraine and DPR groups as fundamentally different. Like the Ukrainian identity managers, the DPR identity managers seek to cognitively systematise the conflict by drawing sharp social boundaries between the agents present. What is of interests in DPR’s framework is, however, not so much how the DPR identity managers systematise the situation, and how

⁶³¹ DPR-81 (6)

⁶³² DPR-74 (6)

they reify the other groups. The interesting findings are how the DPR identity managers reify the DPR group because although the identity managers point to how the conflict is between two distinct groups, they have had difficulties establishing who it is that they represent and manage. The cause for this cognitive conundrum is found in the difficulty to socially categorise the agents present and socially position the DPR group members vis-à-vis the two more dominant identities of Russia and Ukraine. Eventually, the DPR identity managers arrive at a cognitive systematization where DPR is a group identity of its own. Like the other conflict parties, the DPR identity managers thus also seek to make sense of who is who, and they do so by largely constructing a new group identity, which they argue needs to be adopted in order to arrive at the factual understanding of what is going on and how the conflict should be resolved.

The problem with this new identity is that it continues to have a strong association with the Russian group identity. This causes cognitive confusion amongst the other conflict parties because they do not know whether to position DPR within the Ukraine or Russian category. It also causes confusion amongst the DPR identity managers as they struggle to define what makes DPR unique and how these agents are distinct from and at the same time similar to Russians. What emerges from this cognitive confusion is the “cognitive birth” of the DPR group identity, as the DPR identity managers try to define what a “Donetskian” is, and why this identity should be used for making sense of the agents present. What the analysis of DPR’s framework hence points to is that identities emerge as part of social cognitive processing, as the DPR identity to some extent arose following the Crimea and Maidan events, which functioned as stimuli that needed processing. These events were processed through a group-prism. However, rather than processing these stimuli in accordance with a Russia/Ukraine group-prism, the DPR identity managers were forced into processing them from a DPR/Ukraine group-prism, as Russian identity managers did not act on the DPR identity managers’ claim for Russian unification. The DPR identity managers have since then sought to consolidate the DPR group identity further by making sense of how this group relates to the other groups involved in the conflict. A main aspect of DPR’s social cognitive framework is thus the argument that the DPR group exists, and that the members of this group are entitled to be recognised by the other conflict parties. The DPR identity managers argue that the other conflict parties need to change their social cognitive processing and include the new DPR group identity to make sense of who is present and what is going on. This attempt is to some extent supported by Russian identity managers, as they point to the existence of DPR. However, although Russian identity managers “see” the DPR group, they do not see DPR as an independent group identity. Russian identity managers rather categorise the agents of DPR as Ukrainians. Russian identity managers have hence not fully adopted the DPR identity managers’ social cognitive framework, nor do the DPR identity managers fully abide to the Russian situation, self, and other understanding of the Ukraine conflict.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I addressed the social cognitive processes the conflict parties in the Ukraine conflict resort to. The chapter focused on how they construct situation-, self-, and other-schemas, and how these result in social cognitive frameworks. The reason for exploring these processes was to establish how the conflict parties process stimuli and the intergroup dynamics that may arise from this. This research takes the position that to understand conflict protraction we equally need to explore the ideational factors that shape them. In the Ukraine conflict all conflict parties argue for the need to implement the Minsk agreements and the various ceasefires made. They nevertheless continue to fail in doing so, even though these agreements seemingly cater to their interests. This research has hence set out to explore whether there are certain dynamics that arise from the conflict parties' cognitive processing, which may continue to move them towards confrontation rather than reconciliation. Given that emphasis is on ideational factors, this research should be treated as a complementary study. It thus addresses the cognitive moment of conflicts, albeit the findings may complement e.g. post-structural studies, as it explores the underlying cognitive steps that may lead to competing discourses, and it may complement realist studies as it explores how clashing discourses may prove a hindrance in conflict parties' pursuit of material interests.

From the analysis it becomes noticeable that the conflict parties in Ukraine do not share the same social cognitive frameworks, as they all process stimuli differently and they emphasise different stimuli as of importance for understanding the conflict. This e.g. pertains to Maidan which the Ukrainian and DPR identity managers process as the liberation of their groups, but Russian identity managers process as the destruction of Ukraine's group identity. Adding to this is that the Russian identity managers process the inauguration of the new Ukrainian identity managers as the event that caused the conflict, whilst the DPR identity managers point to the ridicule of the Russian group identity as stimuli that caused agents to dismiss their unification with Ukraine. Ukrainian identity managers, on the other hand, point to how the conflict is an outcome of the end of the Cold War as it is a result of Russian retaliation against Ukraine's strive for independence. The conflict parties also disagree on whether the conflict should be cognitively systematised as an intragroup or intergroup conflict. The Ukraine conflict hence entails conflicting narratives, which have occurred because of different stimuli processing. This correlates with the theory on opposed conflict narratives. However, despite that the conflict parties process stimuli differently, as well as emphasise the importance of different stimuli, the analysis found that they rely on the same processing tendencies when systematising the conflict and reifying the groups present.

The first of such tendencies is to change identities and interests when processing stimuli. In DPR's conflict narrative, the identity managers have in the early days of the conflict had difficulties systematising the conflict and particularly making sense of who the people of DPR are and what they want. Initially these agents were socially categorised as Russians who strived for unification with the Russian

state. As the Russian identity managers did not react on this proclaimed in-group membership, the DPR identity managers were forced to change their systematisation of the conflict. This led to attempts of defining the people of DPR as agents who belonged to “Novorossiia” or “Malorossiia”. It was then from this systematisation that the conflict was to be understood as one between Ukrainians and “New” or “Little” Russians. This systematisation did not gain traction either, and so the DPR identity managers now cognitively systematise the conflict as one between a Ukraine and a DPR group identity. This identification has had implications for DPR’s interests, which the identity managers have adapted into being the creation of an independent DPR state. Whereas the DPR identity managers have explicitly changed their self-schema in accordance with incoming stimuli, the state actors in the Ukraine conflict have sought to process stimuli in accordance with their existing self-schemas or adapted the other’s identity and interests. Most noticeable is the Russian identity managers’ processing of Russian troop presence in Ukraine, which they first denied and eventually categorised as volunteers who were acting from their own interests. By categorising these agents as such Russian identity managers sought to process stimuli in accordance with their established self-schema of being a neutral actor. Rather than adapting their self- and situation-schema, Russian identity managers adapted the stimuli. Ukrainian identity managers, on the other hand, have changed their other-schema, as the conflict initially was processed as one between Ukrainians and terrorists. With the annexation of Crimea and information on Russian troop presence nevertheless occurred a shift, as the other-schema came to revolve around the Russia social category.

The second processing tendency which emerges from the analysis, is that all conflict parties seek to reify groups through the application of a group attribution error and, what I have chosen to call, a leadership attribution error. When reifying their in-group, all conflict parties either refer to how the group is an entity that behaves from a shared cognitive foundation, or how the attitude of the identity managers reflect the general attitude of their group members. In the case of Ukraine and DPR, the identity managers reify their in-group as groups that have been collectively mobilised from a shared understanding of who the in-group is, and who it is confronted with. Russian identity managers nevertheless do point to how they have an active role in shaping the Russian group identity and interests, but they argue that their identity management has the blessing of their group members. The in-groups are hence reified as either consistent entities, or as groups where there is a perfect relationship between group managers and members. When reifying the out-group, however, all conflict parties point to how the out-group managers are shaping the out-group’s identity and interest from their own image. Ukrainian identity managers e.g. reify the Russia group around Putin, who is processed as the individual that epitomises the Russia group. The reason why Russians are in a conflict with Ukrainians is hence not because all Russians have a hatred towards Ukrainians. It is because Putin has a negative personality from which he mobilises Russian group members around a goal of sowing conflicts and destroying other groups. Russian identity managers rather reify the

Ukraine group as a distorted group identity, which the new Ukrainian identity managers have taken hostage in their attempt to redirect attention away from their failure in governing. Ukrainians are hence mobilised around the Ukrainian identity managers' identity and interests, and not the collective interests and identity that define Ukrainians. Similar understanding is expressed by the DPR identity managers who point to how Ukrainian identity managers have distorted the Ukraine group identity to the extent where the people of DPR can no longer identify with, and co-exist alongside, this group.

The third processing tendency is to process stimuli as a matter of alien identity management where the motivation of the out-group managers is to either destroy a group identity or impose their management on an out-group. All conflict parties systematise the conflict around this perceived motivation as they refer to alien identity management as the key characteristic of the conflict, which they and their members seek to defy. Alien identity management is also a processing tendency that they resort to when reifying groups. In their conflict narratives, all conflict parties refer to how there is a "true" and a "false" constellation of the group identities represented in the conflict, and they all argue that they possess the true account of who is who. In the case of Russia, Ukrainian identity managers reify this out-group by not merely processing Russian behaviour in the conflict, but also past Russian behaviour. It is thus by processing Russian behaviour in e.g. the Georgia conflict and during the times of the Soviet Union that Ukrainian identity managers reach an understanding of who Russia really is and what it wants in the Ukraine conflict. This reification is also reached by processing the behaviour of Nazi Germany during WW2. It is hence also by referring to other actors and events deemed as similar to Russia and the Ukraine conflict that Ukrainian identity managers make sense of Russia. This other-understanding is then presented as factual and something that others need to adopt if future conflicts are to be prevented, and the Ukraine conflict is to end. Similar understanding is visible in DPR and Russia's conflict narrative where the identity managers dismiss Ukraine's removal of everything Russian from the Ukraine group identity, as they argue that Russians and Ukrainians are past in-group members who share the same social origin and interests. It is thus the current distortion of the Ukraine group identity that has led to the conflict and so to end the conflict, there is a need to either reverse to the true account of the Ukraine group identity (as Russian identity managers advocate) or move towards a split between Ukrainians and Donetskians (as the DPR identity managers advocate).

Eventually there is a tendency to support parts of another conflict party's social cognitive framework. The DPR identity managers e.g. seek to validate their group constructs by pointing to the support their self-understanding is granted from Russian identity managers. Russian identity managers' attempt to include the DPR identity managers in the negotiation process is also used by the DPR identity managers as a validation of DPR's group identity. This, however, despite that Russian identity managers do not refer to a distinct Donetskian group identity in their conflict narrative, but instead identifies these

agents as Ukrainians. Adding to this is also the Russian argument that Ukrainian identity managers' attempts to distort the Ukraine group identity is receiving support from the West. This is then presented as another cause for the conflict's continuation as Ukraine's social cognitive framework is validated by others. From the Ukraine analysis thus emerges the finding that the conflict parties do not process stimuli in the same way, and they do not rely on stable self/other understandings. This is of interest as it challenges the existing conflict protraction theories that protraction occurs from cemented self/other understandings. It also challenges the realist notion that state actors think in the same way. These findings will be discussed further in chapter 7. In the next chapter I draw my attention to the Georgia conflict and the social cognitive processes that occur in this context.

6.0 Social Cognitive Processing in the Georgia Conflict

This chapter will proceed in a similar fashion as the previous. Here, focus is on the second case study, the conflict in Georgia, and the conflict narratives of the conflict parties: The Georgian government, Russian government, and the de-facto South Ossetian government. As in the previous chapter, this too will focus on the social cognitive processes the conflict parties use to reach an understanding of the situation, self, and other. The Georgia analysis is also based on a thematic analysis, which can be found in appendix 7.

6.1 Schematic Changes

As in the Ukraine conflict, it is possible in the Georgia conflict to explore a development in the conflict parties' situation-, self-, and other-schemas. Although there have been several developments through-out the conflict, which have had an influence in shaping and changing the conflict parties' schemas, the most significant stimuli that led to schematic changes are the 2008 events.

6.1.1 Georgia

Georgia's conflict narrative has changed over the years alongside the change in Georgian identity managers. The most significant change happened with the inauguration of Mikheil Saakashvili in 2004 and the 2008 events where Georgian identity managers adopted a more consistent understanding of the conflict as one between Russia and Georgia. This is a development from the early 1990s where Georgian identity managers processed the conflict as one between Georgia and South Ossetia. The understanding that the conflict was a Georgian/South Ossetia conflict emerged around 1991 when the first clashes (within the dataset used for this analysis) occurred between South Ossetia and Georgia. During this time, the official conflict documents defined the situation as a Georgia/South Ossetia conflict with amongst other the Sochi Agreement of June 1991 stating the need for: "the immediate cessation of bloodshed and achieving comprehensive settlement of the conflict between Ossetians and Georgians"⁶³³. In 1994, initiatives were expanded with the Joint Control Commission agreement where the conflict parties agreed that there was an urgent need for "a whole scale settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict"⁶³⁴. In 1995, Georgian identity managers welcomed an OSCE peace proposal that proposed giving the greatest possible degree of autonomy to the South Ossetians under Georgian management⁶³⁵. Under this proposal, South Ossetians would enjoy a stronger management of their interests and territory in comparison to what they had during the Soviet Union⁶³⁶. Since the 1990s,

⁶³³ United Nations Peacekeepers -1- Page 1 (4)

⁶³⁴ United Nations Peacekeepers -2- Page 1 (4)

⁶³⁵ OSCE -1- Page 37 (4)

⁶³⁶ Ibid

Georgian conflict resolution agreements have entailed an element of autonomy⁶³⁷. This includes one presented by then-Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze in 1998, which proposed transforming Georgia into an “asymmetric federation”⁶³⁸. In the 1990s, all conflict parties hence shared the understanding that the conflict was between Georgians and South Ossetians.

The understanding that the conflict was between Georgia and Russia started to emerge in the early 2000s. In 2002, Russian identity managers adopted a citizenship law, which granted agents with no citizenship, and who were living in the former territories of the Soviet Union, the right to apply and receive Russian citizenship⁶³⁹. To this, Shevardnadze responded that the law was “a hidden annexation”⁶⁴⁰. During the same time, Georgian identity managers increasingly referred to Russian identity managers’ lack of will in implementing the 1999 OSCE Istanbul Summit Agreement, which called for the removal of Russian bases from Georgian territory⁶⁴¹. When Saakashvili was inaugurated as president in 2004, he initially embraced the situation-schema that the conflict was between South Ossetia and Georgia, and that the primary point of contestation was how to ensure peaceful co-existence between these two groups. As he stated in January 2005 in an address to the Georgian Parliament:

Our vision for a peaceful and united Georgia is based on the respect for the desire for autonomy of the Tskhinvali region-South Ossetia[...]We want to have a strong Georgian state, and we want the[...]conflict to be solved peacefully. The price we must pay for that is that we should give that territory certain political rights⁶⁴².

During the early 2000s, South Ossetia was thus treated as a group within Georgian territory, which could be persuaded to refrain from independence if its demands were met through greater autonomy. In 2004, tensions continued between Russia and Georgia, as Georgian identity managers accused Russian peacekeepers of neglecting their duties and siding with South Ossetia⁶⁴³. In the same year, Saakashvili declared that “certain forces in Russia” were preparing an “aggression against Georgia”⁶⁴⁴. What is interesting is that although Georgian identity managers in 2004/2005 started processing the conflict with a reference to a looming Georgia/Russia conflict, they continued to categorise South Ossetia as an independent group. Russia and South Ossetia’s relation was hence understood as a mutual beneficial relationship where Russian identity managers were backing the South Ossetians. As Saakashvili stated in July 2004: “Due to coordinated activities by the Georgian government[...]Georgia has avoided the bloody

⁶³⁷ Radio Free Europe-4 (4)

⁶³⁸ Radio Free Europe-2 (4)

⁶³⁹ Civil-6 (4)

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid

⁶⁴¹ Civil-7 (4)

⁶⁴² Radio Free Europe-16 (4)

⁶⁴³ Refworld-3 (4)

⁶⁴⁴ Refworld-4 (4)

conflict which [South Ossetian leader Eduard] Kokoev and his backers in Russia wanted to launch”⁶⁴⁵. In the mid-2000s, Georgian identity managers thus started processing the conflict and the agents involved differently, and greater emphasis was put on South Ossetia and Russia’s relations. The reason for this may be due to the inauguration of new Georgian identity managers. It may also be related to stimulus such as the Russian citizenship law, which resulted in a majority of South Ossetians becoming Russian citizens⁶⁴⁶.

The full transition towards processing the conflict as a Russia/Georgia conflict may be linked to the 2008 events, where Russian identity managers claimed to invade Georgia on behalf of the South Ossetians, but which Georgian identity managers processed as an unprovoked Russian invasion. As Saakashvili stated in November 2008 when the Georgian opposition accused him of provoking the conflict with Russia: “It was a difficult decision, but it was an inevitable one[...]When we asked the Russians through the Americans what was the goal of their intervention, their answer was “the complete destruction of Georgia””⁶⁴⁷. The 2008 events functioned as stimuli where the South Ossetian social category was discarded for a fully activated Russia social category. Since 2008, Georgian identity managers have applied the Russian social category and nodes such as “proxies”, “invasion”, and “annexation” in their sense making of the conflict and the agents involved. Russia has thus since 2008 been categorised as the antagonist and the South Ossetia/Georgia conflict situation-schema has been discarded. As stated on the Georgian President’s homepage, retrieved July 2018: “That time, after 90s, there were conflicts in two regions of Georgia, in Abkhazia and Samachablo (the South Ossetia). For that period the ethnic problems were named as the reason for the conflict, though later on it was proved that the party of conflict was neither Abkhazia, nor Tskhinvali region (the South Ossetia), but Russia, supporting separatism in the region”⁶⁴⁸. Like Ukraine, Georgia’s situation-, and other-schema changed once the Russia category was activated. The conflict is now processed as a situation where Russian identity managers have mobilised South Ossetians and deployed Russian group members in a fight against Georgians on Georgia’s territory. During the Giorgi Margvelashvili Presidency, Georgian identity managers have slightly altered their situation-, and other-schema in what may be regarded as an attempt to improve relations with Russia. There was e.g. an increased focus on the onset of the conflict with the argument that the previous Georgian identity managers equally provoked the conflict. The onset of the conflict is hence no longer unilaterally blamed on Russian identity managers. The understanding that the conflict is a Russia/Georgia conflict, however, remains. As Margvelashvili stated in October 2016: “how can a friendly country[...]attack and invade its neighbors - Georgians, who, along with Russians[...]created a united cultural social community?! I find it hard to

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid

⁶⁴⁶ Toru Nagashima, "Russia's Passportization Policy toward Unrecognized Republics: Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria." *Problems of Post-Communism* 66, no.3 (2019): 186-199.

⁶⁴⁷ Aljazeera-17 (4)

⁶⁴⁸ GP-68 (5)

understand[...]in the future, the Georgian occupation will not be considered as the “great campaign” of the Russian warlords”⁶⁴⁹. The Georgian conflict narrative thus continues to be shaped around the understandings largely reached during the Saakashvili presidency, and the previous conflict agreements made with South Ossetia no longer features in the Georgian identity managers’ situation- and other-schema.

6.1.2 Russia

Russia’s conflict narrative has also changed over the years albeit this tendency is more related to the processing of unfolding events, than a change in identity managers - as these agents have largely stayed the same. Unlike Georgian identity managers, Russian identity managers have consistently processed the conflict as one between Georgians and South Ossetians. What has changed is how vocal they have been about who the antagonist is. In the early 1990s, Mikhail Gorbachev, as one of the identity managers of the Soviet Union, initially condemned the South Ossetian move towards independence alongside a condemnation of the Georgian abolition of South Ossetia’s autonomy⁶⁵⁰. The Soviet situation-schema thus placed blame on both sides. This schema was somewhat adopted by Russian identity managers as, during the 1990s and until the mid-2000s, Russian identity managers refrained from acknowledging either situation- or other-schema expressed by South Ossetia or Georgia. This did not refrain them from being a part of the conflict resolution process, as Russian identity managers in 1990, alongside Georgian identity managers, dispatched troops to South Ossetia⁶⁵¹. The Russian identity managers also joined Georgian identity managers in signing the 1991 Joint Commission agreement where the Georgian and Russian Ministries of Internal Affairs were to jointly assess the situation and cooperate on matters such as the resettling of refugees⁶⁵². In the early 1990s, Russian and Georgian identity managers hence agreed to cooperate not merely in the resolution of the conflict, but also in reaching a joint understanding of the situation and agents involved.

The idea of a shared understanding deteriorated in 2004, as a disagreement arose regarding the presence of Russian peacekeepers. Georgia’s Conflict Resolution Minister, Giorgi Khaindrova, amongst other stated in June 2004 that the Russian peacekeepers should leave Georgia as “they do not wish to perform their functions”⁶⁵³. To this Russia’s Foreign Ministry responded that: “The Georgian authorities are intentionally vilifying the Russian peace-keepers deployed in the Georgia-South Ossetian conflict

⁶⁴⁹ GP-33 (5)

⁶⁵⁰ University of Central Arkansas-1 (4)

⁶⁵¹ Dennis Sammut and Nikola Cvetkovski. “Confidence-building matters. The Georgia-South Ossetia Conflict”. Vertic (1996), 26

⁶⁵² Ibid, 27

⁶⁵³ Refworld-3 (4)

zone”⁶⁵⁴. Adding to this dispute were Russian accusations that Georgian identity managers had dispatched illegal groups into South Ossetia with Russia’s Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, stating in July 2004 that Georgia had: “illegally brought into the conflict zone hundreds and thousands of armed forces who do not come under the peacekeepers’ control”⁶⁵⁵. In the mid-2000s, Russia’s situation-schema hence started moving away from an expressed need for Georgian-Russian cooperation, to an increased focus on how Georgian identity managers were trying to circumvent the agreements made.

Russia’s conflict narrative changed in 2008, where Russian identity managers became more vocal in terms of which conflict narrative they supported and in presenting their understanding of how the conflict should be resolved. Prior to 2008, Russian identity managers processed the conflict’s resolution as a matter that should be resolved between Georgian and South Ossetian identity managers. In 2008, Russian identity managers’ approach was nevertheless presented as they decided to acknowledge South Ossetia and Abkhazia as two independent states⁶⁵⁶. They also started processing the conflict as one Georgian identity managers had caused. As Lavrov stated in an Interview to Russian TV in February 2010: “The main trouble which led to the tragedy in August 2008 was the failure of the whole galaxy of post-Soviet Georgian leaders to act so as to take into account and follow the fundamental interests of their own people”⁶⁵⁷. Russia’s conflict narrative has since 2008 entailed a strong stance towards Georgia, and the identity managers are now explicitly presenting themselves, and the Russia group, as a party that shares the South Ossetians’ understanding of the situation and agents involved.

6.1.3 South Ossetia

South Ossetia’s conflict narrative has been relatively consistent over the years as all incumbent identity managers continue to process the conflict as one Georgia has imposed upon South Ossetia. What has changed, is how South Ossetian identity managers process their own and Georgian interests. In South Ossetia’s self-schema, the identity managers have consistently reified the South Ossetian group as socially distinct from the Georgians, and it is from this social categorisation that the identity managers have advocated for more agency over matters concerning the South Ossetian territory and prospects. This was visible in the early 1990s, when South Ossetian identity managers sought to change South Ossetia’s status from Autonomous Region to an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic⁶⁵⁸, and the subsequent referendum on independence from Georgia⁶⁵⁹. Although South Ossetian identity managers have continuously reified

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵⁵ Refworld-4 (4)

⁶⁵⁶ Radio Free Europe-27 (4)

⁶⁵⁷ RFM-68 (5)

⁶⁵⁸ Refworld-1 (4)

⁶⁵⁹ University of Central Arkansas-1(4)

South Ossetians as socially distinct from Georgians, they have pointed to how South Ossetians enjoy positive relations with the Russians and share a group membership with the North Ossetians residing inside Russian territory. This led to a declaration in November 1991 that South Ossetia was to be a republic within the Russian Federation, and a referendum in January 1992 where South Ossetians declared their wish of integrating with the North Ossetian region⁶⁶⁰. Since the early 1990s, South Ossetia has held several referendums on independence, and the ambition towards unification with Russia has ebbed and flowed. Although Georgian identity managers have consistently denounced these South Ossetian referendums, the mid-1990s saw a slight improvement in Georgia-South Ossetia relations. Georgian identity managers amongst other stated in November 1996 that the South Ossetian presidential election should not undermine the improved conditions in the South Ossetian-Georgian relations⁶⁶¹. These relatively consoling narratives continued during the early 2000s as the two groups engaged in trade⁶⁶² and Lyudvig Chibirov, de-facto President of South Ossetia, told journalists in April 2000 that he hoped for the re-election of Shevardnadze, as he was: “a man who keeps his word, [and who is] sincerely interested in settling the Georgian-Ossetian conflict by political means without military interference”⁶⁶³.

In 2002, tensions resumed as South Ossetian identity managers stated that they feared the increased build-up of Georgian forces inside Georgian territory and strengthened military relations with the US, might prove a threat towards the South Ossetians⁶⁶⁴. The outbreak of violence in 2008 was used as a proof of Georgians’ hostile intentions towards the South Ossetians. What is noteworthy is that although the South Ossetian identity managers processed the 2008 events as proof of their other-schema, they also changed their understanding of Georgian interests. Because following 2008, South Ossetian identity managers more systematically started processing Georgian intentions as being the eradication of the South Ossetians. As South Ossetia’s President, Eduard Kokoity, stated in August 2009 on the first-year anniversary of the 2008 events: “The goal of the operation was the destruction and exile of the South Ossetian people”⁶⁶⁵. Whereas the other-schema initially was constructed around a disagreement over “who” had the right to exercise control over the South Ossetian territory, the 2008 events defined Georgian behaviour in the conflict as attempts of ethnic cleansing. This other-schema is now combined with the expressed South Ossetian interest of independence/Russian-unification. The situation- and other-schemas that currently define South Ossetia’s conflict narrative is thus that the South Ossetians need to be removed

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶⁶¹ Refworld-1 (4)

⁶⁶² International Crisis Group “South Ossetia: The burden of recognition” International Crisis Group report (June, 2010), 1

⁶⁶³ Radio Free Europe-6 (4)

⁶⁶⁴ Civil-5 (4)

⁶⁶⁵ Aljazeera-24 (4)

from Georgians – either through independence or Russian unification – to prevent a South Ossetian genocide.

6.1.4. Schematic Changes

As in Ukraine, the Georgia conflict parties have changed their schema's in accordance with stimuli they have encountered. This stimulus particularly pertains to the 2008 events where Georgian identity managers changed their situation-schema from one between Georgia and South Ossetia, to one between Russia and Georgia. It was also following 2008 that Russian identity managers became more vocal in their understanding of who the antagonist was, and it was the time when Russian identity managers started communicating South Ossetia's situation-, and other-schema. South Ossetian identity managers also slightly changed their situation- and other-schemas and particularly their understanding of Georgian interests following the 2008 events. Since then, South Ossetian identity managers have referred more consistently to a Georgian intent of annihilating the South Ossetians. It is thus possible to explore a development in the conflict parties' conflict narratives. This is of importance as it indicates that the conflict parties have not processed the situation and agents involved in a consistent manner. Rather, they have changed their conflict narratives, and adapted significant aspects of their schemas in connection to stimulus that occurs, and the identity managers that have been in power. This is of interests as it challenges the opposed conflict narrative theory, which argues that conflict protraction is rooted in cemented narratives. What my finding instead indicates is that conflict narratives are mouldable and reactive to stimulus. As with the adaptable identities in the Ukraine conflict, these reactive narratives in the Georgia conflict present a positive opportunity for conflict resolution, because it implies that the conflict parties can change their narratives and settle on a more stable and consistent understanding of the conflict and how it should be resolved. However, as will be seen in the next section, it also presents an opportunity for the conflict parties to continuously process stimulus in accordance with their negative understanding of the situation and the other. This then feeds into a continued negative interaction between their social cognitive processes and has negative consequences for the resolution of the conflict. These findings will, alongside the findings in the next sections, be further discussed in chapter 7.

6.2 Georgia's Social Cognitive Framework

The following section will explore how the Georgian identity managers reach schematic understandings about the situation, self, and other, and the social cognitive framework that forms from this.

6.2.1 Situation-Schema

6.2.1.1 Conflict Cause

In Georgia's situation-schema, the conflict is processed as an intergroup conflict between Georgia and Russia and it is a conflict that Russia has caused as Russia is in the process of annexing Georgian territory. When making sense of the situation the Georgian identity managers thus cognitively systematize agents in accordance with a Georgian and Russian group identity. The Russia/Georgia group-prism is, as stated, a development as the Georgian identity managers' initially processed the conflict as one between Georgia and South Ossetia. This schematic change is, however, not acknowledged in Georgia's conflict narrative. Rather, Georgia's conflict narrative now revolves around a consistent understanding that the conflict between Georgia and Russia has been long running, as it emerged in the early 1990s following Georgia's secession from the Soviet Union. As Margvelashvili stated in an address to participants of a roundtable discussion in July 2018: "The war of 2008 was certainly a war between Georgia and Russia that involved Russian regular armed forces; however, the Russian-Georgian war began much earlier, more precisely, occupation of these two regions of Georgia began in 92-93's. This decision[...]was triggered by Georgia's decision to become an independent and free country"⁶⁶⁶. When processing the onset of the conflict, Georgian identity managers rely on a fundamental attribution error, as they argue that Russian identity managers caused the conflict. From this attribution error, the conflict is understood as an outcome caused by Russian intent, as Russia's identity managers for long have tried to prevent Georgians from gaining full control over their existence. Georgian identity managers more specifically process the conflict as a matter of alien identity management, as the conflict occurred because Russian identity managers are against the free choice of other groups. As Georgia's Foreign Ministry stated to the "treaty on alliance and integration" Russia signed with South Ossetia in March 2015: "Russia's policy vis-à-vis Georgia[...]illustrates that Moscow does not accept the independent choice of sovereign states and strives for the restoration of zones of influence in the region, including through the use of force, occupation, annexation and other aggressive acts"⁶⁶⁷. The conflict is hence processed as a situation that occurred because Russian identity managers want to prevent developments where out-groups gain control over their own identity and interests. The conflict is thus not caused by all Russians. It is the outcome of Russian identity managers' negative dispositions and interests of wanting to reclaim power over groups and their territory.

The Georgian identity managers process the situation as one where Russian identity managers have mobilised their group members in an attempt to annex Georgia's territory. To reach this understanding, they point to stimuli such as the Russian invasion in 2008, Russian acknowledgement of

⁶⁶⁶ GP-65 (5)

⁶⁶⁷ GFM-3 (5)

South Ossetia, and the agreements made between Russia and South Ossetia. These events are processed as “hidden-”, “creeping-”, or “factual annexation” with the Foreign Ministry stating in September 2016, in connection to the Russian military exercise taking place in the Southern parts of Russia and South Ossetia: “Military maneuvers take place against the backdrop of continuing militarization of Georgia’s occupied territories and creeping annexation through their integration into the military and security systems of the Russian Federation”⁶⁶⁸. Like the Ukrainian identity managers, Georgian identity managers activate an annexation node when processing stimuli. This node is linked to an occupation node, as the identity managers process the physical presence of Russian troops in South Ossetia as Russian occupation of Georgia’s territory. As the Foreign Ministry expressed it in a statement in August 2015 on the 7th anniversary of the 2008 events: “Seven years after the August 2008 war, 20 percent of Georgia’s territory remains under occupation, resulted in[...]hundreds of thousands of victims of ethnic cleansing, which are still denied the right to safe and dignified return to the places of their original residence”⁶⁶⁹. The conflict is thus one where Russian identity managers (through the mobilisation of their Russian in-group members) are occupying Georgia’s territory, with the intent of annexing it to the Russia group. In Georgia’s situation-schema, groups hence represent, and exist within, a certain territory. This is of interest as it constructs Russian identity managers as agents who are trying to remove territory from a group identity, which has this territory as its ‘place of origin’. In Georgia’s conflict narrative, group identities originate from physical places and their existence hinge on group members ability to continue to inhabit these places. The Georgia conflict is thus also a matter of regaining control over territory that rightfully belongs to a group, as this is linked to the management of the group and its identity and interests. Russia’s annexation and occupation therefore threatens the physical existence of the Georgian group identity, as Russian identity managers are gradually chipping away at the Georgian identity’s geographical location.

The threat against the Georgian group identity’s existence is not merely geographical but existential, as Georgian identity managers process the conflict as one where ethnic cleansing and genocide have occurred. As Saakashvili stated in August 2008 following Russia’s acknowledgement of South Ossetia, which he argued was: “a blatant attempt to legalise the results of ethnic cleansing[which]Russian troops are continuing to commit, right now as we speak, and that have been committed during the last several years”⁶⁷⁰. From Georgian processing arises the understanding that the existence of a group identity does not merely hinge on who gets to control it and whether it may continue to exist within its own territory. It also hinges on the continued physical existence of group members. In Georgia’s situation-schema, Russian behaviour in 2008 is not merely processed as an invasion, but as the intent of cleansing the South

⁶⁶⁸ GFM-22 (5)

⁶⁶⁹ GFM-10 (5)

⁶⁷⁰ BBC-7 (4)

Ossetian (i.e. Georgian) territory of Georgians. This understanding is expanded to the processing of other stimuli such as events related to IDP's, which are presented as examples of how Russian identity managers are trying to exterminate those who identify as Georgians. As the Foreign Ministry stated in connection to the 41st round of international Geneva Discussions in October 2017: "Representatives of Georgia sharply raised the issue of mass demolition of houses of Georgian IDPs in Eredvi village, as the continuation of ethnic cleansing and deliberate attempt to completely root out Georgian traces in Tskhinvali region"⁶⁷¹. Russian identity managers are hence threatening the Georgian group identity as they are seeking to take control over the Georgian identity's place of origin and eradicate Georgians in the process.

The situation is eventually defined by a Russian attempt to change agents' social differentiation as Russian identity managers restrict social practices that invoke the Georgian group identity. As the Foreign Ministry stated in connection to the Geneva talks in December 2017: "It was explicitly stressed that the forced registration of local population as foreigners, followed by restriction of their fundamental rights and freedoms, compulsion to change their surnames and national identity, can become a ground for another wave of ethnic cleansing in the occupied regions"⁶⁷². Georgia's situation-schema is hence constructed around an understanding that Russian identity managers are seeking to take control over Georgians, their identity, interests, and territory. This poses a threat towards the Georgian group's existence as territory associated with the Georgian group identity is in the risk of becoming "Russian", whilst Georgians are physically eradicated or forced to change their social identification. The situation is therefore processed as one where Georgians are opposing Russian identity managers' attempt of removing their right to identify as Georgian and to socially differentiate themselves from Russians.

6.2.1.2 The Agents Involved

Whereas the Georgian identity managers can clearly refer to "who" Russia is and what this group "wants" in the conflict, they have had difficulties categorising the South Ossetians and particularly the extent to which these agents are "Russians" or distinctly "South Ossetians". This confusion may be explained from the same premise as Ukraine's categorisation of DPR, namely that the Georgian identity managers have had difficulties establishing whether South Ossetians are acting from their own interests, whether they are acting on behalf of Russian interests, or whether Russian and South Ossetian identity managers are acting together in pursuit of common interests. This confusion of how to categorise the non-state actors has not been a persistent conundrum in Georgia's conflict narrative, as South Ossetia was initially categorised as an independent group that was in conflict with Georgia. In the beginning of the conflict, there was hence a clear-cut referral to who the South Ossetians were, and what they wanted. Gradually South Ossetia was

⁶⁷¹ GFM-34 (5)

⁶⁷² GFM-37 (5)

nevertheless processed as a group backed by Russian identity managers, till the point where the non-state actors were made sense of through the Russian social category. As Saakashvili stated in a televised speech in September 2005: “In reality, Russia is ruling this small enclave[...]not just through its officials, but with ethnic Russians sent there by Russia and appointed by Russia”⁶⁷³. The non-state actors are now categorised as a mixture of Russians and Russian proxies. As stated in the EU fact finding mission on the section presenting ‘Georgia’s view’ of the conflict: “Russian claim about genocide committed by Georgians against ethnic Ossetians proved to be propaganda aimed at justification of Russia’s illegal activities and encouragement of Ossetian proxy militants and other armed formations to commit brutalities against ethnic Georgians”⁶⁷⁴. The non-state actors are processed as agents whom Russian identity managers have mobilised and control. Unlike Ukrainian identity managers who clearly refer to the non-state actors as Russian group members, there is, however, greater confusion in Georgia’s conflict narrative over the extent to which South Ossetians are Russian group members or actually South Ossetians. This confusion may derive from the fact that many South Ossetians have Russian citizenship, but it may also be linked to the issue that the conflict still includes a South Ossetian conflict party, which demands certain outcomes.

To solve the cognitive conundrum over who South Ossetia is, Georgian identity managers draw a distinction between South Ossetian identity managers and group members, as South Ossetian identity managers are categorised as Russians, and the group members are categorised as Ossetians. It is then from this categorisation that Georgian identity managers infer why the South Ossetians engage in behaviour that is detrimental towards conflict resolution, and why there is an increased cooperation between South Ossetia and Russia. As Georgia’s State Minister for Reintegration, Temur Iakobashvili, stated in August 2010: “The war has demonstrated something that was not clearly evident before – our main problem is not relations with Abkhazians and Ossetians[...]Our major problem is Georgian-Russian relations. Russia is using separatists and separatism against the Georgian statehood”⁶⁷⁵. It is also from this categorisation of South Ossetia that Georgian identity managers process the negative relations between South Ossetia and Georgia as something that is easily fixed, as the problem does not originate between the two groups per se. As Margvelashvili stated in a report to the Georgian Parliament in February 2014 regarding Georgia-South Ossetia relations:

Our unity was violated due to many mistakes and by rough interference of other parties, for which we paid with the blood of our peoples. Today, the identity and self-cognition of Abkhazian and Ossetian people is in jeopardy. The strongest warrant for the protection of these principles is in our unity and cohabitation. Therefore, if the future of Abkhazians, Ossetians and all the peoples living on these territories is the least precious for you, don’t leave them in isolation⁶⁷⁶.

⁶⁷³ Refworld-12 (4)

⁶⁷⁴ IIFMCG, 187

⁶⁷⁵ Civil-55 (4)

⁶⁷⁶ GP-19 (5)

The South Ossetia group identity is thus currently distorted because Russian identity managers have taken over the management of this identity, and so Russian identity managers are now commanding which interests should drive these agents' behaviour. What this understanding results in, is the argument that the problem lies with the South Ossetian identity managers, and not with the South Ossetian group members who, unlike their leaders, can naturally and peacefully be re-integrated with the Georgians. In the end, the Georgian identity managers' categorisation of South Ossetia is somewhat blurred, and the reason for this may be due to a difficulty in making sense of a conflict that started between South Ossetians and Georgians, but continuously has included references to Russians and finally came to include an intervention from this party. What is also interesting in Georgia's situation-schema is that the identity managers rarely process the cause of violence and the agreements signed between Georgia and South Ossetia in the 1990s and 2000s, nor do they process the claims South Ossetian identity managers have made since the collapse of the Soviet Union. These stimuli no longer activate any nodes in the Georgian processing of who South Ossetia is. Rather, the conflict is to a greater extent constructed around 2008 and the subsequent interpretations made around the Russian social category. Despite this lack of processed stimuli, Georgian identity managers nevertheless present their reification of the South Ossetian group as factual. They are thus trying to manage the South Ossetian group identity by pointing at who this group is and what it really wants. This then indicates another area where a conflict party seeks to manage the identity of the other and how group identity management is equally applied when processing stimuli that the out-group produces.

6.2.1.3 The Solution

The presence of Russia sow's confusion as it creates a sense-making where South Ossetia as a territory is wanted, but where social reintegration with the South Ossetians is more dubious due to this group's Russian affiliation. The solution to the conflict is nevertheless processed as straight forward as it depends on Russian identity managers removing their group members from the South Ossetian territory. As the Foreign Ministry stated following the opening of customs points in South Ossetia in January 2018: "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs calls upon the Russian Federation to cease the provocative actions against the Georgian statehood, abide by its international commitments, de-occupy Georgia's territories and take steps aimed at peaceful conflict resolution in accordance to the principles of international law"⁶⁷⁷. The physical removal of Russian group members is a requisite for Georgian identity managers to regain control over the South Ossetian territory, which legally belongs to the Georgians. What is noteworthy is, however, that this conflict resolution effort is in contradiction with the categorisation of the South Ossetians. Because, since South

⁶⁷⁷ GFM-40 (5)

Ossetian identity managers are categorised as Russian members/managers, this challenges the Georgian de-occupation solution as it requires the physical removal of South Ossetian identity managers - who claim to be South Ossetians. This complication is not further elaborated in Georgia's conflict narrative. Rather, as stated by the Advisor to the President, Mr. Tengiz Pkhaldze, in January 2018: "This reality will be changed only when the occupation lines no longer exist on the territory of Georgia and when the occupant troops leave the country"⁶⁷⁸. Like Ukrainian identity managers, the Georgian identity managers also point to the need to physically remove Russian group members to re-establish the territorial distribution, which complies with the Georgian group identity's place of origin. There is also a need to change minds and particularly to change the South Ossetians' minds when it comes to Russia. Such actions will, however, automatically ensue once Georgia is modernized, as this will serve as an incentive for South Ossetian group members to retreat to an arrangement where their identity is managed by Georgian identity managers. As Georgia's Prime Minister, Irakli Garibashvili, stated in September 2014 following a question about the EU association agreement and whether Georgia is leaving South Ossetia and Abkhazia behind:

Of course we are not leaving them behind. In my speech to the European Council, I sent a clear message to our brothers and sisters, Abkhazians and Ossetians, that we offer them to share with us this process[...]Here is my vision: when our brothers and sisters, Ossetians and Abkhazians will see those big changes in our country, in Georgia; developing infrastructure, agriculture, educational programmes, improved healthcare and social conditions – they will also want to one day join and reconcile⁶⁷⁹.

The diffuse understanding of how to reintegrate South Ossetians is thus solved by linking de-occupation with modernisation, as Georgian identity managers process EU integration as something that will make the South Ossetians dismiss their Russian managers. EU integration will hence function as stimuli which will make the South Ossetians change their processing of the situation and agents involved.

This perceived future outcome is not merely linked to the positive understanding of the EU and the benefits the EU can offer. It is also linked to the understanding that integration between Russia and South Ossetia is illogical, as it does not align with the group identity of the agents who live in South Ossetia. As Margvelashvili responded in May 2016 to a question regarding the upcoming referendum between South Ossetia and Russia: "This is illegal, illogical and artificial method[...]Russia's expectations that South Ossetia and Abkhazia can be united with Russia, is unrealistic. What will be their identity without Georgia?"⁶⁸⁰. Russian integration is bound to fail as it counters the interests of the agents residing in South Ossetia and does not correlate with their social identification. Georgia's situation-schema is thus also constructed around the understanding that Russian identity managers are distorting South Ossetians' sense

⁶⁷⁸ GP-56 (5)

⁶⁷⁹ Euronews-2 (4)

⁶⁸⁰ GP-28 (5)

making in order to mobilise these agents into pursuing Russian interests. Conflict resolution is hence a matter of changing understandings, and particularly for the South Ossetians to realise the truth Georgian identity managers are proclaiming about Russia and Georgia. To this understanding is also the argument that the South Ossetian group will thrive under Georgian management. As Margvelashvili stated in an address to the Georgian parliament in February 2014 where he addressed South Ossetians: “We are offering you to live in a European, free, developed, democratic and peaceful state, which will be the guarantee of well-being, protection of ethnic, religious and cultural identity of its each citizen and the immunity of their political rights”⁶⁸¹. In Georgia’s situation-schema there is hence a division between Georgian and Russian identity management, with the argument that Georgian identity managers can offer the South Ossetians a consistent management of this group’s identity and interests, which is contrasted to the distorted management this group currently experiences under Russian management.

6.2.2 Self-Schema

6.2.2.1 *The Georgia Group*

When cognitively systematising the conflict, the Georgian identity managers socially categorise agents in accordance with a Russian, Georgian, and South Ossetian group identity. These groups are used to make sense of the situation, but they are also used to make sense of self and other as they explain who the different agents are, why they are fighting each other, and what they are fighting for. In Georgia’s conflict narrative, the identity managers point to the presence of a Georgian group, which is a group of agents who represent the Georgian identity. These agents exist within the ‘Georgian territory’, they are agents united around a long history of shared experiences, and they are agents driven by shared desired outcomes and dispositions. As stated on Georgia’s President’s homepage, accessed October 2019:

Georgia is the country of ancient civilization. This area was inhabited 1.7-1.8 million years ago[...] [The Silk Road passes through Georgia and] it used to be the object of attack from the invaders and be under the influence of others, loss the territories, but Georgian people always found the forces to release from the rule of foreign tribes. Many great Empires were ruined, but Georgia still stands on his feet and continued struggle for protection of its own interests⁶⁸²

In Georgia’s self-schema, Georgia is reified as a group of agents who have a long and shared history and a specific place of origin in the South Caucasus. To this reification is the processing that the Georgians share a common understanding of who they are, and the troubles they have been exposed to over the years. A central feature of the Georgian group reification process is that Georgia is a group that is re-experiencing

⁶⁸¹ GP-19 (5)

⁶⁸² GP-68 (5)

the same events. One of these events is, as seen in the previous quote, the experience of being invaded by out-groups and as a result of this being managed by alien identity managers. As is also stated on the homepage of the Georgian Embassy to the United States in July 2018: “In February of 1921, Tbilisi was occupied by the Red Army of Soviet Russia, and the democratic government of Georgia was forced to flee. For the next 70 years (1921--1991), the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia was one of the 15 constituent republics of the Soviet Union until the breakup of the USSR”⁶⁸³. Georgians share a common understanding that the fight for their independence has been under continuous threat. This self-understanding is used to make sense of the conflict with Russia, as the conflict is processed as nothing new, but a repetition of history where an out-group is once again threatening Georgians. As Margvelashvili stated in August 2018 in an address to Georgian politicians and journalists: “We should know that we will be victorious in this fight, like we were victorious in other fights that we won against the larger empires than Russia”⁶⁸⁴. When making sense of who Georgians are and the experiences that unite these group members, the identity managers hence apply the same group reification process as the DPR identity managers, who also construct a unique group around an understanding of consistently being under attack and forced under the management of out-groups.

Despite this turbulent past, the Georgian group is now independent and so the group enjoys the freedom to manage its own identity, interests, and territory. This is an outcome Georgians have had to reclaim at a certain point in time. As Margvelashvili put it during a meeting with Georgian students in May 2016: “Twenty-five years ago we gained independence and since then we have started the construction of our country and our freedom”⁶⁸⁵. Georgia’s independence is a result of the end of the Cold War, which is processed as the time when Georgians liberated themselves from the Soviet Union i.e. from alien identity management. The early 1990s is thus the time when the group was once again managed by Georgian identity managers, who share the Georgian group members’ identity and interests. In 2008, the Georgians were nevertheless once again mobilised in a struggle for their independence, as Russian identity managers tried to re-impose their control over the Georgians. As Margvelashvili stated in August 2018 during a visit to a cemetery honouring the victims of 2008: “Ten years ago we witnessed another wave of brutal attack. Today, when we think about the past, we see that we are getting closer to the victory and unification of our country, because our morality and faith have not been broken and the number of Georgia’s supporters is increased”⁶⁸⁶. When constructing their self-schema, Georgian identity managers apply a fundamental attribution error, as they argue that Georgians are continuously responding to conflicts that out-groups (particularly Russia) have imposed upon them. Adding to this attribution error is a group attribution error

⁶⁸³ GFM-57 (5)

⁶⁸⁴ GP-66 (5)

⁶⁸⁵ GP-34 (5)

⁶⁸⁶ GP-67 (5)

as the Georgia group is reified as an entity, which shares the same understanding of self, situation, and other. The mobilisation of Georgians in the fight against Russia is hence not something Georgian identity managers have instigated. It is behaviour rooted in a collective memory network, as Georgians' shared experiences of past invasions and relations with Russia has united them around a goal of defying this common enemy. Georgian identity managers thus reify the Georgia group as one which consists of a perfect symbiosis between leaders and members, and a group that behaves collectively and consistently from the same self-understanding.

Adding to this group reification, is the construction of social dispositions. When processing the conflict and how Georgians respond to this situation, Georgian identity managers reify the group as one which is stoic and resilient, as Georgians have consistently fought for their collective existence and their group's independence. As Margvelashvili stated in August 2018 in an address titled "We Are Partially Occupied Country, but Victory Is Inevitable Because Georgian Society Will Never Accept Occupation": "The will of the Georgian people to determine own fate and future has not been changed either. Georgian people maintained this fate for centuries and it will continue in the future"⁶⁸⁷. Georgian identity managers and group members are united in the same struggle and they have been so with the same tenacity for decades. Georgians are thus agents who follow a consistent behavioural pattern, which they should continue to abide to in order to ensure victory and their group identity's continued existence. As Margvelashvili stated in a New Year address to the nation in January 2016: "And the freedom means that we should be just the way we are. Be as talented as we are, and as unique as we are"⁶⁸⁸. The other disposition that defines the Georgia group is that it is guided by the truth about who it is and what is happening in the conflict. This truth is something Russian identity managers are trying to distort, as they try to impose a false conflict narrative and make Georgians believe that there is a new social reality, which they should think and act in accordance with. As Georgia's Foreign Minister, David Zalkaliani, stated in June 2018 to a comment made by the press-speaker of the Russian Foreign Minister: "We try to dispel the narrative being imposed on us that there is allegedly some new reality in Georgia. But there is no new reality whatsoever in Georgia. The reality is that Georgian territories are occupied and need to be de-occupied"⁶⁸⁹.

This new reality pertains to the acknowledgment of South Ossetia, which Russian identity managers are demanding that the Georgians accept and hereof adopt their social cognitive processing in accordance with. Doing so, however, implies adopting Russia's social cognitive framework and the understanding that Georgians attacked the South Ossetians, which generated the need to declare this group independent. This understanding does not correlate with Georgia's self-understanding and so Georgian

⁶⁸⁷ GP-66 (5)

⁶⁸⁸ GP-26 (5)

⁶⁸⁹ GFM-53 (5)

identity managers dismiss this account. Rather, the conflict continues to be processed as a Russia-Georgia intergroup conflict where Russian identity managers and group members have attacked Georgians. As the Foreign Ministry responded in June 2015 to a report published by Russia's Foreign Ministry on Russia's policy accomplishments in 2014: "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation continues to impose on us its own reality resulting from its large-scale military aggression against Georgia in 2008 and still persists in referring to Georgia's integral territories – Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region as "independent republics""⁶⁹⁰. Unlike the Russian identity managers, Georgian identity managers speak the truth about self and other, and so when Georgia's group members think and act in accordance with their identity managers' conflict narrative, they react in accordance with reality. As in Ukraine, there is therefore also in Georgia a conflict over whose 'truth' is correct and who gets to define the social reality from which the remaining conflict parties should think and act. As Margvelashvili stated in an address to Georgian journalists in August 2018: "It is your contribution that the world has heard about the August War and the Russian aggression against Georgia. Georgian journalists, sacrificing own lives and health have managed to broadcast the truth in parallel to cyber-attacks"⁶⁹¹.

Despite the expressed Georgian unity, there is in Georgia's conflict narrative a division between Georgian group managers and members, as the managers are those who guide the members and ensure that their thoughts and actions are in line with the group identity that defines and unites them. When reifying the Georgia group, the identity managers apply a group attribution error in order to link leaders and group members, as the attitude of the leaders is said to reflect the general attitudes of the members. This constructs a group which is seemingly unified and a group where group managers and members act in accordance with the same positive dispositions. As seen in the Ukraine conflict, there is thus also in the Georgia conflict a disagreement over which group is united, and which group is experiencing internal turmoil. In Georgia's self-schema, the Georgia group is processed as unified and consistent in not merely its behaviour towards the out-group, but also towards the resolution of the conflict. Georgian identity managers point to how they are peaceful and rational agents who, alongside their group members, seek to ensure a proper outcome to the conflict. This is a peaceful trait which is not shared with the Russian identity managers, as these agents continue to dismiss resolution efforts and pursue hostile intentions. As the Foreign Ministry expressed it in commemoration of the 2008 events in August 2018: "In response to the constant provocative steps, Georgia stays committed to its peaceful conflict resolution agenda[...]Georgia has many times unilaterally reaffirmed and implemented the non-use of force commitment, still awaiting

⁶⁹⁰ GFM-5 (5)

⁶⁹¹ GP-66 (5)

the reciprocity from Russian side”⁶⁹². Like Ukrainian identity managers, so too do the Georgian identity managers point to how their group is different and unique vis-à-vis the Russia group.

6.2.2.2 Georgia’s Motivation for Behaviour

The Georgia group is not driven by merely common identification and shared memories, but also by collective interests, which unite group members and managers and motivate their behaviour in the conflict. Whereas one Georgian interests is modernisation (as this will benefit both Georgians and South Ossetians and provide a foundation for Ossetian re-integration) another interest that shapes Georgian behaviour in the conflict, is to ensure that the Georgia group will continue to have full control over its identity and interests. As Margvelashvili stated in February 2014 in a speech to the Georgian parliament: “We are building a peaceful and democratic country, which aims at building kind neighborly relations only based on the protection of our sovereignty and territorial integrity – only by respect to these values”⁶⁹³. Georgian identity managers point to the same interests as many of the other conflict parties in Georgia and Ukraine. This is to exist on their own terms and to ensure that Georgians will continue to inhabit and manage Georgians territory and the group itself. To ensure this, there is a need to manifest Georgia’s independence, which will only ensue once relations with Russia have changed. As Margvelashvili stated in July 2018 during a meeting with media representatives: “This fight is going on for ten years to break Georgia’s morale. What Russia aims is simple: they attempt to make us believe that Georgia does not have any other choice than Russia and the Russian Federation is the only guarantor of security in the region. This is a lie! The lie that is shaken by the resilience of the Georgian people”⁶⁹⁴. There is thus a need to change the intergroup relations that currently shape and define the conflict. Because, following 2008, the Georgians have come to realise that Georgia-Russia relations have been shaped around a lie and a hierarchy, as Russian identity managers have convinced Georgians that their security is only guaranteed if they are managed by Russians. Since Georgians now know the truth about self and Russia, Georgians can resist this lie. Whereas South Ossetians need to change their understanding of Russia, Georgians have discovered the truth about the Russia group and particularly its identity managers. It is then by acting in accordance with this truth that the conflict will end and the Georgia group will once again be freed from the grasp of a hostile out-group.

⁶⁹² GFM-56 (5)

⁶⁹³ GP-19 (5)

⁶⁹⁴ GP-66 (5)

6.2.3 Other-Schema

6.2.3.1 *The Russia Group*

Apart from reifying their in-group, the Georgian identity managers reify the Russia out-group as they construct a clear understanding of who Russia is, where it comes from, and what it wants. What is interesting in this construction, is that whereas the Ukrainian identity managers construct Russia as a group identity that is epitomised through its leadership, Georgian identity managers point to how Russia as a group has behaved in a consistent manner for decades. Russia is hence not merely the hologram of Putin, but the outcome of consecutive Russian identity managers who have constructed a wholly negative group around them. In their narrative, the Georgian identity managers thus also apply a leadership bias, but they focus on how consecutive leaders have constructed the Russian group. This then still indicates a cognitive tendency to process the other and its behaviour as the outcome of individuals. Also, unlike Ukrainian identity managers who argue that the Russia group is the successor of the Soviet Union, Georgian identity managers categorise Russia as an independent group, which has a long history of suppressing others. As stated on the homepage of the Georgian Embassy in the United States in July 2018:

In 1891, Georgia was annexed completely by the Russian Empire. The Russians ignored Georgian habits and traditions and sought to eradicate Georgian culture and the Georgian language. Most frescos in Georgian cathedrals were white-washed; Russia abolished both the status of the Patriarch of Georgia and the autocephaly of the Georgian Church. Georgia gained short-lived independence from czarist Russia in 1917 as Russia descended into revolutionary chaos⁶⁹⁵

Georgia's other-schema deviates from Ukraine's, as Georgian identity managers point to a longer social existence of the Russia group, and a longer history of the behavioural patterns witnessed from this group today. Russia's current behaviour and ambitions as seen in the conflict is nothing new. It is behaviour, which was temporarily subdued during the Soviet Union but resumed once this collapsed. As stated by H.E. Tamar Beruchashvili, Georgia's Foreign Minister, in a lecture given to Argentinian students in June 2015: "Unfortunately, Russia has been practicing expansionist policies towards Georgia for more than two decades. We are under this aggression since early 1990's[...]Russian actions of fomenting and fueling separatism, beginning already during the final days of the Soviet Union, did cost us a great ordeal in Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Georgia"⁶⁹⁶. Russia is a group that has consistently pursued the same collective interests through the same behavioural tendencies for years.

Although Russia is reified as a group with a decades-old behavioural pattern, it is also a group which has adopted many of the Soviet practices, and Russian identity managers are in the process of reinstating the Russian empire/Soviet Union. As Saakashvili stated in March 2012, Russia is: "trying to

⁶⁹⁵ GFM-57 (5)

⁶⁹⁶ GFM-7 (5)

create or restore a Soviet empire[...]They are mentally taking their country back to the past”⁶⁹⁷. To reify the Russia group, Georgian identity managers process it as a group which has merged with the Soviet Union. Stated differently, the Russian group identity merged with the Soviet Union making these two categories two sides of the same coin. Despite the attempt to categorise Russia and the Soviet Union as the same, there is nevertheless in Georgia’s other-schema a slight inconsistency in how the identity managers distinguish between Russia and the Soviet Union. This includes the extent to which Russia and the Soviet Union represent the same group managers and members, or whether Russia’s identity managers seek to reinstate a certain level of control that their group enjoyed during the Soviet Union. Whereas Ukrainian identity managers process the Soviet Union and Russia as the same group and agents, Georgian identity managers create a slightly more confused understanding of these two. What is noteworthy is nevertheless that the Soviet Union does not feature in Georgia’s conflict narrative to the same extent as it features in Ukraine’s. Rather, in Georgia’s conflict narrative focus is primarily on Russia as a group that has behaved in a consistent manner since the 1700s.

The understanding that Russia is a repressive group is not merely used to define who Russia is but also used for making sense of Russian behaviour in the conflict. Like the Ukrainian identity managers, Georgian identity managers process how other seemingly similar out-groups have acted in the past, which is used as an indication of what Russia will do, and an inference of what Russia has done in the conflict. This is amongst other visible in the quote by Saakashvili in 2008, where he stated that the Russian acknowledgement of South Ossetia was: “the first attempt in Europe after Nazi Germany and the Stalinist Soviet Union to[...]change the borders of Europe by force”⁶⁹⁸ and Saakashvili’s comparison of Russia’s behaviour to the Soviet Union’s invasion of Finland in 1939⁶⁹⁹. Russia is thus reified as a group which replicates much of the oppression witnessed from other dictatorships as well as the oppression witnessed during the Soviet Union. As the Foreign Ministry stated in August 2011 following accusations from Russia that Georgia was preparing “a large-scale provocation” in South Ossetia: “Such Soviet-style propaganda aims at creating artificial tensions on the ground, and in doing so to prepare for possible future provocations[...]We will all keep a watchful eye on possible developments, as we can never be sure what aggressive intentions Russia may be hiding behind such statements”⁷⁰⁰. Russia is compared to former groups where identity managers also have mobilised members around distorted understandings of self and other, and it is from this processing that Georgian identity managers define Russia as a group that will most likely continue to engage in hostile activities against others. Georgian identity managers process Russian identity managers as agents who are seeking to regain power over other groups and dictate their identity

⁶⁹⁷ Civil-107 (4)

⁶⁹⁸ BBC-7 (4)

⁶⁹⁹ Telegraph-2 (4)

⁷⁰⁰ Civil-89 (4)

and behaviour in accordance with the managers' personal interests. Georgian identity managers hence also apply a leadership attribution error when reifying the Russia group, as it is argued that the Russia group is shaped around the leaderships' personality and personal interests. What defines the Russian out-group is therefore a distorted manager-member relation. As Saakashvili stated in 2010, Russia is a "feudal country"⁷⁰¹ and as Margvelashvili also stated in March 2014 in a speech at Chatham House:

What happened in 2008 in Georgia was the punishment for independent choice; what happened in 2014 in Ukraine is the punishment for independent choice. Both of those cases are concrete cases of a global theory, of a global approach to newly created independent and democratic states. We were discussing during the interview that the politicians from the Russian Federation have very specifically defined what they want, how they view future of what they call areas of special interest⁷⁰².

To reach their personal interests, Russian identity managers continuously incite hostilities, and they violate laws and norms meant to guide intergroup relations. As the Foreign Ministry stated in August 2018 on the 10-year anniversary of the events in 2008: "Russia blatantly violated the fundamental norms and principles of international law and created a dangerous precedence of attacking the rules-based international order. Russia's actions in 2008 served the ambition to redraw the borders in Europe by force and undermine the entire European security architecture"⁷⁰³. Russian identity managers are thus agents who behave with full intent and control, and so the violation of laws, agreements, and norms is a tendency which is typical for these identity managers.

Although Georgian identity managers have discovered this truth about Russia and its leadership, Russian identity managers are trying to present their decisions and their group members' behaviour as legal situational responses. As Saakashvili stated in April 2009 to the border cooperation signed between Russia and South Ossetia: "you cannot legalize something that is fundamentally illegal. It is very dangerous to everybody, including Russia itself,"⁷⁰⁴. Georgian identity managers process Russian identity managers as rogue agents who are not merely bent on distorting the truth to regain power over others, but blatantly violates agreements to reach these desired outcomes. Since Russian identity managers are hostile and selfish agents, they do not have the political will to solve the conflict. As the Foreign Ministry stated in March 2017 in a response to the South Ossetia/Russia agreement on the inclusion of South Ossetian troops into the Russian military forces: "The Russian Federation is seriously harming the Geneva International Discussions and is intentionally obstructing any potential progress in the peace process"⁷⁰⁵. This understanding is also extended to the South Ossetia group. Because whereas the South

⁷⁰¹ Civil-58 (4)

⁷⁰² GP-20 (5)

⁷⁰³ GFM-56 (5)

⁷⁰⁴ Civil-24 (4)

⁷⁰⁵ GFM-28 (5)

Ossetian identity managers are categorised as the “Russian occupation regime”⁷⁰⁶, South Ossetians are brainwashed yes-men who have come to believe and act in accordance with Russia’s false narrative about the conflict and Georgia. As Georgian Agriculture Minister, Davit Shervashidze, stated in June 2004 in connection to a failed Georgian aid delivery to South Ossetia: “The majority of local residents are avoiding contact with our mission[...]They seem to have been brainwashed to such an extent that they are rejecting any assistance. In fact, they are being terrorized”⁷⁰⁷. South Ossetians’ lack of will to engage with Georgians is because they have been manipulated into believing the falsities Russian identity managers construct about the situation and agents involved. Russian management will thus not merely lead to suppression, but to distorted consciousness amongst those who succumb to it.

As Georgian identity managers construct their other-schema as factual, this leads them to advocate for others to adopt this schema, as it is only by doing so that the conflict will end. As Margvelashvili stated in July 2018: “We should not be afraid of words[...]This is a war against Georgia; this is aggression[...]As long as we do not say these words with full courage, we create more risks to ourselves and the environment in which we exist”⁷⁰⁸. Like the Ukrainian identity managers, Georgian identity managers argue that the conflicts in Georgia and Ukraine could have been avoided, had the international community merely responded to the truth Georgian identity managers proclaimed about Russia. As Margvelashvili stated in an interview with Radio Liberty in October 2016: “Unfortunately, the West failed to comprehend the absurdity and tragedy of what happened in 2008. As a result, in 2014 we got the “Ukrainian Front”; and Russia, having the “experience of 2008”, was much more organized and rapid, because the Russian leadership considered the aggressive style of action acceptable”⁷⁰⁹. Russian behaviour in Ukraine is thus processed as a validation of Georgia’s other-schema and so in Georgia’s processing is also an argument that Russian identity managers are driven by clear-cut dispositions, interests, and behaviour. It is only once others understand this that future conflicts will be prevented and the conflicts in Ukraine and Georgia will end. This then also once again indicates a tendency amongst the conflict parties to resort to a form of alien identity management where they seek to present a clear-cut understanding of who the other is and advocate for others to adopt this understanding in order to end the conflict.

6.2.3.2 Russia’s Motivation for Behaviour

From the processing of who Russia is, comes the understanding that Russian identity managers are driven by clear-cut and negative interests. This includes controlling other groups and so Russian identity managers

⁷⁰⁶ GFM-3 (5)

⁷⁰⁷ Refworld-3 (4)

⁷⁰⁸ GP-65 (5)

⁷⁰⁹ GP-33 (5)

are driven by power, which is ensured by expanding their identity management. To expand Russian identity management, there is a need to take control over territory that belongs to other group identities. As Margvelashvili stated in July 2017 in a speech at Chatham House: “This is clearly and vividly elaborated foreign policy and message from Russia - Russia’s neighboring countries are in the interest zone of Russian federation and everything that occurs on those territories is considered by Russian politicians as sphere, where they can make decisions through any form, including military intervention”⁷¹⁰. Russian identity managers are seeking to create “areas of special interest”⁷¹¹, which implies the enforced Russian identity management of other groups in order to align these groups’ identity and interests with Russian interests. Russian identity managers’ ambition of managing other groups will, however, only result in destruction and the suffering of those agents who give in to, or are forced to be managed by, Russian managers. As Margvelashvili put it in 2017, there is a need to prevent Russia from reaching its goals and establishing its: “spheres of privileged interests, which leads only to destabilization, human tragedy and parting of peoples”⁷¹². As the Ukrainian identity managers, Georgian identity managers process Russian identity management as something that will result in spheres of suffering due to Russian identity managers’ negative dispositions and interests. This is visible in e.g. the South Ossetian territory where Russian management of the South Ossetian group identity has created a lawless area, where agents are suppressed and deprived of their basic human rights. As Grigol Vashadze, Georgia’s Foreign Minister, stated about South Ossetia in February 2009: [South Ossetia is] “a territory where no law exists, no human rights exists and where there is no respect for international agreements”⁷¹³. Georgian identity managers hence also point to how group identities and interests may be distorted if these come under the management of alien identity managers.

Since Russian identity managers have an interest in managing other identities, they deploy various means to destroy the good relations that exist between Georgian identity managers and group members. One of these is to sow discontent amongst Georgians by misleading them into believing the lies Russian identity managers spread about the Georgian group identity. As noted in a press release published on the homepage of Margvelashvili in December 2017: “Russian soft power and propaganda try to build unacceptance of differences in Georgia, which should be confronted by strong identity[...]Russia tries to break Georgia’s moral and resilience, tries to get Georgians used to the fact that they are occupying the territories, tries to drag the Georgian party to negotiations. Georgia will never accept this historic injustice”⁷¹⁴. To gain control over other identities, Russian identity managers use a range of tactics including the annexation of territory, military pressure, ethnic cleansing, and propaganda. These tactics are directed

⁷¹⁰ GP-25 (5)

⁷¹¹ GP-20 (5)

⁷¹² Civil-124 (4)

⁷¹³ New York Times-18 (4)

⁷¹⁴ GP-50 (5)

towards changing relations between in-group managers and members and destroy the control these groups have over their identity, territory, and interests. In Georgia's conflict narrative is hence also a referral to the ideational nature of identities, and how there is a need for group members to fight for, and believe in, certain ideas for their group identity to exist. As in Ukraine, the Georgia conflict is also to some extent an ideational conflict as Russian identity managers are seeking to change self/other understandings. This tactic is, however, countered by Georgian identity managers who express the truth about who Russia is and what this group wants.

6.2.4 Georgia's Social Cognitive Framework

In the previous sections I have in this chapter analysed how the Georgia identity managers process stimuli and how they combine nodes into schemas, which come to make up their social cognitive frameworks. This has been done to get an insight into the processing tendencies the Georgian identity managers resort to. These findings will in section 6.5 be compared to the tendencies of the other conflict parties. The reason for comparing these tendencies is to explore the intergroup dynamics that exist between the conflict parties and to explore the role their social cognitive processes may play in shaping conflict protraction.

In Georgia's conflict narrative, the identity managers construct specific situation, self, and other-schemas, which make up Georgia's social cognitive framework. The central aspect of this framework is that the conflict is an intergroup conflict between Georgia and Russia, and one Russian identity managers have unilaterally imposed upon Georgians. Georgian identity managers hence apply an intergroup prism to distinguish between agents and make sense of who is fighting who and why. Here 'Russia' and 'Georgia' are distinct identities, which are reified as groups that have come into conflict because these groups are driven by different interests and dispositions. What is interesting in Georgia's framework, is that unlike the Ukrainian identity managers who point to how Russian identity managers are seeking to suppress or physically eradicate agents that do not identify as Russian, Georgian identity managers mainly process Russia from an alien identity management perspective. What this means is that Russian identity managers are processed as agents who seek to take control over the management of other group identities, as this ensures that these out-groups' interests are aligned with Russia's. Rather than eradicating group identities per se, Russian identity managers are bent on controlling them. This is the understanding used to make sense of why Georgia and Russia are in conflict (because Russian identity managers oppose Georgians' re-established independence in the early 1990s) and why South Ossetian identity managers are opposed to Georgian conflict resolution efforts (because the South Ossetian group is managed by Russians). In Georgia's framework, groups can hence be taken over by alien identity managers, as Georgians are defying Russian identity managers' attempts to manage the Georgian group identity. This is an outcome Georgians are opposed to as they share a common memory network of past alien management, and an understanding

that only Georgian management will ensure Georgians collective interests and well-being. This is an understanding that Georgian identity managers reach by processing the past Georgia-Russia/Soviet relations, and the current Russia-South Ossetia relations, where Russian management of the South Ossetian group has led to lawlessness and human rights abuses. In Georgia's framework is thus also a construction of "true" and "false" identity managers and the implied argument that identity management needs to follow a certain ideational structure for group identities, and the agents that make up these groups, to exist and thrive. What is, however, not elaborated is who gets to establish who is a true representative of an identity, and how one may tell the difference between these agents.

Despite Georgian identity managers' attempt to present clear-cut differences between the agents fighting in the conflict, they have had difficulties making sense of who the non-state actors are and how they are different or similar to Russians. This difficulty may be linked to the development in Georgia's situation- and other-schema, as it may be argued that the increased cooperation between Russia and South Ossetia prior to 2008 led to a social cognitive confusion of how to link the South Ossetia node with the Russia node. Prior to 2008, Georgian identity managers granted equal cognitive attention to South Ossetia and Russia as both social categories featured in the understanding of what was happening. With the 2008 events, which functioned as new stimuli that needed processing, the Georgian situation- and other-schema were changed and somewhat simplified into a pure focus on Russia. This simplification challenged the understanding of who South Ossetia was as this group continued to express demands. Georgian identity managers eventually arrived at an understanding that the South Ossetian group was a mismanaged group identity as it does consist of real Ossetians, but it is managed by Russians. By relying on such a categorisation, it becomes possible for Georgian identity managers to cognitively systematise the conflict. What this systematization, however, results in is a dismissal of the previous clashes and events in the 1990s and 2000s. It also dismisses the previous Georgian understanding that the conflict is between Georgia and South Ossetia over the extent to which the South Ossetians should be managed by Georgians. As also seen in Ukraine's conflict narrative, Georgian identity managers are trying to manage their own as well as the identities of others and so, like the others, Georgian identity managers argue that others need to adopt their social cognitive processing for the conflict to end. The problem with this is that Georgia's framework consists of a highly negative reification of the Russia group and it reifies South Ossetia as a Russian puppet, which are constructs these two conflict parties reject.

6.3. Russia's Social Cognitive Framework

The following section will explore how the Russian identity managers reach understandings about the situation, self, and other, and the social cognitive framework that forms from this.

6.3.1 Situation-Schema

6.3.1.1 Conflict Cause

In Russia's conflict narrative, the situation is processed as an intergroup conflict between South Ossetia and Georgia, with the main point of contestation being the extent to which Georgians and South Ossetians can co-exist in the same territory. To make sense of the Georgia conflict, the Russian identity managers cognitively systematize agents around a Georgian and South Ossetian group identity, as they argue that the conflict has occurred and sustained as a result of the Georgian identity managers' hostile intentions towards the South Ossetians. When processing the onset of the conflict, the Russian identity managers point to the early 1990s, as they argue that the collapse of the Soviet Union caused Georgian identity managers to become more hostile in their pursuit of creating an exclusive space for the Georgians. As Russia's Foreign Ministry stated in August 2008 when it pointed to how the conflict drew roots to the "chauvinistic policy pursued by Tbilisi": "That policy is based on the slogan "Georgia for Georgians" advanced in 1989 by Zviad Gamsakhurdia who tried to implement it in 1992 by abolishing the autonomies in the Georgian territory and ordering Georgian troops to take[...]Tskhinval with a view to enforcing unlawful practices. It was as early as then, that South Ossetia was subjected to genocide"⁷¹⁵. The conflict is more specifically the outcome of Georgian identity managers' decision to consolidate and expand the reach of the Georgian group identity onto perceived Georgian territory. As Lavrov stated in an interview with Russian media in February 2010: "It is true that Zviad Gamsakhurdia in one of his first political statements demanded that all the peoples be deprived of any autonomy. Then the titular nation, he declared, must run the show in Georgia. The Ossetians he proposed to deport to North Ossetia altogether"⁷¹⁶. In Russia's situation-schema, the conflict occurred in the 1990s and it occurred as a result of Georgian intent. To make sense of the conflict, the Russian identity managers hence apply a fundamental attribution error, as the conflict is not an outcome of situational causality but an outcome of personal causality. They also apply a leadership attribution error, as they point to how the conflict is an outcome of the Georgian identity managers personal ambitions.

Whereas the onset of the conflict is attributed to the early Georgian identity managers, the conflict's protraction is extended to all Georgian identity managers. Because, according to the Russian identity managers, the early Georgian hostility towards the South Ossetians has since been passed on to succeeding Georgian identity managers. To make sense of who sustains the conflict, the identity managers apply a group attribution error, as it is argued that the attitude of the early Georgian identity managers has come to reflect the general attitude of the Georgian leadership. All Georgian identity managers thus follow

⁷¹⁵ RFM-45 (5)

⁷¹⁶ RFM-68 (5)

a consistent behavioural pattern. As Lavrov expressed it in a joint press conference with South Ossetia's President in April 2011: "Mr. Gamsakhurdia pursued a policy of ethnic cleansing, and in the person of Mr. Saakashvili, found a worthy successor"⁷¹⁷ and as Russia's Foreign Ministry's spokesperson, Andrei Nesterenko, stated in September 2010: "the approaches of the Tbilisi rulers haven't changed in the slightest compared with the period of the 1990's and 2000's, when Georgia imposed a suffocating blockade on the population of these republics"⁷¹⁸. The negative group relations that exist between Georgia and South Ossetia have hence been consistent, and they have been so because current Georgian identity managers continue to rely on the same other-understanding that the early Georgian leadership constructed around South Ossetia. The conflict was and is therefore caused and sustained because Georgian identity managers continue to think and act in accordance with a distorted understanding of the situation and agents involved.

It is from this construction of the Georgian leadership that one should understand the 2008 events. As the Foreign Ministry stated in November 2010 in a response to a speech given by Saakashvili at the European Parliament:

Saakashvili is still trying to convince the international community that there is a conflict between Russia and Georgia, while at issue is actually the long-running conflict between Tbilisi and the peoples of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which as a result of yet another military gamble by Georgia in August 2008 was resolved with the final national self-determination of these peoples⁷¹⁹.

In Russia's situation-schema, 2008 is processed as a conflict escalation and a continuation of the Georgian identity managers' behavioural pattern. 2008 was hence not a time when Russian identity managers took advantage of an opportune moment to seize Georgian territory. Rather, this was another Georgian attempt to exterminate the South Ossetians. As it was expressed by the Foreign Ministry in August 2008: "the Georgian leadership, illegally invaded and attempted to seize South Ossetian territory on August 8, 2008[...] This act constitutes genocide against the South Ossetian people"⁷²⁰. Russian intervention in 2008 was a situational response, which occurred because Russian identity managers observed Georgian behaviour, and from this observation re-assessed their understanding of the situation and the role that Russia should play in this regard. The events in 2008 should, however, also be compared to what occurred in the 1990s and early 2000s. As the Foreign Ministry stated in August 2008: "In May 2004, special forces and troops of the Internal Ministry of Georgia were deployed in the zone of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, and in August that year Georgian troops shelled Tskhinvali and tried to take it"⁷²¹. In Russia's situation-schema,

⁷¹⁷ RFM-78 (5)

⁷¹⁸ RFM-72 (5)

⁷¹⁹ RFM-74 (5)

⁷²⁰ RP-3 (5)

⁷²¹ RFM-45 (5)

the conflict is hence processed as one where violence has ebbed and flowed because Georgian identity managers have continuously sought to fulfil the hostile intentions their predecessors failed to achieve.

6.3.1.2 The Agents Involved

6.3.1.2.1 South Ossetians

The Russian identity managers have a clear-cut understanding of who is involved in the Georgia conflict as they construct the conflict as one between two distinct groups. Unlike in the Ukraine conflict where they had difficulties categorising the non-state actors, the Russian identity managers have no complications socially categorising the non-state actors in the Georgia conflict, as they are understood as agents who represent and belong to their own group identity. According to the Russian identity managers, the South Ossetia group has always existed within the South Ossetian territory and so it is a group that has a place of physical origin, and a history of managing its identity and interests within this space. This has over the years led South Ossetian identity managers to pursue relations with other groups, such as Russia. Relations between South Ossetia and Russia, as seen in the current Georgia conflict, are thus nothing new, as South Ossetian identity managers already sought to establish such relations in the 1700s. This fact has, however, been distorted as Georgian identity managers are constructing such relations as an early example of Russian occupation. As Lavrov stated in an interview with Russian media in April 2013:

It is a fact that the Ossetians sent their first embassy to St Petersburg[...]before the Treaty of Georgievsk. We all know how they were slighted in Soviet times[...]However, the Treaty of Georgievsk was the result of the Georgians' request for protection from the Russian throne. Mikheil Saakashvili in one of his emotional speeches called this event in the history of our relations the first occupation of Georgia by Russia. To knock such things into heads of youths who do not remember the period of good relations is his crime to his own people⁷²².

The Georgian narrative that Russia-South Ossetia relations implies that Russian identity managers are controlling the South Ossetian group, is thus refuted. The two groups are instead understood as groups that have a long tradition of interacting and cooperating on a socially equal footing. South Ossetia-Russia relations therefore represent relations between two independent groups who each have full control over who they are and what they want.

Compared to this understanding, is the Russian argument that there has been a continued hostile relationship between Georgians and South Ossetians. These negative relations already existed during the Soviet Union where Georgians “slighted”⁷²³ the South Ossetians. These relations escalated into a conflict in the 1990s and in 2008 the South Ossetians finally decided to reclaim full control over their group

⁷²² RFM-90 (5)

⁷²³ Ibid

identity in order to ensure their social and physical survival. As the Foreign Ministry stated in August 2008: “By the aggressive attack against South Ossetia on the night of 8 August 2008[...]Mikhail Saakashvili has himself put paid to the territorial integrity of Georgia. Using repeatedly brutal military force against the peoples, whom, according to his words, he would like to see within his State, Mikhail Saakashvili left them no other choice but to ensure their security and the right to exist through self-determination as independent States”⁷²⁴. The Georgian claim that South Ossetians and Georgians can co-exist peacefully is hence wishful thinking, as Georgian identity managers’ decisions to attack the South Ossetians in 2008 cemented the need to separate the two groups. The South Ossetian decision to separate from Georgia is processed as a natural outcome of Georgian-South Ossetia relations, as South Ossetians and Georgians are understood as different agents who each seek different outcomes. As Russia’s Foreign Ministry Spokesperson, Maria Zakharova, stated in April 2018 regarding Georgia’s policy towards South Ossetia and Abkhazia: “The residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia do not consider themselves and do not want to become citizens of Georgia, even in exchange for generous promises[...]Recognition of this crucially important aspect gives us hope that over time, Tbilisi will fully recognize and accept the [new] political reality, that Georgia’s neighbors are[...]independent”⁷²⁵. To make sense of the South Ossetians’ wish for self-determination and the subsequent Russian acknowledgement of this, the Russian identity managers rely on situational causality as they argue that these events were outcomes of the Georgian identity managers’ behaviour. The Russian support for the separation between Georgians and South Ossetians, however, also derives from an understanding that the Georgians and South Ossetians are inherently different people. The Russian identity managers hence also draw in their cognitive systematisation of the conflict when processing stimuli, as they argue that the conflict lies in not merely clashing interests, but in clashing groups that do not share the same identity nor dispositions. As Nesterenko stated in September 2010 in response to media questions about the Georgian prosecution of foreigners who have visited Abkhazia and South Ossetia: “The Georgian authorities’ pathological hatred of the Abkhaz and Ossetians is so great that it gets projected, as we see, onto third country nationals as well, up to and including the application of lawless repression to them”⁷²⁶. In their situation-schema, Russian identity managers thus present a clear-cut understanding of who is involved in the conflict, and the intergroup relations that led to the situation.

6.3.1.2.2 Western States

Although the conflict is an outcome of Georgian identity managers’ hostile intentions towards the South Ossetians, the Russian identity managers refer to the presence of other parties that equally have an influence

⁷²⁴ RFM-45 (5)

⁷²⁵ Civil-136 (4)

⁷²⁶ RFM-72 (5)

on the Georgians' behaviour. In Russia's situation-schema, the presence of the US and the prospect of Georgian NATO membership are stimuli that have caused Georgian identity managers to think that they can continue to pursue their hostile interests towards the South Ossetians. As Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister, Grigory Karasin stated, stated in December 2017: "We are carefully observing the process of [Georgia's militarization by western nations] and are adjusting the security assistance to Abkhazia and South Ossetia accordingly[...]the Western allies [have] completely forgotten what Georgia's militarization had once brought about"⁷²⁷. Cooperation between Georgia and Western states, and particularly American military assistance, is stimulus that Georgian identity managers interpret as validation of their behaviour. This Russian understanding of the conflict is particularly rooted in the processing of the 2008 events, which the Russian identity managers process as a time of conflict escalation that the American identity managers supported. As Medvedev stated in August 2011 when he presented his interpretation of the lead-up to the 2008 events: "The moment of truth for me, as I realised later while analysing those events in hindsight, came with the visit by secretary of state Condoleezza Rice[...]Following that visit, my Georgian colleague simply dropped all communication with us[...]It was apparent that he had new plans"⁷²⁸. In 2008, Western states functioned as cognitive supporters of Georgian behaviour, as they supported the Georgian identity managers' social cognitive processing and thus validated these identity managers' negative ambitions.

Although Western states did not cause the conflict, they assisted in its escalation and in the construction of a situation where the South Ossetians were exposed to genocide and subsequently sought for independence. Western states also continue to exacerbate the conflict and prevent conflict resolution, as they continue to support the Georgian identity managers' understanding that it is a Georgia-Russia conflict, and that Georgians need military protection to deter this Russian threat. As stated by the Foreign Ministry in March 2018: "The Russian, Abkhazian and South Ossetian delegations expressed their concerns regarding Georgia's military cooperation with NATO. They pointed out that there are no guarantees that Georgia, which is being equipped with Western weapons, will not resume its militarist policy regarding its neighbours"⁷²⁹. Hence, although the conflict is between Georgia and South Ossetia, the increased cooperation between Georgian identity managers and Western states is processed as a tendency where Georgia's social cognitive framework is validated by others. This encourages Georgian identity managers' and assists in sustaining the conflict. In Russia's situation-schema is thus also a referral to how the conflict is a conflict over whose social cognitive processing should direct thoughts and actions. This then also indicates a tendency amongst the Russian identity managers to process the conflict as an outcome of

⁷²⁷ Civil-129 (4)

⁷²⁸ Independent-3 (4)

⁷²⁹ RFM-122 (5)

cognitive support as it is argued that the conflict to a great extent occurred and sustains because Western states support the Georgian narrative.

6.3.1.3 The Solution

Since the primary cause of the conflict is negative relations between Georgians and South Ossetians, the solution is to build trust between these two groups. To ensure this, South Ossetians should be included on a socially equal footing in the negotiation process, and the concerns and interests the South Ossetian identity managers express on behalf of their in-group members, should be heard and respected. As Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister, Alexander Grushko, stated in an interview with a Russian newspaper in August 2008: "We have always said that the questions of status can be tackled only by the parties in conflict without the use of force or outside pressure. But you have to move from the simple to the complex[...] You have to start with confidence-building measures[...] People in such territories should not feel isolated"⁷³⁰. Russian identity managers point to the same resolution efforts as they express in the Ukraine conflict, namely that the non-state actors need to be accepted as equal to the other actors present in the negotiation process. As the Foreign Ministry stated in a press release in March 2018: "Georgia should start thinking about ways to restore trust in relations with its neighbours, launch a direct dialogue with[...] South Ossetia based on mutual respect, stop encouraging other countries to deny visas to these republics' residents[...] and stop hindering the republics' cultural and humanitarian events abroad"⁷³¹. To build trust, Georgian identity managers should allow the social validation of the South Ossetian group identity and stop hiding the reality that such a group exists, and that it is the other conflict party in the conflict. Russian identity managers hence apply the same understanding that the existence of a group identity is not merely rooted in agents' possibility to invoke this identity through social practices, but also in others' acknowledgement of this identity's existence. The Georgian identity managers should also change their behavioural pattern and promise that they will end their policy of hostility. As was outlined by Russia's Foreign Ministry in response to the upcoming Geneva talks in May 2009: "It is necessary to sign legally binding agreements on non-use of force between Georgia and South Ossetia[...] It is necessary to create reliable security regimes on the borders of these states, envisaging full and consistent fulfillment of the provisions of the Medvedev-Sarkozy agreements by the Georgian side"⁷³². To solve the conflict, Georgian identity managers should create a new incentive for the South Ossetians to change their other-schema, which includes promising to end the negative behavioural pattern Georgian identity managers have pursued against the South Ossetians since the 1990s. What Russian identity managers are arguing is thus that Georgian identity managers should

⁷³⁰ RFM-42 (5)

⁷³¹ RFM-122 (5)

⁷³² Civil-25 (4)

adopt Russia's situation- and other-schema, and admit that the conflict is an intergroup conflict, which the Georgian identity managers are solely responsible for.

The solution to the conflict also lies in the physical separation of the two groups. As stated, Russian identity managers process Georgians continued hostility as stimuli that led South Ossetians towards a claim for independence. Given that Georgian identity managers have continuously denied these demands and continued their hostile behavioural pattern, there is no longer any possibility for the two groups to exist within the same territory. Rather, there is a need to create a relationship between the two groups, which will allow them to manage their existence without the interference of the other. This is particularly the case with the South Ossetia group which has yet to be granted full social validation, but nevertheless is required to gain so to ensure these agents' survival. The other solution is thus to follow in Russia's footsteps and acknowledge the South Ossetian group identity through statehood. As Medvedev stated in August 2008 in connection to Russia's recognition of South Ossetia: "I signed Decrees on the recognition by the Russian Federation of South Ossetia's and Abkhazia's independence. Russia calls on other states to follow its example. This is not an easy choice to make, but it represents the only possibility to save human lives"⁷³³. Since Russian identity managers process the separation of the two groups as a necessity for ending the conflict, they also argue that this decision is refutable. As the Russia's State Secretary, Grigory Karasin, expressed at the Session of the OSCE Permanent Council in June 2009:

Does anyone think again of refuting by force the right of South Ossetia to determine its future for itself? Equally futile are the attempts to start long-standing echeloned pressure on Russia to change its adopted decisions recognizing the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In this case we shall simply condemn ourselves to a protracted nonconstructive standoff⁷³⁴.

The other argument is hence that if the Russian decision to grant South Ossetians full control over their existence is not adopted by others, then the conflict will continue to be protracted as conflict parties and mediators will continue to disagree on the resolution efforts. This also entails the understanding that Russian identity managers are the only ones who have taken the initiative to end the conflict, and that the conflict (to some extent) has ended, as the two sides have been separated. For the conflict to be effectively terminated others need to follow in Russia's footsteps. The problem with this, however, is that the acknowledgement of South Ossetia was a Russian initiative. The adoption of this behaviour thus implies that one confirms Russian identity managers' social cognitive processing of the situation and agents involved.

⁷³³ New York Times-8 (4)

⁷³⁴ RFM-61 (5)

6.3.2 Self-Schema

6.3.2.1 *The Russia Group*

In Russia's self-schema, the identity managers use the Russian group identity to make sense of who they are and who they represent in the conflict. They are more specifically managers of a Russia group, which is used to distinguish them from other agents present in the conflict. As in Ukraine, the Russian identity managers mainly point to their own behaviour in the conflict, as the Russia group is constructed as a neutral party in the conflict. The only Russian group members involved in the conflict are those that were deployed to deter the situation in 2008, and the Russian peacekeepers who continue to patrol the area. The understanding of being a neutral party is generally a construct the Russian identity managers use when reifying the Russia group, as they construct Russians as the guarantors of security and peace between Georgians and South Ossetians, as well as other groups in the post-Soviet space. As Medvedev stated in August 2008: "Russia, as guarantor of security in the Caucasus and the region, will make the decision which unambiguously supports the will of these two Caucasus peoples"⁷³⁵. The Russian group identity is reified as a peaceful group that consists of identity managers who seek to ensure peaceful co-existence between others; and group members who act on behalf of this objective. This self-schema is reached by amongst other pointing to how Russian identity managers responded to the South Ossetians' precarious situation in 2008. As Medvedev put it in April 2009 in connection to the signing of bilateral agreements between Russia and South Ossetia:

While defending the borders of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, we are of course aspiring to achieve the most important goal, the same we have always had: to ensure long-awaited peace in the region. For a long time now people there have grown tired of living in constant fear and in anticipation of attacks, although we must of course say that after the decisions that Russia took the situation has radically changed⁷³⁶.

The Russian identity managers thus seek to associate themselves and the Russian group identity with the ending of suffering and the ensuring of stability and security.

When the Russian group identity is represented in a conflict, such as the one in Georgia, this should be processed as agents engaged in stabilisation. As Putin stated in November 2017 following a meeting with the South Ossetian President, Anatoly Bibilov: "We are aware of what was happening ten years ago, back in 2008[...]The situation has undoubtedly stabilized since then. Russia is doing a lot to ensure sustainable security"⁷³⁷. To this understanding is also the argument that the Russian identity managers have an overview of (and a correct understanding of) what needs to be done to end the conflicts

⁷³⁵ RTE-1 (4)

⁷³⁶ RP-8 (5)

⁷³⁷ Civil-127 (4)

in the post-Soviet space. As Medvedev stated about Russia in August 2008 during a meeting with veterans from the battle of Kursk: “We do not attack anyone. On the contrary, in a number of cases we are protecting the lives and dignity of people, our citizens and foreign citizens, through our presence as peacekeepers in different countries, including in states that emerged following the collapse of the Soviet Union”⁷³⁸. The Georgian argument that Russian identity managers are hostile and driven by the interest of re-gaining territory and power, is hence a falsity as Russian identity managers allow other groups to regain control over their identities and interests. As Putin stated in July 2010: “While some think that it [South Ossetia] is occupied, others think it is liberated”⁷³⁹. Russian identity managers are hence agents who seek to ensure that others can continue to express their social identification.

Although Russian identity managers have been present in the conflict since the early 1990s as conflict mediators, they point to how Russian group members were mobilised following reports that Georgian identity managers sought to eradicate the South Ossetians. As Lavrov stated during a press conference about the situation in South Ossetia in August 2008:

The situation there is worsening with each passing hour. The Georgian side, as you can see on TV screens, is using heavy weapons, heavy equipment and, as a matter of fact, has unleashed aggressive actions against the South Ossetian people. Massed fire is being conducted at residential quarters of Tskhinvali and other populated areas, including those outside the South Ossetian zone of conflict[...]There have appeared reports of ethnic cleansings in South Ossetian villages⁷⁴⁰

These reports of ongoing ethnic cleansing eventually caused Russian identity managers to mobilise their group members in an intervention to prevent further deterioration of the situation. The Russian decision to intervene was reached by processing the events that unfolded, and so Russian behaviour was shaped around an understanding of the threat that existed towards South Ossetians. Russian group members were, however, also mobilised to protect members of the Russian group identity who served as peacekeepers in the conflict. As the Foreign Ministry stated in August 2018 on the 10th anniversary of the 2008 events: “The participation of the Russian armed forces in repelling the attack on South Ossetia was legitimate[...]The Russian Federation used its armed forces in response to a large-scale Georgian attack on the Russian peacekeeping units that were deployed in South Ossetia legally and with Georgia’s permission”⁷⁴¹. The mobilisation of Russian group members was two-fold: it was driven by the need to alleviate a threatened out-group; and a need to protect Russian in-group members. In the Georgia conflict, the Russia group is hence granted a more active role (compared to the Ukraine conflict) as the Russian identity managers acknowledge that their, and their group members’, behaviour shaped parts of the situation. The Russian identity managers

⁷³⁸ RP-4 (5)

⁷³⁹ Civil-51 (4)

⁷⁴⁰ RFM-40 (5)

⁷⁴¹ RFM-126 (5)

nevertheless continue to apply situational causality when processing their own behaviour, as they argue that they did not cause the conflict. They instead mobilised and deployed their group members in a response to the situation.

From this causality, the Russian identity managers process their behaviour as guided by peaceful intentions. As Lavrov stated in an article titled 'On the Caucasus Crisis and Russia's Ukrainian Policy,' published in September 2008: "The outcome of the talks between Presidents Medvedev and Sarkozy in Moscow on August 12 and September 8[...]serves as a convincing testimony that Russia has not had any aims, and will not have any aims, other than those declared. There no "hidden agendas" extending beyond what we were forced to do"⁷⁴². It is also from situational causality that the identity managers construct themselves as agents who have the political will to solve the conflict. As the Foreign Ministry expressed in August 2018 in connection with the 10th anniversary of the 2008 events: "Over the ensuing period, Russia has been working in the South Caucasus to resume dialogue and comprehensive negotiations between Georgia on the one hand, and Abkhazia and South Ossetia on the other hand[...]We hope that common sense will prevail after all"⁷⁴³. The Russian identity managers therefore process themselves as agents who have the stamina and rationality needed to solve the intergroup conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia. The understanding that the Russian group is peaceful is, however, not merely used to make sense of the conflict and Russian managers and members' role in it. It is also used to make sense of issues such as the presence of Russian troops in South Ossetia. As Karasin stated in an interview with the Kommersant newspaper in January 2018: "The United States is actively building up its presence in Georgia, which is a source of growing concern for us. We want peace and quiet on our borders. This is why we have two military bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. They are not to threaten anybody but guarantee that nobody will attack these young Caucasian republics"⁷⁴⁴. It is from situational causality that the Russian identity managers process the Russian presence in South Ossetia as not a threat, as the mobilisation of Russian troops will only occur if the Russian identity managers are once again forced to respond to a situation where South Ossetians or Russians are threatened.

Like the other conflict parties, the Russian identity managers argue that they are speaking the truth about the situation and agents involved and as seen in the Russian solution to the conflict, they advocate the adoption of their version of the truth. This advocacy is rooted in an understanding that Russian behaviour is guided by what is happening on the ground. Because the truth spoken by Russian identity managers is not something the identity managers have reached from their own social cognitive processing.

⁷⁴² RFM-49 (5)

⁷⁴³ RFM-11 (5)

⁷⁴⁴ RFM-120 (5)

Their understanding of the situation and agents involved is guided by the truth South Ossetians speak. As Medvedev stated in August 2009 during conversations with residents in South Ossetia:

There will always be different views of what happened of course. It is your view of events that matters most to us, rather than the assessments of foreign political analysts who do not even know where South Ossetia is on the map, and the assessments of specialists who have spent their lives studying the Soviet Union and Russia, but have no idea how life is actually organised in our countries and how our peoples lived and live. For us, for Russia's people and leadership, it is your view of events, your assessment that matters most of all⁷⁴⁵.

The Russian identity managers hence mobilised their group members in accordance with reality, which, according to the identity managers, is the reality proclaimed by the South Ossetians. The Russian identity managers thus argue that they share the same social cognitive framework as South Ossetians, and it is from this similar cognitive processing that the two groups cooperate and interact in the conflict. Apart from this, is also the understanding that Russian identity managers present a correct and true account of who Russia is and what this group wants in the conflict. As Karasin stated in August 2012 to Russian media in connection to the scheduled 'Caucasus 2012' military exercises: "There are exclamations about some aggression plans on the part of Russia, about demolition of Georgian statehood and suchlike propagandistic ravings. The political government representatives of Russia, Russian military officials and diplomats repeatedly explained both the exercise and our intentions"⁷⁴⁶. The Russian identity managers are telling the truth about Russians. There is hence also a Russian argument that the other conflict parties need to stop their attempts to distort the Russian group identity and interests in their conflict narratives, and instead adopt the Russian identity managers' self-schema when they process stimuli that includes Russia.

6.3.2.2 Russia's Motivation for Behaviour

The primary motivation for the Russian identity managers in the conflict is to ensure the security of their Russian group members and the South Ossetians from the revanchist Georgian identity managers. The primary interest is therefore the protection of human life. As Medvedev stated in August 2009 during talks with residents from South Ossetia: "I want to say how extremely important this is to me not just as Russia's president, but as an ordinary person, because everything we did, we did it for you. We acted not in pursuit of geopolitical aims and victories – this is all worthless. What counts above all is human life"⁷⁴⁷. The protection of human life is linked to social existence, as the Russian identity managers construct the continued existence of the South Ossetian group identity as something that hinges on this group's ability to be safe from external aggression. As the Foreign Ministry stated in July 2017 in connection to talks taking

⁷⁴⁵ RP-9 (5)

⁷⁴⁶ RFM-87 (5)

⁷⁴⁷ RP-9 (5)

place between Lavrov and South Ossetian's, Foreign Minister, Dmitrii Medoev: "Russia, which recognised the independence of South Ossetia in 2008, pledged to guarantee its sovereignty and also the peaceful future of the South Ossetian people"⁷⁴⁸. To ensure South Ossetians survival, there is a need to assist these agents in strengthening their group identity by providing them stability. This does not imply that the Russian identity managers are controlling the South Ossetia group. It is through Russia-South Ossetia cooperation that the Russian identity managers are seeking to aid these alien agents. As Lavrov stated in an interview with Russian media in February 2010: "You certainly know that the peoples of South Ossetia and Abkhazia with the acquisition of independence are in the process of the establishment of national self-consciousness. This is a completely natural process and, of course, requires an extremely delicate attitude, especially on our side, considering that we have undertaken, at the request of these peoples, the obligation to ensure their security"⁷⁴⁹. Russian identity managers are hence not managing the South Ossetians but supporting them until the situation has changed in accordance with what the Russian identity managers perceive to be a preferred direction.

6.3.3 Other-Schema

6.3.3.1 The Georgia Group

In Russia's other- schema, the antagonists are processed as the Georgian identity managers as these are the agents who caused the conflict and continue to sustain it. As seen in the Ukraine conflict, the Russian identity managers draw a line between Georgian identity managers and group members as it is argued that Georgian identity managers are distorting the Georgian group identity, which leads to negative behaviour amongst the group members. However, whereas Ukrainian identity managers are distorting the Ukraine group identity by denying its Soviet origin and Russian affiliation, Georgian identity managers are distorting the Georgian group identity by pursuing interests Georgians do not wish for. These interests pertain to the wish of eradicating the South Ossetians, expelling other groups from Georgia's territory, and creating negative relations between Georgia and Russia. These are interests Georgian identity managers have continuously pursued on behalf of Georgians, but which do not reflect Georgians true interests. Rather, the true Georgian interests is peaceful co-existence between groups in the post-Soviet space, including with the Russians. Georgian identity managers have, however, constructed a twisted understanding of what drives Georgians and the relations that they have with others. As Lavrov stated in an interview with Russian media in July 2010: "We were not going to break off diplomatic relations, knowing full well that the regime of Mikhail Saakashvili does not personify the Georgian people, but is an anomaly which in general does

⁷⁴⁸ RFM-111 (5)

⁷⁴⁹ RFM-68 (5)

not grow from within Georgian society but was brought there from outside⁷⁵⁰.” The Georgian group identity is hence a mismanaged identity. Although this mismanagement has existed since the 1990s, where then-Georgian identity managers constructed the hostile interests towards the South Ossetians, this mismanagement is not irreversible. It may be reversed if Georgian group members decide to elect new identity managers who are better capable of expressing their group identity and interests. As the Foreign Ministry stated in August 2008: “Russia has sincere good and friendly feelings towards the Georgian people, and is confident that Georgia will eventually find worthy leaders who would be able to show proper concern over their country and develop mutually respectful, equal, and good-neighbourly relations with all the peoples of the Caucasus”⁷⁵¹.

The understanding that Georgian identity managers are distorting the Georgian group identity by pursuing interests that contradict Georgian interests, is to a great extent an understanding that hinges on the processing of the stimuli that unfolded during the Saakashvili administration. In Russia’s other-schema, Saakashvili is processed as the architect behind the 2008 events. Whereas the former Georgian identity managers distorted Georgian interests by pursuing the eradication of the South Ossetians, Saakashvili is the agent behind the ‘anti-Russian’ hysteria, which has gained cognitive traction within the Georgian group. As Karasin stated in an interview with Russian media in July 2011:

Our relations after Georgia's aggression continue to undergo severe tests. There is a growing anti-Russian hysteria in Tbilisi. The authorities are zealously developing in Georgian society, an "enemy image" of Russia. Their harsh attempts to eradicate all that for ages united Russians and Georgians are hitting many thousands of our citizens, cutting the spiritual, cultural, and just family and kinship chords⁷⁵².

In Russia’s other-schema, identity and interests are interlinked as to ensure that a group identity complies with its true ideational structure, it must not merely be managed by the correct identity managers but also pursue certain interests. In the Russian identity managers’ processing, these true interests are the interests that the Russian identity managers grant the Georgian group identity. As in the Ukraine conflict, the Russian identity managers hence also point at true and false identity constructs in the Georgia conflict, and how the deviation from these true constructs has generated a conflict. They also point to how they know the true contours of the identities that exist in the post-Soviet space and argue that there is a need to return to these constructs to reverse the conflicts that exist within this space.

In Russia’s other-schema, there is thus a ‘true’ and a ‘false’ Georgian group identity. Whereas the real Georgian group is associated with peaceful intentions and defined by agents who wish for good relations with others, the false Georgian group identity is characterised by the Georgian identity

⁷⁵⁰ RFM-71 (5)

⁷⁵¹ RFM-45 (5)

⁷⁵² RFM-80 (5)

managers' hostile intentions and behaviour. As Medvedev stated in June 2009: "It is our view that that this political regime has committed a crime and we will have nothing common with this [regime]"⁷⁵³. The Russian identity managers hence resort to a similar understanding as seen in the Georgian identity managers' conflict narrative about South Ossetia, namely that the group identity that defines the out-group has been taken hostage by identity managers whose mismanagement of this identity is leading group members to destruction and ruin. Rather than processing the Georgian identity managers as alien, however, the Russian identity managers process the Georgian identity managers as unlikable Georgians. The Russian identity managers hence rely on an understanding of alien identity management in order to make sense of the groups present and the behaviour that these groups engage in. It is also from this negative understanding of the Georgian leadership that the Russian identity managers do not wish to engage with the Georgian leaders. They do nevertheless wish to engage with Georgian group members who are said to personify the true Georgian group identity. This categorisation of Georgian identity managers and group members is then again, an example of a Russian attempt to manage identities.

Another central aspect of Russia's Georgian group reification is the use of a leadership error as the Russian identity managers seek to make sense of Georgian behaviour by referring to the Georgian leaderships' irrationality and hostility. As Medvedev stated in August 2008 regarding Georgian identity managers' behaviour: "You know, lunatics' difference from other people is that when they smell blood it is very difficult to stop them"⁷⁵⁴. Although Georgian identity managers, and particularly Saakashvili, are processed as the architects of Georgians' negative interests, the Russian identity managers also point to how Georgian identity managers' false narrative about South Ossetians and Russians has gained traction within the Georgia group. The negative dispositions associated with Georgian identity managers are increasingly becoming Georgian dispositions. As Lavrov stated in an interview with RTVi in April 2013: "We always wanted to be friends, to cooperate with our Georgian neighbours[...]Our relations were constantly "tensioned" by Mikheil Saakashvili. I think that he made a destructive contribution into souls and minds of many young Georgians"⁷⁵⁵. There is now a slight confusion as to how big of a percentage of Georgian group members have adopted Saakashvili's self/other understanding, and thus how big of a percentage act and think in accordance with the social cognitive framework Saakashvili imposed on the Georgians. What is noteworthy in Russia's other-schema, is, however, that following Saakashvili's end as president, the Russian identity managers continue to point to hostile relations between Georgians and Russians as a trend that endures. The negative social dispositions and interests now associated with the Georgia group hence derives from the narrative Saakashvili introduced during his presidency. In Russia's

⁷⁵³ Civil-27 (4)

⁷⁵⁴ Reuters-3 (4)

⁷⁵⁵ RFM-90 (5)

other-schema is thus also a referral to how the management of identities – and the narratives this management produces - manifests into the minds of those who belong to a given group identity. It is then implied that cognition arises amongst the leadership, but it spreads and becomes the collective cognition of a group.

The hostile intentions towards the South Ossetians and hatred towards the Russians is the outcome of the lies Georgian identity managers have spread about the situation and agents involved. As Karasin stated in an interview with Russian media in August 2012:

First of all, during four years it may have been realised that it is necessary to stop the warlike rhetoric, which leads to nothing. It is impossible to solve difficult political issues by propaganda, this is an absolute axiom. It is necessary to admit the existence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, to try to develop normal, respectful and equal relations with them⁷⁵⁶.

Apart from lying about the conflict; the existence of the South Ossetians; and the relations Georgians have with this group, is also the continued lie that Russians have annexed Georgian territory. This is a falsity as it should be understood from the Russian processing of the situation. As stated by the Foreign Ministry in June 2018: “The Georgian side[...]continued to bring up the absurd claims about "Russian occupation" of Abkhazia and South Ossetia[...]All sides at the talks, with the exception of the Georgian representatives, agreed that the situation near the border areas remains stable and under control”⁷⁵⁷. The conflict is also sustained because Georgian identity managers continue to lie and force others to adopt this lie, which distorts minds and leads to detrimental conflict resolution efforts. This behavioural pattern shows that the Georgian identity managers do not have the will to solve the conflict. The South Ossetian identity managers, on the other hand, do have the political will because as stated in a joint Russian, North-, and South Ossetian statement from February 2006, following Georgia’s refusal to attend the Mixed Control Commission talks: “While the South Ossetian side demonstrates a striving to find compromise peaceful ways for settling the conflict and has put forward concrete proposals for joint work on a common action program to settle the conflict, the Georgian side actually ignores the peace initiatives and is building up arms and stepping up bellicose rhetoric”⁷⁵⁸. The South Ossetian group is hence a peaceful group that has experienced an attack, but which still seeks to ensure a peaceful and fair solution. In the end, the Russian identity managers construct their South Ossetian and Georgian group reification attempts as factual and they argue for others to adopt this truth. As Medvedev stated in a meeting with the State Council in September 2008: “We are meeting to discuss the new situation in the world, created as a result of the Georgian aggression against South Ossetia.[...]Let us call a spade a spade: a real war occurred in the region where the aggression was

⁷⁵⁶ RFM-87 (5)

⁷⁵⁷ RFM-124 (5)

⁷⁵⁸ RFM-15 (5)

launched, a war which claimed the lives of Russians, Ossetians and Georgians”⁷⁵⁹. The Russian identity managers are thus speaking the truth, and the conflict will only be resolved once others adopt this social cognitive framework.

6.3.3.2 Georgia’s Motivation for Behaviour

In Russia’s other-schema it has been a consistent Georgian intent to gain control over the South Ossetian territory and remove the South Ossetians to ensure that this space becomes “Georgian”. Although this motivation continues to drive Georgian identity managers’ decisions and behaviour, there has been a slight shift in these identity managers’ ambitions, as the 2008 events and the following acknowledgement of South Ossetia, forced them to change their tactics. The interests that now shape Georgian identity managers’ behaviour is to revenge the humiliation that 2008 imposed on them. Georgian identity managers are processed as agents who are trying to right this wrong and ‘prove’ that their distorted understanding of the situation and other is correct. As Nesterenko stated in April 2010, in response Saakashvili’s accusation that Russia was complicit in smuggling nuclear materials in the South Caucasus:

The desire to engage in settling of accounts and try to take revenge for past defeats is evident here. Obvious is the discontent of the Georgian regime with the increasingly strong sovereignty of these two countries. But Saakashvili has no one to blame but himself for this. No one else did more than him for Abkhazia and South Ossetia's secession from Georgia⁷⁶⁰.

Georgian identity managers find themselves in a self-imposed conflict, which they need to justify to their group members. However, rather than changing their understanding to end the conflict, Georgian identity managers are, as stated by the Foreign Ministry in June 2014: “The Georgian authorities are not concerned about this. For them it is more important to "cement" their idea, which has nothing to do with the reality, that the independent Republic of Abkhazia and the Republic of South Ossetia "belong" to Georgia. Unfortunately, such an approach confirms that Tbilisi is still not ready to have a constructive dialogue with its neighbours about a long-term settlement of the situation in the region”⁷⁶¹. The other interest that motivates Georgian identity managers is hence the ambition of imposing their social cognitive framework on the conflict and ensure that others adopt this, as this will validate their re-pursuance of the South Ossetian territory and eradication of the South Ossetians. Unfortunately, Georgian identity managers have to some extent succeeded in this ambition as several Western states have adopted Georgia’s conflict narrative. As the Foreign Ministry put it in May 2017: “Tbilisi, supported by its Western sponsors, continues to generate political and propaganda non-issues at international venues, which are designed solely to legitimise

⁷⁵⁹ RP-6 (5)

⁷⁶⁰ RFM-69 (5)

⁷⁶¹ RFM-94 (5)

Georgia's reluctance to normalise relations with its neighbours"⁷⁶². The Russian identity managers thus also point to how the conflict is defined by the presence of cognitive clashes and it is a situation, where a particular social cognitive framework has gained traction, which has resulted in a re-direction of conflict resolution efforts and further deterioration of intergroup relations.

According to Russian identity managers, Georgian identity managers are trying to exclude the South Ossetians from the international community as this ensures the exclusion of social cognitive processes that contradict the Georgian identity managers' manufactured understanding of self, other, and the conflict. As Lavrov stated in an interview with the Russian media in April 2013:

An UNGA opened after some time, and Georgia entered there the resolution concerning the problem of refugees and destitutes[...]South Ossetians asked to provide the possibility to make a speech in the UN and to present "their portion of the truth"[...]They turned for a visa to the USA, but no visa was issued to them[...]they [Georgia] do not discuss it in places, where all participants to the process are [p]resent and these issues may be solved in a pragmatic way"⁷⁶³.

To ensure the full adoption of the Georgian identity managers' understanding, there is a need to exclude South Ossetian identity managers from the conflict resolution process, as this will veil the Ossetians' account of reality. This behaviour exposes the Georgian identity managers' intention because, as stated by Nesterenko in September 2010: "The purpose of this practice is obvious – Georgian authorities are trying by all means available to block[...]South Ossetia communication with the outside world"⁷⁶⁴. Georgian identity managers are trying to prevent the outside world from gaining an insight into the existence, interests, and struggles of the South Ossetians. This is an attempt to prevent the social validation of the South Ossetian group identity, as the social validation of South Ossetians validates the inclusion of their conflict narrative. The "proof" of Georgian identity managers' discontent towards South Ossetians' validation is amongst other reached by processing the time Georgian identity managers created an interim administrative in South Ossetia, which, according to the Georgian identity managers, was meant to promote the "peaceful resolution of the conflict"⁷⁶⁵. The administration was to be led by Dmitry Sanakoyev, a former Defense minister and later Prime Minister in South Ossetia⁷⁶⁶. In Russia's other-schema this administration is processed as one made up of "fake" South Ossetian identity managers and the primary cause of its existence was to divert the peace process in Georgia's favour. As the Foreign Ministry stated in March 2007 in a response to the creation of the administration: "The "rebel Tskhinvali regime," as they customarily call it among the Georgian political elite, naturally is not the most convenient negotiation partner for Tbilisi. To

⁷⁶² RFM-106 (5)

⁷⁶³ RFM-90 (5)

⁷⁶⁴ RFM-72 (5)

⁷⁶⁵ Refworld-19 (4)

⁷⁶⁶ Radio Free Europe-21 (4)

have dealings with its own placemen is far easier - they are preprogrammed for chorus singing with their creators. Only as a result that design will evolve not into a dialogue, but a monologue on an arbitrary theme, a conversation with oneself⁷⁶⁷.

The administration was one where Georgian identity managers disguised themselves as South Ossetian identity managers, as this created an opportunity for Georgian identity managers to impose their social cognitive processing on the conflict resolution process. What is interesting here is that the Russian identity managers do not consider that Sanakoyev was a former Defence Minister and later Prime Minister of South Ossetia. He has thus previously functioned as a South Ossetian identity manager. This is not included in the Russian processing, as the administration is processed as one which excluded the “real” South Ossetian identity managers in an attempt to fool the international community. As the Foreign Ministry stated in 2007, the objective of the administration: “is obvious - to produce in the eyes of a not quite experienced internal and external observer a semblance of respectability for this agent group, a creation of Georgian special services, that has landed itself in one of the Georgian enclaves on the territory of South Ossetia”⁷⁶⁸. The administration hence represented another Georgian attempt to overtake the management of the South Ossetian identity. The main aspect that drives the conflict is thus, according to the Russian identity managers, who gets to manage the South Ossetian group identity – South Ossetians or Georgians.

6.3.4 Russia’s Social Cognitive Framework

As in the Ukraine conflict, the Russian identity managers rely on a specific social cognitive framework in the Georgia conflict. A central aspect of Russia’s framework is that the conflict is between South Ossetian and Georgians, and it is a conflict that Georgian identity managers have unilaterally imposed upon the South Ossetians. The conflict is processed through an intergroup prism with the main argument being that the two groups have come into conflict because they inhabit different identities, interests, and dispositions. What is interesting in Russia’s framework is that the Russian identity managers adopt the same understanding as Georgian identity managers, namely that the conflict is a matter of regaining full control over an identity. However, whereas Georgian identity managers argue that Russian identity managers have taken control over the South Ossetian identity by installing Russian group members in the area, the Russian identity managers argue that Georgian identity managers are seeking to retake control over the South Ossetian identity. Unlike Georgian identity managers who argue that Russian identity managers have an ambition of managing other identities, the Russian identity managers argue that the Georgian identity managers are seeking to manage the South Ossetians in order to eradicate them. The Russian identity

⁷⁶⁷ RFM-22 (5)

⁷⁶⁸ Ibid

managers hence systematise the conflict as a struggle over who gets to control who, and particularly a struggle over a group's right to socially exist. This construction is rooted in a group reification process where the Russian identity managers process group identities as natural constructs that can be mismanaged, as alien identity managers can take over a group's identity and interest management with horrific consequences to follow.

Groups may, however, also be mismanaged by their own group members. In Russia's framework, the identity managers point to how the Georgian identity managers are mismanaging the Georgian group identity. This mismanagement is not due to alien identity managers per se, as Georgian identity managers are real Georgians. This mismanagement has instead occurred because Georgian identity managers are pursuing interests that do not comply with the actual interests of the Georgians. The Russian identity managers hence point to how a group can be mismanaged if identity managers do not construct and pursue correct interests for their group. Identities are thus interlinked with interests and here it is argued that a change in one may distort the other. Group identities are, however, not merely constructs which need to follow certain ideational structures for them to be true. They are also physical constructs as they are represented in the form of agents and territory. Group identities derive from certain physical places and their continued existence hinges on agents' ability to stay within and control these spaces. The Russian identity managers share the Georgian understanding that identities and territories are interlinked. What they do not agree on is who belongs to and by an extension of this has the right to inhabit a certain territory. The construction of territorial belonging, just like the construction of social identification, also hinges on social categorisation and on the reification of where certain groups "come from" and "who" they are. This is a contested process as all conflict parties claim that they know the truth about which territory belongs to who.

Another interesting aspect of the Russian conflict narrative is the Russian identity managers' focus on group relations. In Russia's framework, there is a great focus on how group identities need to be 'seen' by others for them to exist. It is from this understanding that the Russian identity managers process Georgian identity managers as agents who are trying to socially exclude the South Ossetians, as this ensures that the South Ossetians and their conflict narrative are forgotten. Hence, if the international community is not made aware of the existence of the South Ossetian group identity, the agents who belong to this group do not exist. To ensure the continued existence of the South Ossetians, there is thus a need to include its identity managers in the negotiation process and validate this group identity through statehood. This, however, is a trend that the Georgian identity managers are seeking to prohibit. Instead the Georgian identity managers continue to advocate the false understanding that the events in 2008 were not an escalation in South Ossetian-Georgian relations, but the emergence of a conflict between Russia and Georgia.

6.4 South Ossetia's Social Cognitive Framework

This final section will explore how the South Ossetian identity managers construct understandings about the situation, self, and other, and the social cognitive framework that forms from this.

6.4.1 Situation-Schema

6.4.1.1 Conflict Cause

In South Ossetia's conflict narrative, the conflict is processed as an intergroup conflict between Georgians and South Ossetians and it is a conflict caused by the Georgians intent of eradicating the South Ossetians. The conflict is hence processed through an intergroup prism as agents are categorised in accordance with a distinct Georgian and South Ossetian group identity. According to the South Ossetian identity managers, the conflict can be traced back to the 1920s, as this was the first time the Georgians sought to commit an act of genocide and ethnic cleansing against the South Ossetians. As Alan Kochiev, South Ossetia's Foreign Minister, stated in October 2015:

It should be noted that South Ossetia had been attacked by Georgia several times before August, 2008.

Genocide and total ethnic cleansing of the Ossetian organized by Georgian troops in 1920 resulted in thousands of causality[...]Thousands of guiltless people became victims of Georgian military aggression[...]when Georgian forces and bands of guerrillas committed to flames and destructed dozens of villages in South Ossetia in early 1990s. Next time South Ossetia was attacked by Georgia in 2004.

These crimes of Georgian authorities were left unpunished and affirmed their self-believed right to freedom of action with respect to South Ossetia, and led to another bloody war in August, 2008⁷⁶⁹.

The conflict is hence defined by years of negative South Ossetia-Georgian relations where violence has ebbed and flowed, but where a consistent feature has been the Georgian attempt to annihilate the South Ossetia group. To make sense of this situation, the South Ossetian identity managers draw a division between Georgian identity managers and group members, as it is Georgian identity managers who instigated the conflict. It is also these agents who sustain the conflict, as they continue to mobilise their group members in an attack against the South Ossetians. To make sense of the situation and agents involved, the South Ossetian identity managers thus apply a fundamental attribution error, as they construct the onset and continuation of the conflict as an outcome of Georgian identity managers' intent.

The South Ossetian identity managers activate ethnic cleansing and genocide nodes and they tend to treat these two concepts as the same, namely as the eradication of a group. There is no further differentiation between ethnic cleansing and genocide in South Ossetia's narrative. The two terms are instead used interchangeably when the identity managers process events that unfold. According to the

⁷⁶⁹ SO-50 (5)

identity managers, ethnic cleansing and genocide has consistently occurred and it has been pursued in two ways: One is the physical extermination of the South Ossetians, and the other is identity assimilation. As South Ossetia's Foreign Minister, Dmitriy Medoev, stated in an interview with a South Ossetian newspaper in September 2017:

From the beginning of the 20th century till the beginning of the 21st century Georgian authorities regularly organized ethnical cleansings of the Ossetians, forcibly resettled them from one place to another, unleashed massacres and drove out from the ancestral territories[...]Later, in 1949-1953 the Georgian Communists were doing the same, but with the use of so-called soft power, the policy of assimilation and cultural genocide⁷⁷⁰.

To eradicate the South Ossetians, the Georgian identity managers have sought to physically eradicate South Ossetian group members through force; they have sought to drive them out of their territory; and they have forced South Ossetian members to change their social identification. This behaviour has been a general Georgian tendency or as South Ossetia's Foreign Minister, Kazbulat Tskhovrebov, stated in an interview with a German magazine in December 2012: "There are more than enough data on the genocide of the Ossetian people"⁷⁷¹. The current conflict between the South Ossetians and the Georgians is hence long running and it includes a clear-cut antagonist and protagonist. This understanding of the situation also means that the events that unfolded in 2008 do not signal the onset of the conflict but is another time of conflict escalation. Unlike the Georgian and Russian identity managers who argue that the conflict emerged in the 1990s and genocide occurred in 2008, the South Ossetian identity managers argue that the conflict emerged in the 1920s and genocide/ethnic cleansing has consistently occurred through-out the years, hereby making it the main characteristic of the situation.

6.4.1.2 The Agents Involved

6.4.1.2.1 Russia

Since the conflict is cognitively systematized around a South Ossetian and Georgian group identity, the South Ossetian identity managers have no qualms in pointing to who is involved in the conflict. Apart from these two groups is also the presence of Russia, which the identity managers process as a positive out-group that supports and ensures the survival of the South Ossetians. The events of 2008 are particularly referred to when shaping the South Ossetian understanding of Russia, as the Russian intervention in 2008 and later acknowledgement of South Ossetia, is behaviour that ended Georgian aggression and prevented the occurrence of another South Ossetian genocide. As Tskhovrebov stated in an interview in December 2015 to a German magazine regarding the Russian acknowledgement of South Ossetia: "It was a logical end of

⁷⁷⁰ SO-85 (5)

⁷⁷¹ SO-53 (5)

the act of peace-enforcement and a firm guarantee of not repetition of our people genocide”⁷⁷². When reifying the Russia group, there is primarily an emphasis on the Russian identity managers as these are treated as agents who have a positive understanding of the South Ossetians, and agents who treat the South Ossetian leadership (and hereof the group) as equals. As Medoev stated following a meeting between South Ossetia’s President and Vladimir Putin in November 2017: “The warm reception and hospitality extended to our delegation indicate the high level of respect of Russian leadership to our country and people.⁷⁷³”. It is hence the positive interaction between Russian and South Ossetian identity managers, as well as the Russian identity managers response to the conflict, which points to the existence of positive South Ossetia-Russia relations.

Although the Russian identity managers actively sought to ensure a peaceful end to the Georgia-South Ossetia conflict, the Russians merely joined a struggle the South Ossetians initially fought on their own. The conflict was hence not instigated by Russian identity managers. As Medoev stated in an interview with a South Ossetian Newspaper in September 2017: “Nobody in the so-called civilized world is interested neither in the fate of the Serbs from the Serbian Krajina nor in the genocide in Ruanda. The same would have happened to the South Ossetians, unless the nation raised the banner of the national liberation struggle in distant 1990’s, unless Russia interfered in 2008, unless the Russian Federation made the decision on recognition of our Republic”⁷⁷⁴. Adding to this understanding is also the argument that the West did not come to aid the South Ossetians. They neglect(ed) this group and so the Russian identity managers and group members are the only agents who fought for, and continue to fight for, the South Ossetians’ existence. What immediately emerges from South Ossetia’s conflict narrative is hence that the Russians and South Ossetians do not share the same group identity. Rather, when processing the 2008 events, Russia is constructed as a distinct out-group, which came to aid the South Ossetian in-group. As will be seen further on, this separation between the Russian and South Ossetian group identities has, however, increasingly become blurred, as the South Ossetian identity managers struggle to explain the rationality behind the increased South Ossetia-Russia relations. When explaining the 2008 events, this separation is nevertheless still clear-cut, as Russia is processed as the only out-group that validates the South Ossetians’ struggle. The Russians are thus also a positive out-group in the eyes of the South Ossetian identity managers, as they are the only ones who support South Ossetia’s situation-schema.

⁷⁷² SO-53 (5)

⁷⁷³ SO-90 (5)

⁷⁷⁴ SO-85 (5)

6.4.1.2.2 Western States

The South Ossetian identity managers point to other parties that have a role to play in shaping the conflict. This particularly pertains to Western states, which is an overarching group identity used to classify out-groups who oppose South Ossetia's social cognitive framework. In South Ossetia's situation-schema, the identity managers of Western states are agents who feed into the Georgian identity managers' negative behaviour. The South Ossetian identity managers share the same understanding as the Russian identity managers that e.g. the US' continued militarization of Georgia serves as a validation of the Georgian social cognitive processing and hereof hostile intentions. South Ossetian identity managers also process Western identity managers as agents who for long have enticed behaviour and narratives that support the exclusion of specific groups in the post-Soviet space. As South Ossetia's Foreign Minister, David Sanakoev, stated in May 2014:

Current events in Ukraine and events in Georgia during the last twenty years are a link of one chain. For twenty years both in Georgia and Ukraine through different foreign organizations, that were funding local NGOs, were brainwashing the public. During that time foreign agents were able to create groups of nationalists that were used as the main striking force[...]It should be reiterated that in case of Georgia tragic aberration of national consciousness resulted in loss of ten thousand people⁷⁷⁵.

The South Ossetian identity managers thus share the same understanding as the Russian and DPR identity managers that the West has had a role to play in the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts, as the West's support for the Georgian and Ukrainian conflict narratives enticed these identity managers into pursuing negative interests and hereof launch and escalate the conflicts. Both conflicts are therefore cases of "aberration of national consciousness" or the distortion of group understandings and the mobilization of groups against each other. Whereas Russia is a positive out-group, as it has adopted the South Ossetian social cognitive framework, the West is a collection of negative out-groups as they support the Georgian social cognitive framework.

Adding to this understanding is the argument that the Georgian identity managers have a patron relation with the West, as much of Georgian behaviour in the conflict is attributed to the wish of pleasing Western out-groups. Like the DPR identity managers, the South Ossetian identity managers process Georgian behaviour as directed by the appeasement of Western states, as this ensures the social validation of the Georgian self/other understanding and by extension of this Georgian interests. However, unlike the DPR identity managers who point to how Western out-groups only support groups that deny their Russian identification, South Ossetian identity managers process the Georgian attempt to disguise the presence of the South Ossetians, as behaviour meant to create the illusion that the Georgian identity managers have the situation under control. This is a way for Georgian identity managers to convince out-

⁷⁷⁵ SO-34 (5)

groups to adopt Georgia's conflict narrative. As the Foreign Ministry stated in April 2015 in a response to Margvelashvili's address to the Georgian parliament: "The main addressee of such declarations made by Georgia has always been western audience inexperienced in subtlety of Tbilisi word usage; the purpose has been improvement of not very respectable image of the Georgian state and attempt to convince the Western world that Georgia was a regional "democracy beacon" that needed a great support"⁷⁷⁶. The conflict is thus characterised by negative intergroup relations, which the West to a great extent is validating and enticing as they support Georgia's social cognitive processing.

6.4.1.3 The Solution

Since Georgian identity managers have had a consistent behavioural pattern of attacking the South Ossetians, the only solution is to dismiss any attempts of restoring peaceful co-existence between these two groups within the same territory. Instead there is a need to support South Ossetians' strive for reclaiming full control over their existence. As the Foreign Ministry stated in December 2011 in a comment on Georgia's "Concept of national safety": "The leadership of Georgia for the last 20 years by its criminal actions the apogee of which became an aggression in august 2008 against South Ossetia, with its own hand spelt the death of the issue of territorial integrity of Georgia within the framework of former Georgian SSR. As a consequence of such aggressive policy became creation of two new recognized democratic states"⁷⁷⁷. The solution hence already exists, and it has been acted upon by Russian identity managers. As Kokoity stated in January 2005: "All our history dictates that autonomy within Georgia does not guarantee the security of the South Ossetian people"⁷⁷⁸. Resolving the conflict entails that Georgian identity managers and the rest of the international community recognise South Ossetia's independence. South Ossetian identity managers therefore share the same processing as Russian identity managers that to end the conflict, there is a need to create a new foundation for more equal intergroup relations, which can only be ensured through South Ossetian statehood. To create a foundation for positive intergroup relations the Georgian identity managers must also admit that they and their predecessors caused the conflict. As the Foreign Ministry expressed it in October 2014:

South Ossetia confirms that no relations between South Ossetia and Georgia can be established until a legally binding document on non-use of force is signed[...]Moreover, adequate political and legal assessment of Georgian aggression in South Ossetia has to be made and first of all by Georgia itself. Georgia has to admit the fact of genocide of Ossetian people, recognize the independence of the Republic and indemnify the damage caused as a result of the military aggression imposed on South Ossetia⁷⁷⁹.

⁷⁷⁶ SO-44 (5)

⁷⁷⁷ SO-11 (5)

⁷⁷⁸ Refworld-8 (4)

⁷⁷⁹ SO-38 (5)

Georgian identity managers hence need to adopt South Ossetia's social cognitive framework. The problem with this, however, is that it entails a negative construct of the Georgia group and a different understanding of who is fighting who and why.

6.4.2 Self-Schema

6.4.2.1 *The South Ossetia Group*

In South Ossetia's self-schema, the South Ossetians are reified as a group of agents who share a common history, interests, and dispositions. When reifying the South Ossetia group, the identity managers identify it as a group that has a specific place of origin. As the Foreign Ministry stated in June 2011: "The history of South Ossetia as an ethno-geographical territorial unit numbers over two thousand years. The data provided by the antique, old Georgian and old Armenian narrative sources are an unequivocal testimony of Ossetian (Scythian-Sarmatian) origin of the ancient and medieval population, which inhabited the southern slopes of the Central Caucasus"⁷⁸⁰. The South Ossetian group identity arose from a physical place in the South Caucasus, and it continues to exist within this place. What is interesting in the South Ossetian group reification is, however, not the proclaimed social origin of this group, but how the identity managers construct South Ossetia's agency. Because, when the identity managers construct the group's history, they refer to how it over time has shifted between having full and partial control over its existence, as alien identity managers have at times managed the South Ossetian identity. Rather than always being an arrangement imposed on the South Ossetian group, alien identity management has at times been a decision South Ossetians made for themselves, as the group members voluntarily included themselves under Russian management up until the 1918s. As the Foreign Ministry stated in a document outlining the cause of the Ossetian genocide in the 1920s: "Ossetia legally entered the Russian Empire in the 70-ies of the XVIII century"⁷⁸¹. The identity managers also point to how South Ossetians collectively decided to oppose Georgian management in the early 1920s. As the Ministry further stated in November 2012: "Georgia has never had a legal right to the territory of South Ossetia, which has been incorporated into the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1922 against the will of the Ossetian people"⁷⁸². South Ossetians thus represent an independent group, which has always had full control over who manages, or should manage, them.

The end of the Soviet Union equally shapes South Ossetia's self-schema, as it is argued that this was when the group reclaimed full control over its existence. As the Foreign Ministry responded in February 2015 to a statement made by Georgian leaders regarding the possibility of a Georgia-South Ossetia dialogue: "The statehood of South Ossetia was defined by its people and is in no way a subject of discussion.

⁷⁸⁰ SO-6 (5)

⁷⁸¹ Ibid

⁷⁸² SO-23 (5)

The independence of the Republic[...]was proclaimed in the Declaration, dated December 21, 1991”⁷⁸³. Full South Ossetian control over the South Ossetian group was thus manifested prior to the Russian recognition of the group in 2008. In connection to this understanding is also the argument that all South Ossetians share a common memory network and a common self-understanding, which guides their behaviour in the conflict. As the Foreign Ministry responded in October 2014 to statements from the Georgian leadership that friendship exists between the South Ossetians and Georgians: “The repetitive massacres and ethnic cleanings of the Ossetian, organized by Georgian officials as well as attacks on South Ossetia and the August war of 2008, launched by Georgia can’t be forgotten, no matter how Georgian authorities seek for razing that from social memory”⁷⁸⁴. In their group reification attempt the identity managers thus apply a group attribution error, as the South Ossetians are constructed as unified in their understanding of self and other. The decision to seek independence to escape the Georgians was hence not one Russian identity managers, or the South Ossetian identity managers, imposed on the South Ossetians. It derived from a collective South Ossetian understanding of Georgia and the conflict situation. As the other conflict parties, South Ossetian identity managers also seek to present a perfect symbiosis between them and their group members, as they point to how they are merely following the interests and demands of their group members.

Despite South Ossetia’s unity, the group is divided as it represents one half of an Ossetian group identity. The other half of this identity, the North Ossetians, are managed by Russian identity managers. This division between the Ossetians draws roots to the conflict and the onset of negative relations between Georgia and South Ossetia, as the Ossetian division is largely an outcome of Georgian behaviour in the 1918s. In 1918, following the Russian revolution, South Ossetians expressed their wish to continue being managed by the Russians and so the South Ossetians dismissed the Georgian attempt to seize control over them and their territory. This wish was not an act of reprisal against the Georgians but symbolised a collective South Ossetian interest of uniting with their in-group members in North Ossetia. As the Foreign Ministry stated in a declaration published in June 2011 regarding the 1920 genocide:

The revolutionary movement in South Ossetia was by no means an act of reprisal against anyone, neither was it directed against Georgia[...]The demands put forward by the leaders of the national movement in South Ossetia were of a particularly democratic character directed at the attainment of the lawful right of the 100 thousand men strong peasantry to self-determination, which implies: a) having the form of a political system in South Ossetia acceptable for the local population, i. e. the Soviets. b) having the right to remain within the political system the population of South Ossetia has the right to choose, i. e. within the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic together with the other part of Ossetia – North Ossetia⁷⁸⁵.

⁷⁸³ SO-42 (5)

⁷⁸⁴ SO-38 (5)

⁷⁸⁵ SO-6 (5)

This understanding links to the positive reification of the Russia group, as it is argued that Russian management of the Ossetians has always been an Ossetian interest, since it entails being managed within a “political system” more “acceptable for the local population”⁷⁸⁶. This wish was, however, misinterpreted by Georgian identity managers as they processed the “revolutionary movement in South Ossetia” as an attempt of Russian annexation, and from this misunderstanding chose to mobilise their Georgian group members in an attack against the South Ossetians. This decision split the Ossetian group identity into two and caused a conflict that continues to this day. In South Ossetia’s conflict narrative is hence also a referral to how Georgian identity managers for long have sought to eradicate the Ossetian identity, as they have consistently prevented the Ossetian in-group members from existing in unity. As the other conflict parties, the South Ossetian identity managers point to how they and their group members are driven by a wish to re-establish the true contours of their group identity, which can only ensue once they are freed from Georgian management.

In South Ossetia’s self-schema, the group is reified as a peaceful group of agents who wish to live in peace with others. Like the other conflict parties, the South Ossetian identity managers deny that the conflict is caused by any negative South Ossetian interests or social dispositions. The South Ossetians and their identity managers are willing to solve the conflict peacefully and in accordance with the agreements made. As the Foreign Ministry stated in August 2013 in connection to the five-year anniversary of the 2008 events: “South Ossetia highly appreciates value of peace and security and strives for strengthening of regional security through interaction with the regional countries and cooperation with International Organizations. South Ossetia again confirms its committal to basic principles and norms of the International Law, open dialogue and cooperation with all the members of the International Community”⁷⁸⁷. South Ossetians are driven by positive social dispositions in the conflict, and the South Ossetian identity managers are willing to cooperate with Georgia and others to reach a fair outcome for all conflict parties. To this understanding is also the implied argument that the reason why the conflict is sustained, is because of Georgian behaviour. Despite South Ossetia’s peaceful nature, the identity managers do point to how they and their group members continuously need to be prepared to respond to Georgian aggression. As, it was stated in June 2004 by a representative from the Interior Ministry in connection to South Ossetian training exercises aimed at combating terrorism: “We have to do it[...]Georgia still maintains illegal police posts in the conflict zone and keeps troops on the border with South Ossetia”⁷⁸⁸. When the South Ossetians respond with force towards the Georgians in the conflict, this is thus an act of self-defence as the reification of the South Ossetians as peaceful agents prevent them from inhabiting any

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid

⁷⁸⁷ SO-29 (5)

⁷⁸⁸ Refworld-3 (4)

negative intentions. South Ossetian aggression in the conflict is, however, also based on the other-understanding of the Georgians, as South Ossetian identity managers have the Georgian identity managers “figured out” and so they are two steps ahead of Georgian behaviour. South Ossetian preventive and self-defence activities are therefore driven by both an understanding of “who” Georgia is, what Georgia “wants”, as well as what Georgia will do in the future.

The South Ossetian identity managers eventually argue that they are telling the truth about the situation and the agents involved. South Ossetia’s self-schema is thus built around the argument that the South Ossetian social cognitive framework is the correct account of reality. This includes the understanding that the conflict is an intergroup conflict between South Ossetia and Georgia, and that the Russians merely function as an out-group that assists the South Ossetians. As the Foreign Ministry responded to comments made by Georgia regarding the border agreement signed between South Ossetia and Russia in February 2015: “This document has emphasized once again the full absurdity of the statements made by Georgian politicians and their western patrons about so-called "occupation" of South Ossetia”⁷⁸⁹. Adding to this is also the expressed truth that the South Ossetian territory belongs to the South Ossetian group, and so it is legitimate and justified for the South Ossetian identity managers to engage in whatever way they see fit with the territory and the agents who inhabit it. As the Ministry further stated in response to Georgian remarks about the territorial integrity of Georgia in January 2012: “Recognition or non- recognition of the Republic of South Ossetia by Georgia does not abolish the fact of existence of the country, which has appeared as a result of implementation of the nation’s right to self-determination, and the Republic of South Ossetia will exist regardless of Georgia’s attitude towards it”⁷⁹⁰. Like the other conflict parties, the South Ossetian identity managers hence also reify their group through a fundamental- and group attribution error, as they process their behaviour as responses to Georgian intent, and they construct the South Ossetia group as a unified and unique entity, which behaves and thinks in a collective manner.

6.4.2.2 South Ossetia’s Motivation for Behaviour

Although the South Ossetian identity managers process the conflict as a situation that arose from a misunderstanding regarding South Ossetia’s decision to unite with Russia, and although they reify the South Ossetian group as unified and independent, there is confusion in South Ossetia’s self-schema regarding the interests that drive the group. This confusion particularly pertains to South Ossetia’s increased relations with Russia which, as seen in Georgia’s conflict narrative, has created cognitive confusion amongst the other conflict parties regarding the extent to which the South Ossetians are Ossetians or Russians. When

⁷⁸⁹ SO-41 (5)

⁷⁹⁰ SO-15 (5)

exploring South Ossetia's conflict narrative, there has been a development in the expressed interests as these have moved between autonomy (now largely discarded), independence, unification with the Ossetians, and unification with Russia. Here it could be interpreted that Russian unification indirectly refers to a unification with the Ossetians – as North Ossetia is a region in Russia. Russian unification is, however, not explicitly presented as the unification between the Ossetians. It is instead at times communicated as the unification of in-group members. As South Ossetia's President, Leonid Tibilov, put it in October 2015: "The political reality is that we have to make a historic choice to be reunited with brotherly Russia[...]to ensure the security and prosperity of our country and our people"⁷⁹¹. At times, the South Ossetian identity managers hence present Russian unification as the unification of agents who share the same group identity. This has caused confusion in how the other conflict parties make sense of South Ossetia, as Georgian identity managers point to South Ossetia's unification with Russia as proof of how this group is managed by Russians. Although South Ossetian identity managers in their self-schema refer to a distinct South Ossetian group, the interests of increased relations with Russia has thus blurred the social categorisation of the South Ossetians. This has caused confusion of whether the South Ossetians in fact are Russians.

The expressed interest of uniting with brotherly Russia has also caused confusion for the researcher, as it has been difficult to discern how South Ossetian identity managers position the South Ossetian interests and identity vis-à-vis Russia. The conclusion is that 'unification with Russia' seems to refer to unification between the South and North Ossetians. Russians are hence not South Ossetians' in-group members. Russia is an out-group which is able to manage South Ossetians' collective interests - such as protecting them from the Georgians. As the Foreign Ministry responded in January 2012 to Georgia's comment on wanting to ensure territorial integrity: "While there is no agreement between South Ossetia and Georgia on nonrenewal of hostilities supported by international guarantees the people of South Ossetia do not see the alternative to Russian military presence in the region"⁷⁹². The cognitive confusion of "who" South Ossetia is, does hence not arise because the South Ossetian identity managers are not able to construct a consistent understanding of South Ossetians' social origin. It occurs because they are not capable of communicating consistent South Ossetian interests. This creates a group identity that seemingly has one leg in the South Ossetian social category, and the other in the Russian category. The South Ossetian identity construct is thus like the DPR identity construct. However, whereas the DPR identity is in a cognitive birth as the DPR identity managers are largely constructing a DPR identity from the Russian group identity, it could be argued that the South Ossetian identity is in a "cognitive death" as this group's identity and interests are increasingly linked to the Russian group identity. What previously was a distinct identity is now becoming more diffuse. The increased relations with Russia, and confused incentives that lie behind

⁷⁹¹ Independent-4 (4)

⁷⁹² SO-15 (5)

the wish to unify with Russia, is therefore threatening the social existence of the South Ossetian group identity.

The irony of this is that the primary interest expressed in South Ossetia's conflict narrative is to ensure the group's existence. To ensure this, there is a need to build an independent South Ossetian republic, which is capable of existing from its own agency. As Bibilov stated in August 2017 in connection to an event titled "I couldn't imagine myself without Russia, without its love or without my love":

Recognition of the independence and sovereignty by Russia has allowed the people of South Ossetia and fraternal Abkhazia to embrace stable peace and security[...]We have to take the full advantage of the unique historical chance, we have to develop the Republic, rebuild our statehood so that nobody has doubts regarding solvency of our country⁷⁹³.

This understanding contradicts the beforementioned wish of uniting with Russia, and the primary finding when exploring South Ossetian interests is that these tend to be self-contradicting. It may eventually be argued that the main interest that drives the South Ossetians is to socially exist, with a confusion of how to ensure this existence – via independence or Russian unification. Social existence, however, does not merely depend on who manages the South Ossetian group (Russians or South Ossetians), but also hinges on the need to make others acknowledge that the South Ossetian group identity exists. Because the South Ossetian identity managers also point to how they wish to be seen and heard by other out-groups. As Tskhovrebov stated in July 2015 in an interview to Interfax News Agency: "South Ossetia repeatedly has declared of readiness to interact with international organizations not as a part of Georgia as they try to hold us out in western countries, but as an independent state. To mould their own objective opinion based on their impressions, but not on a data obtained from Georgia, we invite representatives of international organizations to visit South Ossetia"⁷⁹⁴. There is thus also an emphasis on the wish to be recognised by others within the international community. As the non-state actors in Ukraine, South Ossetian identity managers equally point to the importance of social validation, as this will ensure that the South Ossetian group identity and interests will continue to feature in the consciousness (and social cognitive processing) of others.

6.4.3 Other-Schema

6.4.3.1 *The Georgia Group*

In South Ossetia's reification of the Georgia group, the identity managers do not refer to where this group comes from or how it gained control over its existence. Focus is on when and what mobilised this group in

⁷⁹³ SO-82 (5)

⁷⁹⁴ SO-48 (5)

the conflict with South Ossetia. As stated, South Ossetian identity managers process Georgian identity managers as agents driven by the intention of eradicating the South Ossetians. The reason for this intention is because the Georgian identity managers inhabit inherently negative interests and social dispositions, which they pass on to Georgian group members. As the Foreign Ministry stated in April 2016 regarding an investigation into the 2008 events: “It is not clear, for how much longer will the occurrences of August 2008 and other fascist crimes of the Georgian leadership, that took place during the last twenty years, will be covered with mist. It is time to open eyes of Georgian people and the International Community on the ruinous inadequate policy of Georgian leadership towards people of South Ossetia”⁷⁹⁵. Like the Russian identity managers, South Ossetian identity managers point to the distinction between Georgian identity managers and group members. They more specially argue that Georgian group members are fooled into believing the negative group construct their leadership shape around the South Ossetian identity. According to the South Ossetian identity managers, the negative understanding of the South Ossetians is passed on over time and it has now manifested as part of the Georgian collective cognition. As the Foreign Ministry responded in April 2013 to statements made by Georgia’s Prime-Minister, Bidzina Ivanishvili, during a speech at the Council of Europe:

People of South Ossetia know that generations Georgians were brought up in context of chauvinism and xenophobia where Ossetians were not brothers but just neighbors. For some reason Ivanishvili forgot about shelling of South Ossetia as well as about the Georgian tanks that entered Tskhinval shooting helpless residents. This is probably how Georgia demonstrated love to its brothers⁷⁹⁶.

There is hence a mismanagement of the Georgian group members and it is a group of agents who increasingly abide to their leadership’s false construction of self and other. In South Ossetia’s conflict narrative, the Georgians are processed as agents who thus share the same negative dispositions. When reifying the Georgia group, the South Ossetian identity managers therefore apply a combined group and leadership attribution error, as the negative attitude towards the Ossetians is perceived as deriving from the leadership. It is, however, also an attitude that now generally reflects Georgians understanding of South Ossetians.

Xenophobia towards the South Ossetians is a phenomenon that draws roots back to the 1918s where South Ossetians were used as scapegoats for the negative relations Georgians had with the Russians. As stated in “The Declaration of the Genocide of 1920 in South Ossetia” posted on the Foreign Ministry’s homepage in June 2016:

Apparent persecution of Ossetians was started as far back as 1918. They were declared ‘highwaymen’, ‘anarchists’ and the blame was put on them for all the misfortunes that befell the Georgians. One of the

⁷⁹⁵ SO-25 (5)

⁷⁹⁶ SO-26 (5)

leaders of the Georgian punitive squads, colonel Kasishvili said at a meeting in the village of Eredvi: ‘It is already 118 years that Russia has subjugated Georgia and deprived it of freedom. We have suffered this age-long torture through the fault of Ossetians’⁷⁹⁷.

The mobilisation of Georgians against the South Ossetians is rooted in the Georgian identity managers’ tendency to understand the South Ossetian territory as a bargaining chip between them and the Russians. The Georgian identity managers have thus for long treated South Ossetia as a Russian substitute. The negative understanding of the South Ossetia group is, however, also a result of early disagreements over the legal right to territory. As the Foreign Ministry expressed it in January 2017 on the 25th anniversary of South Ossetia’s first referendum for independence: “Demonstratively having left the legal framework of the USSR before legal dissolution of the Union, Georgia couldn’t become the successor of GSSR and lost any basis for claims to South Ossetia territory. However, instead of settling legal relations with its neighbor, Georgia unleashed armed aggression against people of South Ossetia that culminated in tragic events of 1992, 2004 and 2008”⁷⁹⁸. The conflict between the two groups hence draws roots to negative Russia-Georgia relations and it was originally a disagreement over territory. It, however, turned into an armed conflict once Georgian identity managers decided to disregard the legal settlement of this dispute and launch an aggression against the South Ossetians.

The mobilisation of the Georgian group members around ‘territorial integrity’, i.e. the right to exercise control over the South Ossetian territory, is therefore a lie as Georgians do not possess the rightful ownership of the South Ossetian territory and so the Georgians are not experiencing the annexation of their land. As the Foreign Ministry also stated in January 2012 in a response to Georgia’s continued claim for territorial integrity:

Georgia has never had a legal right on the territory of South Ossetia which was included as a component of Georgian SSR in 1922 under protest of the Ossete people[...]By the time of recognition of Georgia by international society as an independent country, South Ossetia had been its part neither politically nor juridical and had been external to its ‘territorial integrity’⁷⁹⁹.

This true account of the conflict’s origin, and the Georgia group’s role in it, is refuted by Georgian identity managers who seek to justify their choice of settling a legal disagreement using force. By removing the Georgians from the Soviet Union, Georgian identity managers nevertheless removed their right to manage the South Ossetians and their territory. Georgian identity managers have since then had to adapt to this fact but has refused to do so. As the Foreign Ministry stated in February 2014: “Georgian leadership, cursing Soviet era in the history of their nation, refuse to realize that by denouncing of all the state acts, adopted

⁷⁹⁷ SO-6 (5)

⁷⁹⁸ SO-58 (5)

⁷⁹⁹ SO-15 (5)

since 1921, Supreme Council of Georgia abolished all legal grounds for South-Ossetian Autonomous Oblast be part of Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic”⁸⁰⁰. Georgian identity managers have instead had to fabricate a negative identity around the South Ossetian group due to their own decision in the 1920s and early 1990s. This is a fact that the Georgian identity managers do not wish to admit to, and so they continue to communicate the negative construction of South Ossetia and distort this groups’ relations with Russia. As the Foreign Ministry responded in December 2017 to a Georgian statement regarding Georgia’s readiness for dialogue with South Ossetia: ”It is time for Georgian party to realize that the reality isn’t related at all with the picture drawn by imagination of the Georgian politicians”⁸⁰¹.

It is from this reification of the Georgia group that the South Ossetian identity managers process Georgia as a conflict party that disregards any peaceful solution to the conflict. As stated in an interview with Sanakoev to Informational Agency ‘Res’ in August 2013: “All the prerequisites for war were created by Georgia. Georgia ignored the existing at that time negotiation format, discredited the peacekeeping forces that were located here. It was Georgia who attacked peaceful population”⁸⁰²”. The South Ossetian identity managers thus have a clear understanding of who the Georgians are, and this is an understanding the South Ossetian identity managers rely on when processing the behaviour that Georgia is, and will be, undertaking in the conflict. As the Foreign Ministry stated in October 2011: “And Georgia up till now is not ready for signing of binding document of non-use of force against South Ossetia and its leadership is still maturing revanchist plans”⁸⁰³. Georgian identity managers’ current behaviour, such as the unwillingness to sign a non-use of force agreement, is thus used as validation of South Ossetia’s other-schema as it is used to infer about the intentions that motivate the Georgians in the conflict.

6.4.3.2 Georgia’s Motivation for Behaviour

The main motivation said to drive the Georgians is the eradication of the South Ossetians as there is a Georgian interest of annexing the South Ossetian territory. As Kochiev stated in December 2015 in a response to Georgia’s claim for territorial integrity: “They keep on fantasizing about their territorial claims in Tbilisi. It appears that one should use applied psychology to comment such statements as it is evident that being frustrated because of the impossibility of getting the desired, Georgian authorities are forced to use psychologically manipulative techniques”⁸⁰⁴. Since the Georgian identity managers have been prevented from fully eradicating the South Ossetians, and since they cannot make a legal claim to the South Ossetian territory, there is a need to continue to disguise the Georgian identity managers’ lies in order to

⁸⁰⁰ SO-33 (5)

⁸⁰¹ SO-39 (5)

⁸⁰² SO-28 (5)

⁸⁰³ SO-9 (5)

⁸⁰⁴ SO-51 (5)

validate their behaviour. The need to disguise the truth about the conflict is an agreement that has been made between Georgian identity managers, as they continue to construct the situation and agents involved in a similar manner. As Sanakoev stated in an interview in August 2013:

Georgian authorities have partly changed but continue to use rhetoric of their predecessors. Comparing rhetoric of Saakashvili in 2003 and rhetoric of current authorities in respect of South Ossetia one can even find the same sentences. They do not even change the wording. Georgia ‘changes’ the approaches but the goal is the same to subdue South Ossetia and Abkhazia⁸⁰⁵.

Georgian identity managers are now also motivated by the attempt to impose their social cognitive framework onto the conflict, as this may allow them to reach their hostile intentions. Georgia’s conflict narrative is hence a manipulative technique and it leads to negative outcomes as it distorts the understandings that Georgians and others rely on in the conflict. What is interesting about this understanding is that South Ossetian identity managers argue that conflict narratives are vital tools in times of conflict. However, as the Foreign Ministry responded in October 2014 to Georgian statements that Ossetians and Georgians are able to co-exist peacefully: “It should be emphasized that nobody possesses the monopoly for the truth and nobody is allowed to distort it for as its own sake if there is no alternative. The policy of lie doesn't meet the needs of modern world and comes up with the objective order of a democratic world regime formation. It is high time to realize that only efforts based on the principles of mutual respect can result in stability and peace in the region”⁸⁰⁶. In the South Ossetian processing is therefore also the argument that if the South Ossetian identity managers’ conflict narrative is not adopted, then this implies the dismissal of facts with horrific consequences to follow. Hence, although no one has the monopoly on truth, South Ossetian identity managers do possess the right account of what is happening and why.

6.4.4 South Ossetia’s Social Cognitive Framework

Like the other conflict parties, South Ossetian identity managers’ social cognitive processing results in a social cognitive framework, which consists of a situation-, self-, and other-schema. The central aspect of South Ossetia’s framework is that the conflict is an intergroup conflict between South Ossetians and Georgians. Like the other conflict parties, South Ossetian identity managers reify distinct groups when processing stimuli that arise in the conflict. When reifying the Georgia group, the identity managers point to how this group follows a specific behavioural pattern, as Georgian identity managers have been consistent in their ambitions and consistent in passing their understandings on to Georgian group members - who uncritically adopt them and act in accordance to them. From this understanding arises the argument that the

⁸⁰⁵ SO-28 (5)

⁸⁰⁶ SO-38 (5)

conflict is one Georgian identity managers have initiated against the South Ossetians in the 1920s, and that the conflict continues to persist because Georgians have come to believe that it is justified to eradicate the South Ossetians and claim their territory. Whereas Russians identity managers process Georgian group members as agents with a conscious and the ability to change the situation (if they elect new leaders), South Ossetian identity managers process the Georgian group members as agents who unquestionably believe the things their identity managers tell them about the conflict and agents involved. In the South Ossetian in-group, there is, however, a perfect symbiosis between identity managers and group members as it is argued that all South Ossetians have experienced the same events, and so their behaviour and interests are guided by collective cognition. The South Ossetia group is thus reified as a unified and united entity, which acts in a consistently peaceful manner. The conflict is hence cognitively systematized around a distinct South Ossetia and Georgia group, and it is processed as one that has occurred because the South Ossetians and the Georgians inhabit different identities, interests, and social dispositions.

Despite this, there has been confusion regarding South Ossetia's self-schema and the reason for this, is the interests the South Ossetian identity managers associate with the South Ossetian group identity. South Ossetian identity managers have over the years been expressing inconsistent understandings of the South Ossetian interests, and particularly how these interests align with Russia. Interests have ebbed and flowed between autonomy, independence, Ossetian unification, and Russian unification. This inconsistency, and particularly the groups' increased relations with Russia, has had implications for South Ossetia's group identity. The interest of uniting with Russia and the increased relations that have occurred between these groups has led to cognitive confusion amongst Georgian identity managers, as these managers have difficulties separating South Ossetians from Russians. The inconsistent interests and the increased relations with Russia have thus led to a situation, where the South Ossetian group identity is being diluted. Whereas DPR is in a "cognitive birth" - as the identity managers are trying to distinguish the DPR identity and interests from Russia and Ukraine - the South Ossetia identity is in a "cognitive death" as this identity and associated interests, are increasingly linked with the Russian group identity. South Ossetian identity managers, with their shifting expressed interests, are thus running the risk that the South Ossetian group identity loses its value as an identity that agents identify with, and a social category that others use for sense making in the conflict. South Ossetia's social existence does hence not merely hinge on the social validation of others but also on the identity managers' ability to construct a consistent self-schema. Despite this, South Ossetian identity managers seek to present their in-group as a clearly distinguishable group of agents who share a common understanding of who they are, and how they relate to the other conflict parties. Like the other conflict parties in Ukraine and Georgia, South Ossetian identity managers thus seek to present clear-cut group constructs and a cognitively systematized reality, which they argue that the other conflict parties need to adopt if the conflict is to be resolved.

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I addressed the social cognitive processes the conflict parties in the Georgia conflict resort to. The chapter focused on the conflict parties' situation-, self-, and other-schemas, and how these result in social cognitive frameworks. The reason for exploring these processes was to establish how the conflict parties process stimuli and the intergroup dynamics that may arise from this. As in the Ukraine conflict, it is possible in the Georgia conflict to locate conflicting social cognitive frameworks as all conflict parties' resort to different understandings of the situation, self, and other. The Georgia conflict parties process stimuli differently and they place different emphasis on, and even exclude, certain stimuli when systematising the conflict. Common for all conflict parties is that the 2008 events serve as key stimuli, which are processed to make sense of why there is a conflict and who is confronted with who. They nevertheless process 2008 differently. Whereas Georgian identity managers process 2008 as the onset of a Russian invasion, Russian identity managers process it as a conflict escalation where Georgian identity managers once again sought to claim South Ossetian territory. South Ossetian identity managers share the Russian identity managers' understanding that 2008 was a conflict escalation, but they equally point to how 2008 was the time when the South Ossetian group reclaimed its full existence as a result of its Russian acknowledgment. Additionally, the conflict parties systematise the conflict differently as Russian and South Ossetian identity managers process it as a South Ossetia-Georgia conflict, whilst Georgian identity managers process it as a Georgia-Russia conflict. When systematising the conflict, the conflict parties also point to different events. Georgian identity managers e.g. point to the 1990s as the root cause of the conflict, as this was when Georgians claimed independence and the time when Russian identity managers started their revanchist policy of reversing this independence. In this processing, Georgian identity managers exclude the South Ossetia-Georgia clashes that occurred in the early 1990s and 2000s. Russian identity managers also point to how the conflict arose in the 1990s but as a result of Georgian identity managers' interests in expanding the Georgian identity onto more territory. South Ossetian identity managers, on the other hand, point to how the conflict arose in the 1920s, as this was when Georgian identity managers launched their first genocide attempts against the Ossetians. In the Georgia conflict there is hence the existence of opposing conflict narratives, which have occurred because the conflict parties process stimuli differently. Like in Ukraine, the conflict parties nevertheless share similar processing tendencies. Hence, despite them reaching different conflict narratives, they resort to the same processing tendencies when systematising the conflict and reifying the groups present.

The first processing tendency of adapting identities and interests in accordance to incoming stimuli is visible in Georgia's conflict narrative, where the identity managers have adapted their understanding of the conflict from an intragroup conflict, to an intergroup conflict as a result of Russians' increased presence and influence in South Ossetia. Georgian identity managers have also altered their other-

schema as they have gone from defining the antagonist as South Ossetia, to focusing purely on Russia. The South Ossetian identity managers have adapted their in-group interests. Initially these were greater autonomy and independence. However, in the 2000s it increasingly came to be the expressed wish of uniting with Russia. South Ossetian interests have eventually ebbed and flowed, which has made it difficult to establish what this conflict party wants. The continued adaptation of South Ossetian interests has also had implications for the South Ossetian group identity, as South Ossetia's increased relations with Russia, has led Georgian identity managers to identify South Ossetians as Russians/Russian puppets. Through the South Ossetian identity managers processing of stimuli and subsequent change in interests, has hence occurred a (presumably involuntary) change in the South Ossetian identity. This has implications as to how South Ossetia is reified by others, but it also has implications as to how the conflict is cognitively systematised. The Russian identity managers have also altered identities and interests as they have moved from identifying the conflict as a South-Ossetia/Georgia conflict, where the conflict parties needed to reach a common agreement, into a conflict where Georgians identity managers have consistently attacked South Ossetia.

Another tendency visible in the conflict parties processing is to reify out-groups from a leadership attribution error, and in-groups from a group attribution error. In Georgia's conflict narrative, Russian behaviour is processed as the outcome of Russian identity managers' interests and personal identities. Rather than reifying the Russia group as the spitting image of Putin (as seen in Ukraine), Georgian identity managers point to how the Russia group has behaved in a consistent manner for decades. Russia's group identity and interests are thus an outcome of consecutive Russian identity managers who all have had negative personalities and interests. Apart from this, is the Georgian tendency to reify the Georgia in-group as a united entity that acts from the same understanding of self and other. From this understanding it is argued that it is not the Georgian identity managers who have mobilised Georgians in the conflict, as Georgians have collectively mobilised themselves when they discovered that Russia was, once again, threatening their existence. A similar tendency is seen from the South Ossetian and Russian identity managers who point to how Georgian behaviour is an outcome of the Georgian leaderships' personal identity and interests. Here South Ossetian and Russian identity managers slightly differ in their processing. Whereas the Russian identity managers point to how Georgians are mobilised around fake interests, South Ossetian identity managers point to how the hatred that Georgian identity managers inhabit towards Ossetians has manifested and become a general Georgian attitude. As seen in the Ukraine conflict, there is thus also in the Georgia conflict a tendency to reify the identity and interests of in- and out-groups differently, and to process the mobilisation of group members as either the outcome of collective cognition or leadership manipulation.

There is also the tendency to process the conflict as a matter of alien identity management. Here, Georgian identity managers e.g. point to how Georgians are seeking to resist the Russian identity managers' attempt to reimpose their management on them, whilst Russian identity managers point to how Georgians identity managers are seeking to impose their management on the South Ossetians. South Ossetian identity managers point to how the conflict is a matter of defying alien Georgian management of the Ossetian group. South Ossetian identity managers equally point to the wish of uniting with Russia, as Russian management of the South Ossetian identity is processed as a positive development. Apart from relying on alien identity management to process the conflict, is the tendency amongst the conflict parties to advocate for the adoption of their other-schema. As in Ukraine, all conflict parties in Georgia point to how they possess the true understanding of the other and how there is a need for others to adopt this understanding for the conflict to end. Georgian identity managers e.g. point to how their Russia group reification is the true account of who Russia is and what it wants, which is an understanding reached by processing Russian behaviour in the Georgia conflict, but also past Russian behaviour and the behaviour of the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. Russian identity managers also point to how they know the true contours of the Georgia group identity, and how there is a need for others to adopt the understanding that the conflict is one Georgian identity managers have initiated and now sustain. Something similar can be seen in South Ossetia where the identity managers seek to advocate the adoption of their processing that Georgian identity managers have consistently sought to eradicate the South Ossetian group identity.

The conflict parties also resort to cognitive support. South Ossetia's social cognitive framework is e.g. partly supported by the Russian identity managers, as Russian identity managers support the understanding that the conflict is defined by the Georgian attempt to eradicate the South Ossetians. At the same time is also the Russian argument that the conflict is held in place because Western states are supporting Georgia's social cognitive processing, which causes Georgian identity managers to continue their pursuit of negative behaviour. Georgian identity managers, on the other hand, argue that others need to support their social cognitive framework if the conflict is to end. The four processing tendencies are thus also visible in the Georgia conflict. These analysis findings will serve as a foundation for discussing, in the next chapter, the intergroup dynamics that exist in the Georgia and Ukraine conflicts and how these may contribute to the conflicts' protraction.

7.0. The Conflicts' Intergroup Dynamics

The puzzle that shapes this research is how come the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts continue to be protracted when the conflict parties all agree that the various conflict agreements and ceasefires they have reached, need to be implemented and respected in order for their interests to be attained. This puzzle raises the question of whether there are certain understandings that continue to move the conflict parties towards confrontation rather than reconciliation. To explore these ideational factors, I focus my attention on the role cognitive processes play in shaping conflict protraction. The aim is to explore how the conflict parties' cognitive processes interact, and how these interacting processes construct intergroup dynamics that may hinder the conflict parties in reaching common ground. To this end, the objective was to explore how the conflict parties process stimuli, how they compartmentalise this into specific understandings about the situation, self, and other, and how these understandings interact. What emerged from the analysis findings, is that the conflicts are protracted because the conflict parties engage in processing tendencies that shape a cognitive struggle over which conflict party gets to reify the groups present. Adding to this is also the finding that the conflict parties' processing change. The conflicts are hence not only protracted because the conflict parties' self/other understandings have become cemented. Rather, what the analyses findings indicate, is that their self/other understandings are flexible. The conflicts' protractions are thus shaped by processing tendencies, which the conflict parties continuously engage in as well as seek to counter. The principle of these processing tendencies is that they dismiss the out-group's group reification attempts. When making sense of stimuli, all conflict parties reach certain group constructs, which they argue should be applied to make sense of the conflicts and used as the shared understanding for solving the conflicts. These constructs include an outlining of which groups are present in the conflict and what the different groups want. It also includes an outlining of what defines members of these groups, where the groups originate from, and how they relate to one another. The conflict parties are in their social cognitive processing therefore not merely providing an overview of how the conflicts progressed and who the antagonist is. They are to a greater extent engaged in reifying the groups present and establishing the distinctions between them. Through these processing tendencies, however, each conflict party comes to question whether the group constructs the out-group resorts to, exist. This does not merely imply questioning whether the groups that the out-group refers to in its narrative are correctly described. Instead, through the processing tendencies, the conflict parties construct the other's group constructs as fake. Their intergroup dynamics are thus defined by clashing attempts to establish the social boundaries that exist between the agents who are engaged with, or entrapped in, the conflicts.

In the Ukraine conflict, the Ukrainian identity managers systematise the conflict around a Ukrainian and Russian group identity, which are presented as the classifications that agents engaged in the

conflict belong to, or do not belong to. From this systematisation, the identity managers draw a sharp distinction between Ukrainians and Russians as the means for making sense of stimuli that occur. In this process, they dismiss the existence of people identified as Donetskians, which has implications as to how the Ukrainian identity managers approach the conflict and the conflict narrative that they produce. The Russian identity managers do not share this cognitive systematisation, as they only rely on the Ukraine group identity to make sense of the agents present. The Russian identity managers do, however, resort to the Russian group identity when processing the social origin of the Ukraine group identity. Here it is argued that the Russian and Ukrainian group identities derive from the same origin and so, in Russia's conflict narrative, Ukrainians and Russians are the same people. In this systematisation the Russian identity managers also dismiss the use of a DPR group identity, as these agents are characterised as Ukrainians with a stronger Russian heritage than the rest of the Ukraine group members. The DPR identity managers, on the other hand, draw a cognitive systematisation around a Ukraine and DPR group identity. This results in a conflict narrative where the conflict is between agents who are either distinctly Ukrainian or Donetskian. To make sense of stimuli, the DPR identity managers also include the Russian group identity, which they treat as a group identity that the people of DPR, Luhansk, and Crimea share with the Russian state. The Russian group identity is hence a borderless identity that encompasses a range of sub-identities.

In the Georgia conflict, the Georgian identity managers systematise the conflict around a Georgian, South Ossetian, and Russian group identity. From this systematisation the identity managers draw a sharp distinction between all three identities as Georgians, South Ossetians, and Russians are processed as different agents. There is, however, confusion over the distinction between Russians and South Ossetians, as the cooperation between these two groups has led to bewilderment over who is who. In Georgia's conflict narrative, there is thus an added sub-distinction between the South Ossetians, as the South Ossetian identity managers are processed as Russians, and the South Ossetian group members are processed as Ossetians. The Russian identity managers also draw a clear-cut distinction between all three group identities, as these are treated as distinct groups with their own characteristics. In this systematisation the Russian identity managers seek to soften the distinction between Russians and Georgians, as these are processed as agents who share the same interests. The South Ossetian identity managers equally systematise the conflict around the Georgian, South Ossetian, and Russian group identities. The South Ossetian identity managers have, however, increasingly struggled to draw a sharp distinction between Russians and South Ossetians. This shapes a confused South Ossetian group identity and leads to cognitive confusion amongst the Georgian identity managers, as they do not know "who" South Ossetia really is. Despite this confusion, all conflict parties seek to present their cognitive systematisation and group constructs as real and the opponent's systematisation and group constructs as fake.

The conflicts are thus defined by a struggle over how to, as well as who gets to, define the social boundaries that define these conflicts. This shapes intergroup dynamics where the conflict parties' relations are defined by an action/reaction pattern where each conflict party seeks to counter the other's social cognitive processing, whilst at the same time bolstering their own processing. From the analysis, this action/reaction pattern has found to be shaped and sustained by four processing tendencies: 1) The first process that shapes the cognitive struggle over who gets to systematise agents and reify the groups present, is the tendency to adapt identities and interest. All conflict parties have engaged in this tendency when processing stimuli, and it has led to cognitive confusion and inconsistent expressions of who is fighting who in the conflict and why. When e.g. confronted with stimuli that does not fit into an existing self/other understanding, this has been processed by either changing the in-group's identity/interests or changing the out-group's identity/interests. In some cases, stimulus has been adapted to fit it into an existing self/other understanding. The tendency to change identities and interests indicates an opportunity for the conflict parties to reach a shared understanding of the conflicts and agents involved. It has, however, led to continued group mobilisation, as group leaders seek to maintain that they have a consistent self/other understanding, and that the other is the one who has manufactured a fake self/other understanding. 2) The second process is leadership and group bias. This is the tendency to process the out-group's identity/interest as the outcome of the out-group leaders' personality, and the in-group's identity/interests as the outcome of group think. When confronted with stimulus, such as an out-group attack or an out-group dismissal of conflict resolution efforts, the conflict parties process such stimulus by pointing at the out-group's leadership. Here, they argue that the out-group leaders are the fault of such behaviour as they have distorted their in-group's identity and interests to fit their hostile personalities and personal interests. When, on the other hand, similar actions are undertaken by the in-group, the conflict parties point to how such behaviour occurs from a shared in-group understanding and memory of who they are and who the enemy is. What this processing tendency does is that it denies the other its' self-understanding and particularly its "groupness". It thus denies that the other is a real group, which feeds into out-group mobilization to ensure that this group continues to be regarded as a group.

3) The third process is alien identity management. This is the tendency to process the out-group's intention as wanting to manage the in-group's identity/interests, and the in-group tendency to manage the out-group's identity/interests. When stimulus occurs, such as the increased presence of troops or the walkout from negotiations, this may be processed as an outcome of the out-group's intention to manage the in-group. Such behaviour is processed as the outcome of an intention to seize control over the in-group and either eradicate this in-group or distort its' identity, so it supports the out-group's interests. What this process does, is that it seeks to present the "truth" about who the out-group is and what it wants. The in-group is hence trying to manage the out-group's identity/interests. This feeds into out-group

mobilization in order to counter the identity imposed upon it by the other, and to ensure the continued existence of the out-group's expressed distinctiveness. 4) Eventually there is cognitive support, where parts of a conflict party's social cognitive framework are supported by others or perceived to be supported by others. When e.g. processing why the conflict is protracted or why an out-group receives military support from a third party, this may be understood as an outcome of cognitive support. By processing such stimulus as cognitive support, the conflict parties reach an understanding that the out-group continues to engage in negative behaviour because its' distorted situation, self, and other understanding is supported by others. Cognitive support hence validates the out-group's negative behaviour. At the same time is the tendency to support parts of another conflict party's social cognitive framework. When e.g. a conflict party defines an attack as a genocide attempt, this may find cognitive support from another conflict party who also comes to process such stimulus from this understanding. This feeds into continued in-group mobilisation as a conflict party's social cognitive framework is validated by others. Although such support may only pertain to certain aspects of a social cognitive framework, it shapes a united cognitive front, which allows the conflict parties to uphold their cognitive systematisation and group constructs.

These four processes interlink to form an action/reaction pattern where each conflict party tries to deny, and at the same time manage, the out-group's social cognitive processing. This is done to ensure that the in-group's social cognitive processing gains validation, and that the in-group can continue to approach self and other from the social boundaries the identity managers have presented in their systematisation of the conflicts. Rather than leading to a favourable outcome for the conflict parties, however, the action/reaction pattern shapes a protracted cognitive interaction, as the conflict parties' processing tendencies threaten to nullify all group constructs applied for sense making. The conflict parties can hence not deviate from their processing tendencies, as it may imply losing the capacity to manage the group identities they have accentuated, and particularly loose the capacity to manage their in-group. In the end, deviation from their cognitive systematisation and group constructs would create a cognitive void for interactions, which would have implications for the conflict parties' self-understanding and the pursuit of interests in the conflict. It would also have implications for the mobilisation of in-group members, and it would cause general confusion about the existence of the group identities being accentuated in the conflict. In their social cognitive processing, the conflict parties do hence not merely dismiss conflict narratives. They also dismiss the cognitive systematisation of agents and the group reification attempts that the other is using in its sense making. They thus all want to manage *all* group identities perceived to be present, whilst at the same time define *which* group identities are present. The Ukraine and Georgia conflicts' protraction are therefore not merely an outcome of clashing interests or negative state relations. They are also about the social boundaries that the identity managers position around the agents present in the conflict contexts, and the distinctions attached to these groups. This cognitive conundrum has not been tackled in

current conflict resolution attempts as such efforts tend to focus on clashing interests. It is, however, imperative to build bridges between these incompatible social boundaries (or fully remove and rebuild commonly shared boundaries) as this will change the cognitive roadmaps used for interactions in the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts. A way to do so would be to address the four processing tendencies and to further dig into their individual characteristics in order to understand how they interlink and how they shape a cognitive action/reaction pattern, which is inconducive for resolving the conflicts.

7.1 The Action/Reaction Pattern

The Ukraine and Georgia conflicts' protractions are shaped by a cognitive action/reaction pattern, which is produced, shaped, and sustained by four processing tendencies:

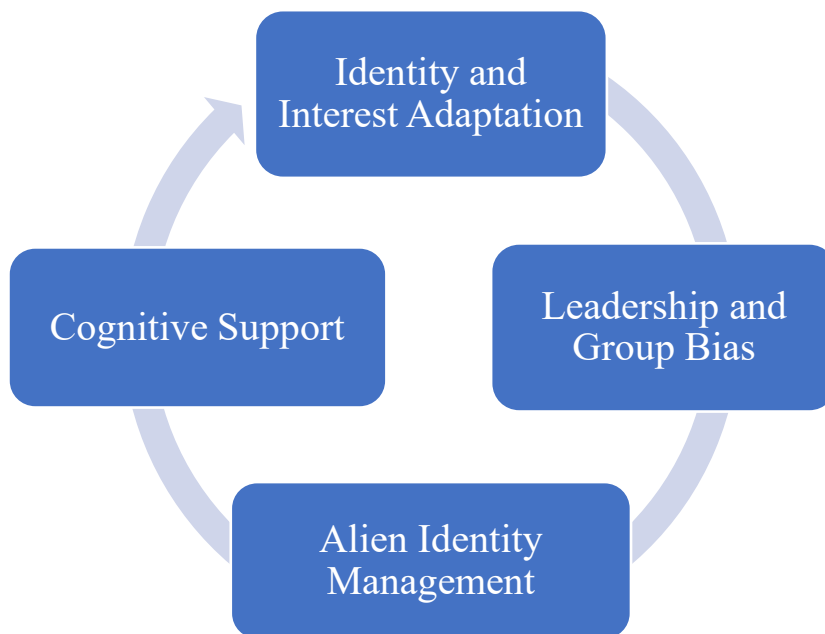


Figure 6: The action/reaction pattern

7.1.1 Identity and Interest Adaptation

The first process that shapes and sustains the action/reaction pattern is the tendency to change self- and/or other identities and interests when processing stimuli. This is a process all conflict parties engage in and it is a process that has led to flexible and contradicting social cognitive frameworks. Both DPR and South Ossetian identity managers have adapted their own identity or interests in response to either the reactions their own behaviour has generated, or in response to stimuli that has occurred in the conflicts. In DPR's conflict narratives, the identity managers have from the beginning had difficulties cognitively systematising

the agents involved in the conflict, and particularly establishing “who” the people of DPR are. Initially the people of DPR were socially categorised as Russians who had an interest in reuniting with the Russian state. As Russian identity managers, however, did not react to this proclaimed Russian identity and interest, but continued to categorise the people of DPR as Ukrainians, the DPR identity managers found themselves in an identity vacuum. To fill this vacuum, the identity managers proposed the establishment of Novorossiia and Malorossiia as social categories that could cognitively systematise the conflict and identify the people of DPR. These projects equally failed in gaining traction as there was limited support in Eastern Ukraine for the establishment of such identities. The DPR identity managers eventually settled on a DPR group identity, which now functions as the cognitive systematization of the conflict (as one between Ukrainians and “Donetskians”) and as the identity from which DPR’s interests (such as independence) are pursued.

The South Ossetian identity managers have also adapted their own identity and interests. However, whereas the DPR identity adaptation has been explicit, the South Ossetian identity adaptation has occurred involuntarily as a result of interest adaptation. In the 1990s, the South Ossetian identity managers pointed to the South Ossetian interest of independence but also to the interest of uniting with fellow Ossetian group members in North Ossetia. In the 2000s, this changed into an expressed wish of uniting with “brotherly Russia” and increased relations between Russia and South Ossetia. This change may have occurred as a response to various stimuli, including a change in South Ossetian leadership, the increasingly negative Russian stance towards Georgia in the 2000s (which opened up pathways for South Ossetia to increase its relations with Russia), and the 2008 events where Russia intervened on behalf of South Ossetia. It is, however, noticeable that the South Ossetian identity managers have been consistently inconsistent in their expressed interests, as these have shifted between greater autonomy, independence, Ossetian unification, and Russian unification. The change in interest is thus not definitive but refers to a reactive change where interests are adapted on a regular basis. Despite this inconsistency, the South Ossetian identity managers try to construct a conflict narrative around a consistent South Ossetia group.

The non-state actors’ identity and interest adaptations have had a significant impact on the social cognitive processing that arises in the conflicts. These adaptations have not merely had an influence on how the non-state actors make sense of their own group identities and interests, but also how the states make sense of the non-state actors. In both the Georgia and Ukraine conflict, the states have had difficulties establishing who South Ossetia and DPR are, and the extent to which they represent their own group identity or whether they are “Russian”. To this end, Ukrainian and Georgian identity managers have settled on two different options for cognitive systematization with Georgia drawing a social distinction between South Ossetian leaders (categorised as Russian) and South Ossetian civilians (categorised as Ossetian). The Ukrainian identity managers have, on the other hand, categorised DPR by applying the Russia social category. In Ukraine’s conflict narrative, DPR is thus not a group identity as the agents who claim to

represent and belong to this group are categorised as Russians. The non-state actors' identity and interest adaptations have led to cognitive confusion, and to a situation where the states have reacted to this adaptation by changing their social cognitive processing of the conflicts. It has also led to a situation where identities are in the process of birth and death as the DPR identity managers' construction of the DPR group identity has forced these identity managers to establish how this identity is different from the Russian group identity, whilst at the same time being similar. South Ossetia's ties with Russia and the identity managers' expressed interest of uniting with Russia has, on the other hand, blurred the South Ossetian group identity, as others struggle to draw a distinction between South Ossetia and Russia. The South Ossetian identity managers now find themselves in a situation where their processing of stimuli may have jeopardized the usage of the South Ossetian social category in the sense making of the conflict. This challenges South Ossetia's inclusion in the conflict negotiation process (as others perceive Russia as the antagonist and South Ossetia as a proxy) but also challenges the non-state actor's interest of reaching international recognition for its independence.

The process of identity and interest adaptation is not merely confined to the non-state actors, as the states have also adapted identities and interests. However, whereas the non-state actors have adapted their own identity and interests, the states have processed stimuli in accordance with their existing self-schemas or adapted their understandings of the others' identity and interests. The Russian identity managers have e.g. sought to adapt information about Russian troop presence in Ukraine into their existing self-schema of being a neutral party. This was done by changing the categorisation of the Russians present in Ukraine, as their existence was first denied and, eventually, they were categorised as volunteers. By doing so, the Russian identity managers have been able to (somewhat) maintain Russia's expressed neutrality, as the volunteers are treated as Russian group members who are acting from their own interests, rather than the collective interests of the Russian group identity. In the Georgia conflict, the Russian identity managers have adapted their understanding of Georgia. This change occurred approximately around 2004 with an increase in Georgia-Russia tensions and it culminated in 2008 where Russian identity managers identified the Georgian identity managers as the conflict instigators. The Georgian identity managers have also changed their understanding of "the other", as they have gone from processing the conflict as an intragroup conflict to an intergroup conflict. Whereas the other initially was identified as South Ossetia (which threatened to separate from Georgia) the other was later identified as Russia (which threatened to annex Georgia's territory). A similar change is seen in the Ukraine conflict where the Ukrainian identity managers initially categorised DPR as terrorists who sought to disrupt order. These agents are now categorised as Russians who are seeking to eradicate the Ukraine group identity. Although both states and non-state actors adapt their schemas, there is a difference in how they process stimuli and the extent to which this leads to an adaptation of their own identity and interests. The states are in the end more capable of keeping a

consistent self-schema. The reason for this may be because the states' applied group identities (such as Ukrainians and Russians) are well established as a result of them being socially validated through statehood. The non-state actors' group identities have not received such a social validation, which forces them to engage in social cognitive processing that may significantly alter their own identities and interests.

What is interesting about the identity and interest adaptation process is that it leads to flexible social cognitive frameworks. This challenges the conflict supportive narrative and radical disagreement theories, which argue that conflict protraction occurs as the result of opposed situation, self, and other understandings that have become cemented. What the analyses find is that the conflict parties do not abide to the same conflict narrative through-out the conflicts, nor do they stick to a consistent understanding of self and other. They instead engage in a process of identity and interest adaptation where self or other-identities and interests are changed as a reaction/action to stimuli that occurs. This change is from a conflict resolution perspective opportune as it opens the possibility to introduce "new" or more compatible self/other understandings, which can be conducive for peaceful relations. This has, however, not been the case as all conflict parties have continuously adapted identity/interests along negative and opposed group lines. This cognitive flexibility has led to in-group mobilisation, as the in-group identity managers seek to maintain the image that they have a consistent self/other understanding, and that the out-group identity managers are the ones who have manufactured a fake self/other understanding. The first process that shapes the action/reaction pattern is hence the tendency to adapt identities and interests, which is a processing tendency sustained and shaped by the remaining processes.

7.1.2 Leadership and Group Bias

The second processing tendency that shapes and sustains the action/reaction pattern is the application of a leadership and group bias. In the conflict parties' conflict narratives, they all resort to certain biases when processing stimuli. They amongst other rely on a group attribution error, which is the tendency to process the in-group's identity/interests as the outcome of group-think. Through this bias, the in-group is constructed as an entity that acts and thinks from a shared self-understanding, and a unit that presents a perfect interaction between leaders and members. In contrast to this is the use of a leadership bias where the out-group's identity/interests are processed as the outcome of the out-group leaders' personality and personal interests. From this bias, the out-group's behaviour does not derive from collective memory, but from the manipulation of out-group members. Whereas the in-group thus experiences unity and behaves in accordance to collectively agreed upon interests, out-group members are manipulated into behaving and thinking in accordance with their leaders' wishes.

In the Ukraine conflict, the Ukrainian identity managers process out-group stimuli through a leadership bias, which constructs the Russian group identity and interests as something that has been

shaped from Putin's image and ambitions. In Ukraine's conflict narrative, the conflict is therefore not between Ukrainians and Russians per se, but between Ukrainians and Putin, as Putin has mobilised some of Russia's group members in the pursuit of his own interests. What this process leads to is an understanding that the Russia group is not an authentic group, but a construct that the Russian leadership has formed and mobilised agents around. Hence, although the Russia group is rooted in the Russian group identity, this identity has been manipulated and de-constructed in order to comply with Putin's personality. The Ukrainian identity managers use a similar processing tendency for DPR, which they fully disqualify as a group, as the people of DPR are categorised as the beforementioned Russians that Putin has mobilised. This creates the understanding that "the other" is a fake group. Stated differently, the Russians/Donetskians who fight in Ukraine are not agents who unanimously act from a group identity, but Russian group members who have been forced/manipulated into thinking and acting in accordance with a fake self-understanding. Ukraine is, however, not the only conflict party that demonstrates leadership bias in their processing as the Russian and the DPR identity managers also resort to this bias when making sense of out-group stimuli. In both DPR and Russia's conflict narratives, the identity managers construct the Ukrainian leaders as agents who are in the process of distorting the Ukraine group identity in order to shape the Ukraine group from their own image. The conflict is thus not between Russians/Donetskians and Ukrainians per se. It is a conflict that the Ukrainian identity managers have instigated and control through the distortion of Ukrainians' self-understanding. The conflict hence derives from a hierarchy in the Ukraine group and from the Ukrainian leaders' ambition of pursuing their own personal enrichment through the mobilisation of their group members around a fake self-understanding.

The leadership bias does not merely result in a certain construction of the out-group's self-understanding as it also generates a reaction pattern where the groups seek to counter the leadership bias with a group bias. In Ukraine's conflict narrative, the identity managers seek to counter the argument that the Ukrainian leaders are manipulating Ukrainians' self-understanding. They do so by processing in-group stimuli through a group bias where they construct the Ukraine group as a united and authentic group, which has collectively mobilised against the Russian threat. In Ukraine's conflict narrative, Ukrainians unanimously think and act from the same self-understanding. The Ukrainian identity managers are therefore not controlling the Ukraine group members, as they represent a collective understanding that unites all Ukrainians. Something similar is seen in DPR where the identity managers construct the DPR group as one that has collectively arisen against the Ukraine threat to reclaim control over its existence. The DPR group is hence not a leadership construct but a group of agents who for centuries have fought for independence. All Donetskians thus share the same self-understanding and all act/react from the same memory network. The only conflict party which does not resort to a stark division in the use of the leadership and group bias is Russia. In Russia's conflict narrative, the identity managers do point to how it is their role as identity

managers to manage and maintain the Russian group identity. This identity is, however, not the unilateral outcome of the Russian leaders' personality. Rather, the Russian group identity that the Russian identity managers represent in the conflict, is a group construct their group members support. The leaders' management of the Russian identity and interests is hence validated by a perfect interaction between Russian leaders and members, and a unanimous understanding of who Russia is.

Similar action/reaction pattern is seen in the Georgia conflict where Georgian identity managers construct the Russia group as an outcome of Russian leaderships' personalities and interests. However, rather than referring directly to Putin as the mastermind behind the Russia group, the identity managers construct the Russian group identity as an outcome of consecutive Russian leaders who all have pursued the same negative interests. Russia's self-understanding has hence developed over time, but it is still a distorted self-understanding that Russian group members have been forced or manipulated into adopting. The Russians fighting in Georgia are thus fighting based on a fake self-understanding and they are pursuing interests that only benefit their leaders. The South Ossetian identity managers also construct the Georgian group identity and interests as the outcome of Georgian leaders who have installed xenophobia within the Georgia group against the South Ossetians. The South Ossetian identity managers thus also point to how the out-group's identity and interests have been formed over time by the leaders who manage the out-group. Rather than merely being a case of out-group member manipulation, however, the South Ossetian identity managers argue that the Georgians have adopted the self/other understanding their identity managers communicate to them. Georgian leaderships' negative personalities have hence manifested as general Georgian dispositions, and so Georgians do not merely fight South Ossetians because they are told to, but because they harbour an inherent hatred towards the Ossetians. Similar processing tendency is seen in Russia's conflict narrative where the Georgian group identity and interests are regarded as the outcome of consecutive Georgian leaders who since the 1990s have sought to expand the Georgian group identity onto more territory. Unlike South Ossetia, however, the Russian identity managers do not point to an inherent hatred in the Georgia group. The Georgian group members are instead misled to follow interests, which do not confine with their identity. This may change if the Georgians decide to elect new leaders who are more capable of representing their group identity and interests. As in Ukraine, the Georgian and South Ossetian identity managers seek to counter these leadership biases with a group bias. They thus point to how their in-group is an authentic and united group, which has collectively decided to rise and fight against the common enemy. The only exception is again the Russian identity managers who point to how they, in confinement with Russian group members' wishes, decided to mobilise Russians in the Georgia/South Ossetia conflict to ensure the safety of the South Ossetians and the Russian in-group members stationed in South Ossetia as peacekeepers.

What is interesting about the leadership and group biases is that they shape and sustain an understanding that the groups present in the conflicts are not only different in terms of who they are and what they want, but also in terms of their genuineness. This is an interesting finding as it adds to the exploration of intergroup relations in times of conflict. In the intergroup conflict theories, there is a general argument that conflicts are sustained because groups perceive their interests to be colliding and incompatible. What the analyses findings nevertheless indicate is that the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts are not merely upheld by perceived clashing interests between groups, but also by attempts to deny the other its' group construct. Hence, although the Ukraine and Georgia conflict parties may also perceive their interests to be clashing, they equally interact from an attempt to construct the other's in-group as not a real group, but a fake construct that out-group leaders have manipulated or made-up in order to reach personal ambitions. The leadership bias is therefore a process where the groups try to deny the other group its existence and particularly its groupness. Since this is part of an action/reaction pattern, this means that the in-group's identity is being externally disqualified. This feeds into in-group mobilisation as identity managers continuously need to reassure their group members, and onlookers, that their in-group is unified and authentic. The problem with the leadership bias is, however, not merely that it leads to a group biased reaction but that it dismisses the relation between group leaders and members. As stated in the theory on identity managers, identity managers will not construct a group identity solely out of their own image. Rather, in their attempt to cognitively systematise a situation they will highlight the importance of an existing social identity and accentuate this on amongst other the basis of stimuli their group members produce. The identities that the Ukraine and Georgia conflict parties' resort to are thus identities that already exist in their societies (with DPR as somewhat of an exception) and so it is identities that their group members identify with and behave and think on behalf of. The leadership bias therefore dismisses the importance and existence of certain social identities and removes agency from group members, as they are constructed as yes-men or puppets who do not have the ability to determine right from wrong. This also feeds into in-group mobilisation as group leaders and members seek to continuously emphasise their identity and their ability to think for themselves.

7.1.3 Alien Identity Management

The third process that shapes the action/reaction pattern is alien identity management, which is the tendency to construct the out-group as bent on managing the in-group's identity and interests. It also refers to the in-group tendency to manage the out-group's identity and interests. Through this processing tendency, the conflict parties try to provide the truth about who the out-group is and what it wants. In the Ukraine conflict, the Ukrainian identity managers continuously construct the intentions of the Russia group to be the management of the Ukrainian identity and interests. This management is framed in various ways with the

dominant one being that Russian behaviour in Ukraine is driven by an intention of reinstating the Soviet Union, and retaking control of the Ukraine group in order to eradicate those who identify as Ukrainians. Russia's intention is hence to prevent agents from identifying with other social identities than the Russian one, and hereof prevent agents from pursuing interests that do not cater to Russia. This leads to the understanding that Ukrainians are fighting for the right to identify as Ukrainian and have Ukrainian identity managers manage the Ukraine group identity. In Ukraine's conflict narrative, the identity managers point to how this construction of Russia is the truth, as Ukrainians have had past experiences with this out-group, and previously been correct in terms of predicting what Russia wants. They hence construct Russia as a group that behaves in a consistent manner, which is an understanding reached by e.g. processing and comparing the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts, and Russian behaviour during the Soviet Union and World War 2. From this follows the argument that others need to adopt the Ukrainian Russia-construct if future conflicts are to be prevented and the current one in Ukraine is to be resolved. The tendency to manage the out-group's identity and interests is also found in DPR's conflict narrative, where the identity managers construct the DPR group as one that is trying to rid itself of Ukraine's alien management. The Ukrainian management of the DPR group, it is argued, has long led to suffering to the point where Donetskians' survival was jeopardized. The DPR identity managers thus now seek to separate the two groups to ensure that the Donetskians are managed by their own people, and hence may come to live in accordance with their true identity and interests. Similar argument is found in Russia's conflict narrative. However, rather than processing stimuli as a matter of alien management, the Russian identity managers process the Ukraine group as one that is threatened by mis-management. In Russia's conflict narrative, Donetskians, Ukrainians and Russians are not three distinct groups but the same people as they all derive from the same social origin – the Soviet Union. This truth is distorted by Ukraine's new leaders who are trying to remove any Russian trace from Ukraine. This has led to an internal conflict as Ukrainians fight amongst themselves over the extent to which they have a Russian origin or not. It is thus, according to the Russian identity managers, imperative that the Russian Ukraine-construct is adopted, as this provides the factual foundation for improving intragroup relations and solving the conflict.

In the Georgia conflict, the Georgian identity managers construct the conflict as a matter of defying Russian identity managers' attempt to reimpose their control over the Georgian group identity and interests. According to the Georgian identity managers, the Russian identity managers have had a consistent tendency to impose their control on other groups and use these groups for the pursuit of their interests. The South Ossetia group is e.g. processed as one that the Russian identity managers currently manage. This alien identity management then accounts for the suffering that occurs in South Ossetia and why the South Ossetian conflict party continues to dismiss conflict resolution efforts. The alleged Russian tendency to control groups is generally a Russian disposition, as the Georgians have been exposed to Russian identity

management during the Russian empire and the Soviet Union. It is also a tendency that one may witness in the Georgia and Ukraine conflict. To resolve the conflict, there is thus a need for others to accept this Georgian truth and act accordingly. The Georgian identity managers are, however, not the only ones who point to how the other is seeking to manage their in-group. The South Ossetian identity managers also point to how South Ossetians are seeking to rid themselves of Georgian management, which they for long have been exposed to, and which increasingly has put South Ossetians at risk. The identity managers e.g. point to how the Georgia group has consistently followed a pattern since the 1920s of trying to exterminate the South Ossetian group identity. South Ossetians now seek independence in order to rid themselves of this threat. What is interesting in South Ossetia's conflict narrative is, however, that the group does not oppose alien identity management per se. Rather, it is an expressed Ossetian ambition to be unified with Russia as this represents a positive form of alien identity management. As the other conflict parties, the South Ossetian identity managers also argue that they speak the truth about the other and that this other-understanding needs to be adopted to end the conflict. Eventually there is Russia, whose identity managers share the South Ossetian Georgia-construct. The Russian identity managers also point to how it has been a consistent Georgian ambition since the 1990s, to manage and eradicate the South Ossetian identity. This Georgia-construct is then presented as the factual other-understanding, which should be adopted to ensure proper conflict resolution measures in the Georgia conflict.

The alien identity management process is interesting as it shapes and sustains the understanding that the out-group is trying to claim the management of the in-group's identity in order to use the in-group as a platform for reaching the out-group's interests. This form of alien management is not merely processed as detrimental for the in-group's interests. It is also detrimental for the in-group's existence as alien identity management threatens the in-group members' ability to identify with a certain group identity. In the conflict parties' narratives is hence the consistent argument that for the in-group to thrive it must be managed by its own in-group members. Yet, what defines an in-group member is fluid as the identity managers at times struggle to draw a clear-cut distinction between the agents present. They nevertheless try, and so group differentiation is rooted in traits such as the territory an agent resides in, the language s/he speaks, and the outcomes that s/he supports in the conflict. The identity managers are thus in their conflict narratives trying to reach somewhat consistent group constructs, which they seek to reinforce and validate in their interactions with the other. The other outcome of the alien identity management processing tendency is also the attempt to manage the out-group's identity and interests. In their conflict narratives, all conflict parties try to present their group constructs as factual. The conflict parties are, however, not merely trying to present an understanding of who they are but an understanding of who the other is. This creates an action/reaction pattern as the conflict parties fight over whose group construct is real. Since these group constructs are juxtaposed this leads to the understanding that there is not cognitive

space for all group constructs, and so the conflicts are not merely zero-sum in terms of interests but also in terms of identity management. This results in continued in-group mobilisation to ensure that the in-groups' constructed identity is maintained. This is of interest as it points to how conflict protraction does not merely derive from protracted understandings of the conflicts, but also from protracted attempts to offer the "correct" understanding of who the out-group is, and the traits that define members of this group. Alien identity management thus leads to intergroup dynamics where the conflict parties argue for the right to identify, pursue, and uphold a certain self-understanding, whilst at the same time argue for the need of others to adopt their other-understanding.

7.1.4 Cognitive Support

The final processing tendency that shapes and sustains the action/reaction pattern is cognitive support where parts of a conflict party's social cognitive framework are supported by others - or perceived to be supported by others. Cognitive support is particularly noticeable when comparing Russia and the non-state actors' conflict narratives. When analysing the non-states' narratives, it becomes noticeable that they rely on many of the same understandings as Russia. Their social cognitive frameworks are however not identical. The South Ossetian identity managers e.g. construct the conflict as a long-standing conflict between Ossetians and Georgians, which occurred in the 1920s following Georgia's genocide attempts. The Russian identity managers, on the other hand, construct the conflict as an outcome of the end of the Cold War where revanchist Georgian identity managers decided to claim the South Ossetian territory. In the Ukraine conflict, the DPR identity managers construct the conflict as an intergroup conflict between DPR and Ukraine and argue that to solve the conflict there is a need to declare DPR as an independent state. The Russian identity managers instead point to how the Ukraine conflict is an intragroup conflict between Ukrainians and that the conflict can only be resolved through federalism reform. These differing understandings suggest that the Russian identity managers do not solely dictate the thoughts and behaviour of agents in DPR and South Ossetia, but rather their connectedness is shaped by similar social cognitive processing and the reinforcing of each other's understandings. This particularly pertains to their self-understanding. As found in the analysis, there generally seems to be an agreement amongst the conflict parties that for a group identity to exist it is not enough that in-group members subscribe to it, as others also need to "see" this identity and subscribe to its constructed dispositions and interests. A central feature of Russia's relations with the non-state actors is that the Russian identity managers socially validate the non-states' in-group constructs. Although the Russian identity managers do not support all aspects of these constructs (such as DPR's claim that there is a Donetskian group identity), the Russian identity managers point to the groups' existence and argue for their continued inclusion in the negotiation process. Adding to this is also that the Russian identity managers support aspects of the non-state actors' other- and situation-

schemas. This results in cognitive support which decreases the need for the non-state actors to change their processing tendencies, as Russian support feeds into the continued possibility of mobilising agents around their existing group constructs.

This cognitive support is contrasted with Georgia and Ukraine's conflict narratives. Unlike Russia, Georgia and Ukraine do not share the non-state actors' social cognitive frameworks. The Ukrainian identity managers e.g. dismiss the existence of the DPR group, and thus dismisses the relevance of using a DPR group identity when processing stimuli and establishing conflict resolution attempts. The people of DPR are rather treated as Russians, which is an understanding that draws Ukraine's attention to Russia's alleged dispositions and interests. The Georgian identity managers, on the other hand, do not dismiss the existence of South Ossetia, as they point to the existence of a South Ossetian group identity. Their categorisation of South Ossetia as a Russia-led group, however, leads them to treat South Ossetia as a group that merely echoes Russia's interests, which has implications as to how South Ossetia is treated. Where Russia plays a role in Georgia and Ukraine's social cognitive processing is hence that Russia features as a social category that both the Georgian and Ukrainian identity managers resort to when processing the conflict and the agents involved. Russia is the central identity around which social cognitive processing evolves and so Russia is the social category that Georgian and Ukrainian identity managers use to mobilise their in-group members against. Eventually, the states' social cognitive processing is not without cognitive support either. Georgia and Ukraine's social cognitive frameworks are to a great extent supported in policy circles, and they function as the dominant narratives used in the conflict negotiation setting. Like Russia and the non-state actors, so too are Georgia and Ukraine exempt from changing their processing tendencies as their group constructs find support amongst others.

Although the conflict parties support parts of another conflict party's understanding, they also process cognitive support as a significant hindrance towards resolving the conflicts. When interpreting stimuli, the conflict parties may process out-group behaviour as an outcome of cognitive support. In Ukraine's conflict narrative, DPR's behaviour is e.g. processed as an outcome of the support this conflict party receives from Russia. This leads to the understanding that the behaviour that occurs would not be possible without Russian support of this out-group's self-understanding. Similar is seen in DPR's conflict narrative where the identity managers point to how the conflict is sustained because Ukrainian identity managers have adopted the West's Russophobia. It is hence due to the adoption of the West's other-understanding that the conflict has occurred as well as continues. The Russian identity managers also point to how the conflict is an outcome of Russophobia. However, instead of being a cognitive construct from the outside, Russophobia is something the Ukrainian identity managers have fabricated and which the West supports. In the Georgia conflict, the Georgian identity managers point to how the conflict is sustained because the South Ossetian group supports (or is forced into supporting) Russia's social cognitive

processing. The South Ossetian identity managers, on the other hand, argue that Georgian behaviour in particularly 2008 was supported and to a great extent encouraged by the West. The Russian identity managers also argue that the Georgia conflict is sustained by cognitive support, as the West's support of Georgia's social cognitive processing continues to validate Georgia's negative behaviour. Cognitive support is hence also used for processing stimuli and it is a process that contributes to in-group mobilisation, as it shapes the understanding that it is imperative to maintain the current social cognitive framework, and convince others to adopt it, in order to end the conflict.

7.2 Who Gets to be a Group

The four processing tendencies lead to an action/reaction pattern that shapes and sustains negative interactions between the conflict parties, as it generates intergroup dynamics defined by clashing group reification attempts. What emerged from the analyses and the exploration of the conflict parties' social cognitive processing, is thus that the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts are not sustained by cemented conflict narratives and self/other understandings. Instead of being the outcome of stagnated cognition, the conflicts' protracted situations are shaped around intergroup dynamics where the conflict parties continuously fight over who gets to be a group. This has implications as to how we understand the conflicts as this implies that they are to a great extent outcomes of group reification attempts gone astray. The conflict parties currently find themselves in a vacuum between cognitive systematisation, group reification, and intergroup relations as neither of these processes have been established from a shared understanding. Although cemented situation, self, and other understandings may lead to protracted situations, it may also, in the case of the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts, be a preferred outcome in terms of conflict resolution. This is because it would offer a more clear-cut understanding of who is who and a shared cognitive foundation for reaching consensus regarding interests. The Ukraine and Georgia conflicts have not reached such a stage. They are stuck as the conflict parties are still debating who is present in the conflicts and whether these agents are actually groups. Regardless of whether such intergroup dynamics are the result of deep held beliefs about the world or carefully crafted conflict strategies (or both), it shapes conflict protraction as the conflict parties have not reached a stable intersubjective understanding. The only shared understanding between them is that there is a conflict and so the other aspects of shared understandings, i.e. who is present and why they are fighting, have not been reached. Instead the conflict parties dismiss the other's group constructs and argue for a fundamental reshuffling of who is who. This attempt to change understandings of the groups present does not mean that an in-group fully dismisses the existence of an out-group. The conflict parties do to some extent acknowledge that the group identities applied for sense making, exist (with DPR as the exception). But they argue that these group identities are either not applicable in the conflict situation, or that the out-

group leaders have distorted these group identities and manipulated their group members into thinking and acting based on a fake self-understanding.

This shapes conflicts where the question is not merely a matter of whose interests prevail but whose group constructs prevail. For the non-state actors this is an existential question as their group identities have not been socially validated through statehood. Their group's existence continues to hinge on others using these social categories in their social cognitive processing. This accounts for amongst other the importance of having good relations with Russia, as the Russian emphasis on the non-state actors' existence upholds these non-states' group constructs. For the states, the action/reaction pattern is also essential as it is a matter of generating certain group constructs, which can be used for the pursuit of interests. All conflict parties hence need to convince others of their groups' genuineness for their own existence to be claimed and for their pursuit of interests to be valid. What becomes noticeable in the analyses is nevertheless that these group reification processes are surrounded by a great deal of confusion and a, at times, desperate attempt to maintain a certain narrative. This points to the socially constructed nature of identities but also to the human tendency to group agents in times of conflict and to insist on these groups existence despite difficulties in maintaining their distinctiveness. An area of complication is particularly the non-state actors who all conflict parties have struggled to include in their conflict narratives and maintain a consistent understanding of. This confusion essentially derives from the fact that social categories are human constructs that agents use to systematise and simplify complex social interactions with. These reified groups' actual existences are thus by definition questionable.

An example of this is the "Russia/Pro-Russian" category applied in the Ukraine conflict. Although this social category makes it easier for the Ukrainian identity managers to distinguish antagonist from protagonist, and easier for them to point at the interests that are colliding in the conflict, the agents represented under this category are not as easily classified. The constellation of those categorised as Russians/pro-Russian are most likely a mixture of: Russian citizens who fight for DPR or Russia, Ukrainian citizens who now identify as Donetskian, Ukrainian citizens who have Russian parents but want to be identified as Ukrainian, Ukrainian citizens who think Russia is the antagonist but still speak Russian, and Ukrainian citizens who identify as Russian but still want to live in Ukraine. In the end it is not the composition of agents which is of interest. What is of interest is the way they are cognitively systematized into groups, and the steady argument from identity managers that this systematization is correct, as it is this systematization which shapes the action/reaction pattern that sustains the conflicts. The conflicts are hence not between "Russians" and "Ukrainians" but between agents who perceive themselves to be, or have been classified by others as being, Russian and Ukrainian group members. Although the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts are rooted in such processes, this does not imply that the conflicts are all in the conflict parties' heads and that the behaviour that occurs is without responsibility. The consequences of these clashing and

shifting processes are very tangible with casualties and wrecked cities to which the implicated need to be held accountable. But it does imply that the conflicts also spring from social cognitive processes, which feed into understandings that validate and justify the continuation of certain behaviour. There is hence a need to unravel these cognitive processes as much as there is a need to unravel conflicts' material factors as they are co-constitutive, and so it is their joint forces that make conflicts real.

What this research contributes with is that it highlights the role cognitive processes and intergroup dynamics play in times of conflicts. The findings reached to some extent challenges the realist dismissal of cognition and the realist tendency to treat states as actors that think in the same way. What this research finds, is that there are differences between the conflict parties' cognition and it finds that conflict protraction does not merely occur from political systems, but also because the conflict parties disagree on how to process the stimuli that occurs. This research does, however, not dismiss the realist, geopolitical, or political geographic accounts of the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts, as it does acknowledge that political systems and geographic positions shape identities and interests that equally come to define the conflicts. What it does is to offer a complementary study to these accounts as it addresses how cognition is equally a process that should be pulled to the forefront for us to understand how and why these conflicts sustain. What emerges from the analysis is the argument that the conflicts do not merely sustain because of clashing interests, but also because the conflict parties clash over the intersubjective knowledge that is to guide them in the conflicts. This argument is reached by exploring the social cognitive steps the conflict parties resort to. It is, however, also a finding that emerges because the non-state actors are included into the study of these conflicts. Rather than rendering these actors mute, or as puppets of the state actors, the non-state actors are treated as equal conflict parties, whose cognition has an influence on how the conflicts develop. By including these actors into the study of conflict protraction, I have been able to present how conflicts equally occur from state/non-state relations, which is another complementary insight that can be combined with the established understandings of the great power relations that define these conflicts. Eventually the focus on states and non-states as group identities has allowed me to move beyond the dominant approach in IR which tends to treat states/non-state actors as units or actors - without exploring further where these "actors" come from and how they come to behave and think in the first place. By approaching the conflict parties as group identities, I have been able to explore how conflict parties such as "Ukraine" and "Georgia" can act in the conflicts, as they are group identities that agents perceive themselves or others to belong to, and hence Ukraine and Georgia come to act because agents adapt their understandings and actions in accordance to these group identities. The group identity approach equally allowed me to explore where these conflict parties emerge from as my focus on group identity management allowed me to explore how group identities arise from the narratives that leaders produce. It is then by focusing on the leaders' attempts

to construct these group identities that I was able to explain the inter-group dynamics that shape these conflicts and eventually why the conflict parties continue to fail in ending the conflict between them.

7.3 Conclusion

This chapter presented the processing tendencies that the conflict parties in Ukraine and Georgia resort to when making sense of stimuli, and it discussed how these tendencies shape a cognitive action/reaction pattern inconducive for resolving the conflicts. What was found from the conflict parties social cognitive processing is that they are in a cognitive struggle over who gets to cognitively systematise the agents involved in the conflicts and reify the groups present. This leads to intergroup dynamics where the in-group questions whether the out-group's group constructs are real, which generates the need for the out-group to counter this claim by emphasising their group constructs' authenticity. This intergroup dynamic is found to be shaped and sustained by four processing tendencies: 1) the tendency to adapt identities/interests to fit stimulus, or adapt stimulus to fit identities/interests 2) to process in-group stimulus as the outcome of group think, and out-group stimulus as the outcome of leadership manipulation 3) to process out-group intent to be the management of the in-group's identity/interests, and the in-group tendency to manage the out-group's identity/interests and 4) to support parts of a conflict party's social cognitive framework, whilst referring to how such a tendency results in conflict protraction. This cognitive action/reaction pattern keeps the conflict parties in protraction, as they cannot deviate from their processing tendencies as this may result in the dismissal of their group constructs. They cannot dismiss their group constructs as this will question their self-understanding, have implications for in-group mobilisation, and generally question the understanding of the group identities being accentuated in the conflicts.

The processing tendencies thus threaten to nullify all group constructs presented in the conflict, which keeps the conflict parties in cognitive suspension. There is hence a need to address these clashing attempts to establish the conflicts' social boundaries if a shared understanding conducive for conflict resolution is to be reached. What the analyses thus also found is that the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts' protractions are not outcomes of cemented conflict narratives and cemented self/other understandings. Rather, the present situation, self, and other understandings are flexible and so the forces that shape conflict protraction are instead to be found in processing tendencies. This research hence answered the research question: How do social cognitive processes and intergroup dynamics contribute to the protraction of the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts? It answered that processing tendencies have shaped a cognitive struggle over how to, and who gets to, cognitively systematise the agents and reify the groups present in the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts. A contributing factor to the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts' protraction are hence intergroup dynamics defined by a struggle over who gets to be a group.

8.0 Conclusion

The aim of this research was to explore the social cognitive processes the conflict parties in Ukraine and Georgia resort to when processing stimuli in the conflict contexts. This was done to explore the intergroup dynamics that are present in the conflicts, and how these may hinder the conflict parties from reaching common ground. The dissertation finds that the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts are protracted because the conflict parties' interactions are shaped by a cognitive action/reaction pattern, which sustains a struggle over who gets to systematise the agents involved in the conflicts and reify the groups present. The conflicts are hence not between fixed groups over incompatible interests per se. Rather, they are to a greater extent conflicts over whose group constructs are real and whose are fake, which is a struggle that arises from four interlinked processing tendencies: 1) identity and interest adaptation, 2) leadership and group bias, 3) alien identity management, 4) cognitive support. The first process refers to the tendency amongst all conflict parties to adapt self or other identities and interests. Rather than sticking to consistent conflict narratives and fixed self/other understandings, the conflict parties change their narratives and understandings hereby resulting in flexible social cognitive frameworks. This adaptability opens a doorway for introducing more compatible conflict narratives and positive self/other understandings. However, rather than doing so, the conflict parties continue to process stimuli by either adapting identities/interests or adapting stimuli to fit their identities/interests. The second process is the tendency to process the in-group's identity/interests as the outcome of group think, and the out-group's interests/identity as the outcome of leaders' personality and personal interests. This tendency denies the other its "groupness", which leads to a reaction and an adaptation of identity management strategies to uphold the understanding that the in-group is a group. The third tendency is to define the out-group's intention as the management of the in-group's identity/interests. It also refers to the in-group tendency to manage the out-group's identity/interests. This denies the other its expressed identity/interests and leads to a reaction where the other seeks to maintain its group's distinctiveness. The fourth process is cognitive support, which is the tendency to support parts of a conflict party's social cognitive frameworks. This support removes incentives for changing the processing tendencies and it leads to a reaction whereby group constructs are maintained as they are validated by others. The Ukraine and Georgia conflicts are hence sustained by this cognitive struggle, which is a struggle over how to, and who gets to, establish the social boundaries between the agents engaged with, or entrapped in, the conflicts. This cognitive struggle contributes to conflict protraction as the conflict parties cannot deviate from their processing tendencies without challenging the group identities that they resort to - and particularly without challenging the in-group identity they rely on for in-group mobilisation and self-understanding in the conflict context.

This research went beyond the dominant leanings in the literature, which approach the Georgia and Ukraine conflicts from a historical/systemic perspective, Russia/Eurocentric perspective, or group/individual perspective. This does not imply that I disregard such literature but that the aim of my research was to move beyond the dominant arguments that the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts are mainly outcomes of the Soviet Union, Russia's relations with the West, ethnic group relations, or individuals' interests. These perspectives have merit in terms of explaining the conflicts' outbreak, but they do not sufficiently account for how and why the conflicts sustain. If one treats the conflicts as systemic or structural outcomes, this implies that the conflict parties are automatically reacting to structures largely beyond their control. This removes their agency and dismisses the fact that conflicts are not automated outcomes, but situations shaped around understandings that there is a need to take up arms. If one, on the other hand, treats the conflicts as outcomes of clashing interests, this implies that the conflicts have not been resolved because such interests have not been addressed. Since, however, the conflict resolution efforts primarily target clashing interests, this questions why such efforts have not been conducive for ending the conflict parties' negative interactions. Eventually, there is a tendency in the literature to treat the causes for the conflicts' outbreak as the same factors that cause their protraction. There is thus a lack of literature that addresses the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts' protraction specifically, and that does so by focusing on how these conflicts sustain because of the cognitive processes that the conflict parties bring to the situation. This was the gap that this research sought to fill, and it did so by asking the research question: How do social cognitive processes and intergroup dynamics contribute to the protraction of the Georgia and Ukraine conflicts?

To address how and why conflict protraction occurs in the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts, I established a theoretical framework that allowed me to explore and explain the role social cognitive processes play in shaping protracted intergroup dynamics. In this research, a conflict is defined as a situation where two or more parties "perceive their goals, intentions, and actions as being mutually incompatible and act in accordance to this perception"⁸⁰⁷. A protracted conflict is defined as a conflict situation that has yet to be resolved, as the conflict parties continue to engage in negative interactions and dismiss the conflict resolution efforts put forward. Rather than exploring conflict protraction from a purely structural approach, I applied an agent-structural perspective as I conjoined social constructivism with social psychology and its sub-field of social cognition. The combination of these fields was conducive for my research as it allowed me to explore how self/other understandings occur as cognitive processes, and how these understandings as discursive practices assist conflict parties in shaping their negative interactions. Combining these fields also allowed me to explore how self/other understandings are sustained as a result of contextual interactions. Hence, rather than focusing on how self/other understandings arise from e.g. collective memory, this

⁸⁰⁷ Bar-tal, *Intractable Conflicts: Socio-Psychological Foundations and Dynamics*, 5

research focused on how self/other understandings are formed, changed, and sustained as a result of the conflict parties' continued cognitive interactions in the conflict contexts. To explore this further, I focused on the conflict parties' social cognitive processing. Such processing refers to information processing about "people, including the self, and about the norms and procedures of the social world", which leads to structured understandings of a situation, self and other⁸⁰⁸. The result of cognitive processing is the creation of a social cognitive framework, which is a contextual roadmap that agents use as an ideational foundation for their interactions. The theoretical framework also presented the concept of intergroup dynamics, which refers to the trends that shape how groups interact with each other based on their understandings of self and other. To explore the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts' protraction, I thus constructed a theoretical framework which could explain the steps that allow conflict parties to reach and maintain self/other understandings. To this end, I focused my attention on the theories of social categorization, social identity, and attribution processing. Whereas social categorization and social identity allowed me to explain how and why the conflict parties draw identity boundaries between them, attribution theory allowed me to address how and why they attach interests to identities. I particularly focused on how interests are formed by inferring the intent behind behaviour from personal and situational causality, and from attribution biases such as fundamental and group attribution errors. Whereas the fundamental attribution error refers to the tendency to process behaviour as the outcome of intent, rather than as a result of the situation, group attribution error is the tendency to process the behaviour of a group member, as something that reflects the general attitude of the group. To these theories and concepts, I linked the theories of conflict supporting narratives and radical disagreements, which explain how conflict protraction occurs because of cemented situation, self, and other understandings. The theoretical framework therefore addressed the concepts and theories used to explore and explain the Ukraine and Georgia conflict parties' social cognitive processing and the intergroup dynamics that arise from this.

In the analysis, I focused on how the conflict parties process the conflict situation, self, and other and how this leads to social cognitive frameworks that come to define their relations. When doing so, I did not engage with general societal understandings of the conflicts, but with how leaders of states and non-states cognitively systematise the conflicts. The social cognitive processes analysed are thus processes that leaders produce as my focus is on group identity management and how leaders construct group identities that others are meant to abide to or think in accordance with. The reached understandings were, however, not treated as the personal beliefs of leaders, nor as outcomes of group think. They were treated as official frameworks that leaders construct on behalf of those who belong to a given group identity by amongst other processing the stimuli the perceived group members produce. The social cognitive

⁸⁰⁸ Jennifer S. Beer, and Kevin N. Ochsner. "Social cognition: a multi level analysis." *Brain research* 1079, no 1 (2006): 98

frameworks reached are hence official narratives where leaders seek to highlight an existing social identity and from this identity, construct an understanding of the situation, self, and other, which is to guide the thoughts and behaviour of perceived group members in the conflict situation. To analyse the social cognitive processes at play, I focused my attention on the conflict parties' conflict narratives. More specially, I explored how these narratives are shaped around steps that define social cognitive processing. These steps refer to the: deconstruction of stimuli into nodes and the compartmentalising of nodes into schemas, which come to constitute the social cognitive frameworks. To explore which nodes the conflict parties activate in their narratives, I applied a thematic analysis. This allowed me to explore the nodes/themes that run as patterned meanings through the conflict parties' narratives. Such an analysis was conducted by reading through data and exploring the themes or topics present in the various texts. The most salient themes were further explored through a frame analysis, which sought to address how the conflict parties group nodes into situation-, self-, and other-schemas. By unravelling these steps, the analysis explored how the conflict parties process stimuli and compartmentalise this into social cognitive frameworks. It is then by analysing these steps and frameworks that I was able to detect the processing tendencies that the conflict parties resort to and the dynamics that arise from this.

The timelines used for the analyses were for the Georgia conflict 1990-2018 (with primary attention on the timeframe 2008-2018) and the Ukraine conflict 2013-2018. In my dataset, I used online data retrieved from the conflict parties' own homepages (the homepages of Foreign Ministries, Presidents, and the Republic) and online data retrieved from media outlets and organisations. Whereas data from the conflict parties' homepages were used for the thematic and frame analyses, data retrieved from media and organisations were used to construct a timeline of each conflict, and used to locate additional texts that may be of use for the analyses. The number of texts retrieved from media outlets and organisations are in total for Ukraine: 487 and Georgia: 905. The number of texts retrieved from the conflict parties' own homepages are in total for Ukraine: 611 and for Georgia: 365. The conflict parties analysed were the Ukraine government, Russian government, Georgian government, de-facto South Ossetian government and the Donetsk People's Republic. The reason for choosing these conflict parties is that they claim certain territory, needs and rights, and they have had a consistent presence in the conflicts. They are thus deemed as central to the resolution of the conflicts and essential to analyse to explore the conflicts' protraction. The choice of these conflict parties was also made from a wish of engaging with parties that do not commonly feature in the literature, which tends to mainly focus on actors such as Russia, EU, and NATO. Although this research focuses on the conflicts in Ukraine and Georgia, other conflicts in the post-Soviet space and beyond could have been addressed. I decided to focus on the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts, as they have seen significant developments in present time between the conflict parties (particularly in 2008 and 2014) and these developments have occurred in times where the conflict parties have been connected via online media.

These conflicts hence offered a “fresh” insight into the dynamics that may contribute to conflict protraction, and access to online data offered a more detailed insight into how these dynamics may have evolved.

What resulted from the analyses is that the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts are sustained by processing tendencies that shape and sustain a cognitive struggle over who gets to cognitively systematise the agents present in the conflict and reify the groups present. What is interesting about this finding is that it challenges the theories of radical disagreement and conflict supporting narratives, which argue that conflict protraction occurs because of cemented self/other understandings. What the analyses found is that the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts are characterised by flexible cognitive processing and adaptable self/other understandings. Conflict protraction is hence not to be found in cemented situation, self, and other understandings per se, but in the interaction between the conflict parties’ processing tendencies. This challenges the argument that intergroup conflicts occur because of clashing groups who compare themselves and perceive their interests to be incompatible. Although the conflict parties do compare themselves and see their interests as incompatible, they do not share an understanding of who the different agents are and which group they belong to. Rather than being rooted in clear-cut intergroup relations, the conflict parties are stuck in between cognitive systematisation, group reification, and intergroup relations as they continue to struggle over how to, and who gets to, systematise the agents present in the conflict. There is thus a cognitive element behind these perceived group relations which equally needs to be highlighted and included to understand why conflict protraction occurs, and why the Ukraine and Georgia conflict parties continue to deny conflict resolution efforts. The contribution of this research is thus that it addresses the flexible nature of protracted conflicts and it presents how conflict protraction does not merely occur as a result of clashing groups, but also from a cognitive struggle over who gets to be a group. This highlights how negative interactions do not merely occur and sustain because of fixed structures of meaning. Negative interactions may also be the result of conflicting cognitive processes that compete over how to structure the overall meaning that is to guide relations in times of conflict.

The findings on how cognitive processes play a significant role in protracted conflicts is of relevance for future research on e.g. the power relations that exist between the conflict parties, but it is also of relevance for the material analyses of the conflicts, as it offers a complementary insight into how flexible self/other understandings may hinder the rational pursuit of interests. The role of cognition is often dismissed in realist studies. What this research nevertheless finds is that cognition is not a background factor that should be rendered mute in the analysis of interests. Rather what my findings show is that conflict parties do not share the same understandings, nor are they stable in their cognition, as they rely on differing and flexible cognitions, which may turn out to be an essential hindrance in their attainment and alignment of interests. What this research also addresses is the IR tendency to dismiss the role of non-state actors and to perceive the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts as outcomes of great power relations and geopolitical

contexts. Although such relations and contexts unquestionably do shape these conflicts, they are not the only factors that need to be considered as intergroup dynamics between states and non-states actors equally need to feature if we are to get a more holistic understanding of how and why these conflicts continue to endure. Adding to this is also that this research addresses how conflict protraction may not only occur due to collective memory and historical developments. Conflict protraction is also a phenomenon which is shaped from the conflict parties continued interactions, which we may discover further by opening the cognitive processes that the conflict parties' resort to when they are confronted with conflict information. Eventually, this research presents an additional insight into how self/other understandings are constructed and how identities may occur and change because of stimuli that arises between conflict parties. The inclusion of social cognitive processing and intergroup dynamics in the study of conflicts thus offered a complementary analysis of the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts, which should be included if we are to get a better insight into why these conflicts sustain.

Since this research is of a complementary nature, there are a plethora of options for future research as it opens the possibility for digging further into how material/discursive factors intertwine to shape conflict protraction. This would particularly be of relevance for conflict resolution efforts as the focus on the interlinkage between material and discursive factors, may prove vital for the resolution of the conflicts. As of now the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts tend to be addressed through an interest-centred approach, with attention to how the conflict parties' interests can be aligned or how their interests (particularly Russia's) should be curbed to end the deadlock between them. As this research finds, however, conflict protraction can equally be detected in the conflict parties cognitive processing tendencies, and so this is also an avenue that needs to be addressed. What this means is that to open up further space for negotiations, and potential possibilities for reconciliation, there is a need to address the conflict parties incompatible group identities, as these currently serve as hindrances towards the conflict parties "rational" pursuit of interests. It is questionable that these conflict parties will ever fully abide to conflict agreements, if these agreements run counter to the group identities that they have constructed for themselves and others. Where this research may be of assistance is to address these cognitive tendencies as it offers an insight into how, why, and where cognitive contestation occurs and how this may be resolved. Resolution may e.g. arise if the conflict parties change their processing tendencies as this will open a cognitive pathway, which could lead to a more stable intersubjective understanding, from which interests can be pursued. This does not imply that the action/reaction pattern is the silver bullet, but that this pattern provides a toolkit for addressing these very contested cognitions, which equally define the conflicts.

Another avenue that this research opens is for future research on how power shapes these conflicts. As I have argued, this research merely offered an insight into the cognitive moment that defines these conflicts, therefore leaving out any further exploration of the power relations that define these

conflicts. This does not mean that I have declared power as obsolete, but that I have had to put it aside for now to explore the neglected cognitive processes. For future research it would, however, be of interest to explore how cognitive processes assist in shaping the power relations that exist between the conflict parties. Such an exploration could be done from both a post-structuralist as well as a critical geopolitical account, with focus on how e.g. the Ukraine and Georgia conflict parties' cognitive processing tendencies feature as part of their competition over the power to manage knowledge. The conflict parties' social cognitive frameworks could also be used to study their rhetorical strategies and how the pursuance of "rhetorical dominance" occurs from amongst other cognitive processing tendencies⁸⁰⁹. Such a knowledge-power analysis is particularly of interest in the context of Russia. In this research I have treated Russia as an "equal" conflict party as I have wished to focus on cognitive processes and the resulting intergroup dynamics specifically. Russia, however, undoubtedly plays a special role in these conflicts as it has significant ideational value for all conflict parties. In the state actors' cognition, Russia is treated as *the* opponent who has caused the conflict and the opponent that these conflict parties wish to be ideationally (and materially) detached from. In the non-state actors' cognition, Russia is *the* actor that allows these conflict parties to continue having a significant presence and leverage in the conflicts. These are power relations which I have not addressed further, but which should be addressed in future research as it is a factor that equally shapes the conflicts' characteristics. What my research findings however suggest is that although Russia has a significant influence over the non-state actors, Russia does not outright control these actors (as is suggested in much literature and particularly in policy circles). Russia and the non-state actors have differing cognitions, and at times conflicting cognitions, which points to how their relations may be more of a mutually benefiting interaction, rather than outright control. Adding to this is also that Russia and the state actors struggle over how agents should be categorised in the conflicts and how the constructed group identities relate to one another. Russia's emphasis that e.g. Ukrainians are Russians, and Ukraine's emphasis that Ukrainians are not like Russians at all, is an example of how power relations are sought through discourses. These findings are of interest and something that should be studied further in the context of post-structuralism where one may explore how particularly the Russian leadership seeks to exert power in these conflicts through their discursive practices.

Other avenues for future research should be to focus on how cognition and emotions intertwine in times of conflict. As of now there is a tendency, with this research included, to primarily focus

⁸⁰⁹ Gerard Toal. "Geopolitical discourses: A new geopolitics series", *Geopolitics*, 5, no. 1 (2000), 126

on either cognition⁸¹⁰ or emotions⁸¹¹. As established in the theory chapter there is, however, a general agreement in social psychology that emotions and cognitions intertwine to shape behaviour⁸¹². To further understand behaviour in times of conflict, and international politics in general, it would be imperative to unravel how such processes interlink. A way to start could be to combine the findings of this study with an analysis of the emotional processes at play in the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts. As the cognition-emotion relation is still an unfolding debate, it is, however, questionable whether a single research will be able to establish these links. But a future step in terms of pairing social psychology and IR would be to marry the growing literature on cognition-emotion relations, as this offers insight into the interplay between conscious and unconscious processes. Future research may also be to explore the interplay between inter- and intragroup dynamics, and how clashing social identities within a state leads to group identities in times of conflict. This internal contestation is of interest and importance if one is to explore the intricacies of conflicts, as it addresses the diverse nature of societies, conflicts, and identities, and offers an opportunity to move beyond the tendency in IR to treat conflict parties as united in their struggle. Such research would also open opportunities for further studying the domestic processes that assist in shaping e.g. foreign policy behaviour. Another avenue for future research, which this research has only touched upon, is the need in IR to not merely link agents and structures, but to further establish the link between individual identities and group identities. As of now, there is a tendency in IR to either treat state behaviour as the outcome of a unit or as the outcome of leadership - hereby somewhat dismissing the role citizens play in shaping and upholding behaviour that comes to define situations such as conflicts. Although scholars have focused on e.g. the international-national nexus in the context of foreign policy, this tends to be approached from an understanding that public opinion shapes foreign policy behaviour, or that leaders try to shape public opinion in order to pursue specific objectives⁸¹³. Focus is not on how the leaderships' processing of citizens' behaviour shapes group identities and thus how the behaviour of citizens extends situations such as

⁸¹⁰ Casier "From Logic of Competition to Conflict: Understanding the Dynamics of EU–Russia Relations."; Martha Cottam. "Foreign policy decision making: The influence of cognition". (Routledge, 2019); and Michael D. Young and Mark Schafer. "Is there method in our madness? Ways of assessing cognition in international relations." *Mershon International Studies Review* 42, supp. 1 (1998): 63-96.

⁸¹¹ Heller "Russia's Power Politics Towards Ukraine: Social Status Concerns and the Role of Emotions."; Neta C. Crawford, "The passion of world politics: Propositions on emotion and emotional relationships." *International Security* 24, no.4 (2000): 116-156; and Gries. "Social Psychology and the Identity-Conflict Debate: Is a 'China Threat' Inevitable?."

⁸¹² Norbert Schwarz. "Emotion, cognition, and decision making." *Cognition & Emotion* 14, no.4 (2000): 433-440; Joseph P. Forgas, *Feeling and thinking: The role of affect in social cognition*. (Cambridge University Press, 2001); and Antony SR. Manstead "Emotion in social life." *Cognition & Emotion* 5, no.5-6 (1991): 353-362;

⁸¹³ Natasha Kuhrt "Russia and the World: The Internal-External Nexus". (Routledge, 2014); Victor Chudowsky and Taras Kuzio. "Does public opinion matter in Ukraine: The case of foreign policy." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 36, no.3 (2003): 273-290; Donnacha Ó Beacháin and Frederik Coene. "Go West: Georgia's European identity and its role in domestic politics and foreign policy objectives" *Nationalities Papers* 42, no.6 (2014): 923-941.

conflicts. Focusing on the link between group identities and individual identities offers a better understanding of these processes, as it allows one to explore how individual traits, such as thinking and feeling, manifests into collective traits. It hence further opens the “black box” of the state. The contribution of this research has thus also been to address the “group level” of analysis, and to point to the role leaders play as group identity managers in times of conflict.

Eventually this research was of a complementary nature and the overall aim of it has been to explore the role cognitive processes and intergroup dynamics play in times of conflicts. This research is thus merely one piece of a larger puzzle, as the findings reached should be paired with the existing literature on the Ukraine and Georgia conflicts for one to understand the various intersecting factors that shape these conflicts. The findings reached in this research are thus not conclusive, nor do they replace existing findings. The findings do, however, explore the gaps located in the literature and they allow us to gain a better understanding of how conflicts *also* derive from the cognitive processing tendencies conflict parties apply in their interactions. It is then by combining this insight with the insights on e.g. material interests, geopolitical contexts, collective memories, and power relations that we may come to understand why the Ukraine and Georgia conflict parties continue to fail in resolving the conflict between them.

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Appendices

The following appendices include the conflict timelines, data used for the conflict timelines and frame/thematic analyses, and an overview of the thematic analysis results. Although I could have provided appendix 3-6 as “normal” bibliographies, I have decided to include them as appendices as this allowed me to provide each bibliography with a number, which made for an easier referencing system in the frame analyses.

Appendix 1:	Ukraine conflict timeline
Appendix 2:	Georgia conflict timeline
Appendix 3:	Bibliography of the media/organisation sources used for the Ukraine conflict timeline
Appendix 4:	Bibliography of the media/organisation sources used for the Georgia conflict timeline
Appendix 5:	Bibliography of primary data used for the Georgia analysis
Appendix 6:	Bibliography of primary data used for the Ukraine analysis
Appendix 7:	The thematic analysis conducted for the Georgia case
Appendix 8:	The thematic analysis conducted for the Ukraine case
Appendix 9:	Codebook of the frames located in the Georgia case
Appendix 10.	Codebook of the frames located in the Ukraine case
Appendix 11:	The Nvivo file used for the Ukraine and Georgia analyses. Can be consulted if online access to primary data is denied.

Appendix 1: Ukraine Conflict Timeline

2013

November 21, 2013: Ukraine suspends preparation for the Association Agreement and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the EU⁸¹⁴. A government decree pointed to the need for further analysis of the impact the agreements would have on industrial production and trade with Russia⁸¹⁵. Russia had equally threatened with economic sanctions with a reference to protecting its economic interests⁸¹⁶. In the same timeframe Russia suggested the creation of a tripartite commission between Russia, EU and Ukraine prior to the signing⁸¹⁷. Russia reacted positively to the suspension while the EU and the US stated their disappointment⁸¹⁸.

December 2, 2013: Protests erupt in Kiev with demands for the resignation of president Yanukovich, prime minister Mykola Azarov and the Cabinet⁸¹⁹. Members of the opposition equally demanded the president to stand down and for the release of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko⁸²⁰. The Prime Minister in a meeting with western ambassadors referred to the protests as a coup⁸²¹. Vladimir Putin responded to the protests by saying “The events in Ukraine seem more like a pogrom than a revolution.”⁸²² There were equally protests in Armenia over the customs union between Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus and Armenia’s abandonment of talks with the EU⁸²³.

December 17, 2013: In a meeting between Russia and Ukraine, Russia announced that it would provide Ukraine a \$15 billion loan and discounts on the price of natural gas import⁸²⁴. Russia also announced that talks of the accession with the custom union had not come up during the meeting and that the loan would prevent Ukraine from implementing the austerity measures set up by the International Monetary Fund⁸²⁵. Yanukovich stated: “I know that this work wouldn’t have been done at this optimal speed if not for the Russian president’s political will”⁸²⁶. Both the EU and the US announced their support for the protesters with senator John McCain addressing protesters onstage in the independence square and Catherine Ashton,

⁸¹⁴ “After Kyiv Snub, Kwasniewski Says EU-Ukraine Deal Is Off”, *RadioFreeEurope*, December 21, 2013, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-tymoshenko-bill-rejected/25175222.html>

⁸¹⁵ Ibid

⁸¹⁶ David M. Herszenhorn and Andrew E. Kramer “Russia Offers Cash Infusion for Ukraine” *The New York Times*, December 17, 2013, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/18/world/europe/russia-offers-ukraine-financial-lifeline.html?pagewanted=all>

⁸¹⁷ “After Kyiv Snub, Kwasniewski Says EU-Ukraine Deal Is Off”, *RadioFreeEurope*, December 21, 2013, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-tymoshenko-bill-rejected/25175222.html>

⁸¹⁸ Georgi Gotev “Ukraine stuns EU by putting association deal on ice” *Euroactive* November 25, 2013, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/ukraine-stuns-eu-by-putting-association-deal-on-ice/>

⁸¹⁹ “Ukraine unrest: Protesters blockade government sites” *BBC News*, December 2, 2013, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-25180502>

⁸²⁰ Ibid

⁸²¹ David M. Herszenhorn “Amid unrest Ukrainian President defends choice on accords” *The New York Times*, December 2, 2013, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/03/world/europe/ukraine-unrest.html?_r=0

⁸²² Herszenhorn “Amid unrest Ukrainian President defends choice on accords”

⁸²³ Ibid

⁸²⁴ David M. Herszenhorn and Andrew E. Kramer “Russia Offers Cash Infusion for Ukraine” *The New York Times*, December 17, 2013, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/18/world/europe/russia-offers-ukraine-financial-lifeline.html?pagewanted=all>

⁸²⁵ Herszenhorn and Kramer “Russia Offers Cash Infusion for Ukraine”

⁸²⁶ Ibid

the then European Union's foreign policy chief, equally visiting the demonstrators and expressing support⁸²⁷.

2014

January 2014: The Ukraine Parliament, the Rada, passes a legislation which restricts the right to protest⁸²⁸.

February 16, 2014: The government and the opposition agree on an amnesty deal which lead to demonstrators vacating the city hall and the riot police withdrawing from some locations⁸²⁹. Amnesty was granted to protesters for violations committed between December and February⁸³⁰.

February 18-20, 2014: Clashes occur between the protesters and riot police with 88 people killed and hundreds wounded⁸³¹.

February 21, 2014: Russia, Germany, France and Poland mediated a settlement between the Ukraine government and the opposition. The agreement urged for early presidential elections by the end of the year, the creation of a national unity government and the return to Ukraine's 2004 constitution⁸³². Demonstrators opposed the signing of the agreement and a leader of the Right Sector, an ultranationalist group⁸³³, threatened armed attacks if Yanukovych did not step down by the morning⁸³⁴. Following the signing of the agreement, Yanukovych flees the country⁸³⁵.

February 22, 2014: Ukrainian MPs vote to impeach Victor Yanukovych and hold early elections in the spring⁸³⁶. The vote was passed by a constitutional majority⁸³⁷. The vote also included the passing of a law which makes Ukrainian the official language in the country⁸³⁸. Prior to the vote Yanukovych denounces the oppositions control of parliament as a coup in a recorded interview⁸³⁹. Following the vote Yulia Tymoshenko is released from prison and Yanukovych is stopped by Ukraine border police in an attempt to

⁸²⁷ Ibid

⁸²⁸ "Ukraine parliament pushes through sweeping anti-protest law" *Reuters*, January 16, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-law/ukraine-parliament-pushes-through-sweeping-anti-protest-law-idUSBREA0F12M20140116>

⁸²⁹ Balmforth, Richard "Ukraine protesters and police pull back in contest over president" *Reuters*, February 16, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine/ukraine-protesters-and-police-pull-back-in-contest-over-president-idUSBREA1F05G20140216>

⁸³⁰ Balmforth "Ukraine protesters and police pull back in contest over president"

⁸³¹ "Timeline: Ukraine's political crisis" *Aljazeera*, September 20, 2014, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2014/03/timeline-ukraine-political-crisis-201431143722854652.html>

⁸³² Ukraine Crisis Timeline "Yanukovych, Opposition Sign Settlement Agreement" *CSIS*, February 21, 2014, <http://ukraine.csis.org/kyiv.htm#9>

⁸³³ Ukraine Crisis Timeline "Yanukovych Reportedly Flees Kyiv, Tensions Remain" *CSIS*, February 21, 2014, <http://ukraine.csis.org/kyiv.htm#10>

⁸³⁴ Andrew Higgins and Andrew E. Kramer "Ukraine has deal, but both Russia and protesters appear wary" *The New York Times*, February 21, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/22/world/europe/ukraine.html?hp&_r=2

⁸³⁵ Ukraine Crisis Timeline "Yanukovych, Opposition Sign Settlement Agreement" *CSIS*, February 21, 2014, <http://ukraine.csis.org/kyiv.htm#9>

⁸³⁶ "Ukrainian MPs vote to oust President Yanukovych" *BBC News*, February 22, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26304842>

⁸³⁷ "Ukrainian MPs vote to oust President Yanukovych" *BBC News*

⁸³⁸ Ukraine Crisis Timeline "Yanukovych Impeached, Oleksander Turchynov in as Interim President" *CSIS*, February 23, 2014, <http://ukraine.csis.org/kyiv.htm#11>

⁸³⁹ "Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych refuses to quit" *BBC News*, February 22, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26306886>

flee to Russia⁸⁴⁰. Following this he flees to the Donetsk region⁸⁴¹. Demonstrators walk unhindered into the president's office and residence⁸⁴².

February 23, 2014: The Rada appoints speaker of parliament, Oleksander Turchynov, as president until the scheduled presidential election on May 25⁸⁴³. Russia's foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, accuses the Ukrainian opposition of "seizing power" in a telephone call with US secretary of state, John Kerry⁸⁴⁴. Lavrov also said that "the most important thing now is to provide for the complete fulfilment" of the agreement signed on February 21⁸⁴⁵. Kerry expressed support for the impeachment.⁸⁴⁶ White House National Security Adviser Susan Rice responds to a quote by an unidentified Russian official in a report by the Financial Times, who allegedly stated that Moscow could intervene in Ukraine in order to protect ethnic Russians in Crimea⁸⁴⁷. Rice warns Russia not to send in troops⁸⁴⁸. Russia recalls its ambassador to Ukraine⁸⁴⁹. Russia also puts a hold on its purchase of Ukrainian Eurobonds, which was another part of Russia's \$15 billion loan to Ukraine, until a new government has been formed⁸⁵⁰. Violence flares in Eastern Ukraine in Odessa between "maiden and anti-maiden" protesters⁸⁵¹.

February 25, 2014: In a statement from the foreign ministry, Russia called on all involved in Ukraine: "to take action to prevent the further degradation of the situation, to bring it back into the legal framework, and to crack down on the extremists who are trying to get established in power"⁸⁵². It also stated "'In the last few days, the capital and some other cities in the country have been sites of armed clashes between young rioters and militants from ultra-right nationalist organizations and law enforcement units that were defending the security of civilians and national interests[...]The militants have not been disarmed, refuse to leave the streets of the cities that they de facto control and to vacate administrative buildings, and continue acts of violence[...]The agreement of February 21 on the settlement of the crisis in Ukraine is not being complied with, though its signature was authenticated by the ministers of foreign affairs of Germany,

⁸⁴⁰ "Ukrainian MPs vote to oust President Yanukovich" *BBC News*, February 22, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26304842>

⁸⁴¹ Ibid

⁸⁴² Ibid

⁸⁴³ Conal Urquhart "Ukraine MPs appoint interim president as Yanukovich allies dismissed – 23 February as it happened" *The Guardian*, February 23, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/23/ukraine-crisis-yanukovich-tymoshenko-live-updates>

⁸⁴⁴ Ibid

⁸⁴⁵ Damien McElroy and Hannah Strange "Ukraine revolution: as it happened 23rd February" *The Telegraph*, February 24, 2014, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/10657466/Ukraine-revolution-as-it-happened-23rd-February.html>

⁸⁴⁶ "Ukraine: Russia recalls ambassador as Kiev turns towards EU" *BBC News*, February 24, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26318816>

⁸⁴⁷ "Obama Official Warns Russia on Military Action in Ukraine" *Sputniknews*, February 24, 2014,

<https://sputniknews.com/world/20140224187829746-Obama-Official-Warns-Russia-on-Military-Action-in-Ukraine/>

⁸⁴⁸ "Ukraine: Russia recalls ambassador as Kiev turns towards EU" *BBC News*, February 24, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26318816>

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid

⁸⁵⁰ "Russia to Delay Ukraine Bailout Until New Cabinet Is Formed" *Sputniknews*, February 23, 2014, <https://sputniknews.com/russia/20140223187803933-Russia-to-Delay-Ukraine-Bailout-Until-New-Cabinet-Is-Formed/>

⁸⁵¹ Urquhart, Conal "Ukraine MPs appoint interim president as Yanukovich allies dismissed – 23 February as it happened" *The Guardian*, February 23, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/23/ukraine-crisis-yanukovich-tymoshenko-live-updates>

⁸⁵² "Moscow urges crackdown in Ukraine on "extremists" in government" *Russia Beyond*, February 25, 2014, https://www.rbth.com/news/2014/02/24/moscow_urges_crackdown_in_ukraine_on_extremists_in_government_34518.html

Poland and France whereas the United States and the European Union, and other international structures have welcomed this document"⁸⁵³

Calls for secession grow in Crimea following the impeachment vote in Kiev⁸⁵⁴. In Sevastopol pro-Russian supporters gathered around the city hall where the Aleksei Chaliy, a Russian citizen, was appointed as mayor⁸⁵⁵. As stated by a protester: "Sevastopol is a Russian town and will always be a Russian town[...]we will never surrender to those fascists in Kiev"⁸⁵⁶. Protesters called for the creation of self-defense squads and checkpoints⁸⁵⁷ were placed on roads leading into Sevastopol⁸⁵⁸. Russia stated that it would support greater federalism in the country⁸⁵⁹.

February 27, 2014: The Crimean parliament passes a resolution on the holding of a referendum for autonomy⁸⁶⁰. The parliament also stressed its support for Yanukovych as the legitimate president⁸⁶¹. From Russia, Yanukovych stated that he continues to hold the presidency whilst the US said he had "abdicated his responsibility"⁸⁶². Masked gunmen barricade government buildings in Crimea and raise Russian flags⁸⁶³. NATO states it has no intention of responding to any Russian intervention in Crimea⁸⁶⁴. Russia prepares a military exercise in the region, which it states was scheduled prior to the unrest and hence had no relation to the situation in Ukraine⁸⁶⁵. The acting president of Ukraine, Oleksandr V. Turchynov, stated: "I am addressing the Russian Black Sea Fleet command with a demand: all military servicemen should stay within the boundaries of the territories stipulated by agreement[...]Any movement of military servicemen with weapons outside this territory will be viewed as military aggression."⁸⁶⁶

February 28, 2014: Unidentified armed men take control of the airport in Simferopol and the military airport in Sevastopol as well as other strategic locations⁸⁶⁷. A Russian military vessel was positioned close to Sevastopol and Russian marines were stationed at the Ukraine border⁸⁶⁸. Russia denies any placement of Russian troops in the area but does agree to having stepped up their "anti-terror units" in Ukraine in order

⁸⁵³ Ibid

⁸⁵⁴ Howard Amos "Ukraine crisis fuels secession calls in pro-Russian south" *The Guardian*, February 23, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/23/ukraine-crisis-secession-russian-crimea>

⁸⁵⁵ Howard Amos, "Ukraine: Sevastopol installs pro-Russian mayor as separatism fears grow" *The Guardian*, February 25, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/25/ukraine-sevastopol-installs-pro-russian-mayor>

⁸⁵⁶ Howard Amos "Ukraine crisis fuels secession calls in pro-Russian south" *The Guardian*

⁸⁵⁷ Howard Amos, "Ukraine: Sevastopol installs pro-Russian mayor as separatism fears grow" *The Guardian*

⁸⁵⁸ Howard Amos "Ukraine crisis fuels secession calls in pro-Russian south" *The Guardian*

⁸⁵⁹ Ibid

⁸⁶⁰ Haroon Siddique, Tom McCarthy and Alan Yuhas "Crimean parliament seizure inflames Russian-Ukrainian tensions – live" *The Guardian*, February 27, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/27/ukraine-pro-russian-gunmen-seize-crimea-parliament-live-updates>

⁸⁶¹ Ibid

⁸⁶² Ibid

⁸⁶³ Christine Hauser and Jennifer Preston "Update on the tensions in Ukraine" *The New York Times*, February 27, 2014, <https://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/02/27/live-coverage-tensions-in-ukraine/?action=click&contentCollection=Europe&module=RelatedCoverage®ion=Marginalia&pgtype=article&mtref=undefined&gwh=1D2E098DCC614D2BFB7F5CE05C5DAC18&gwt=pay&assetType=REGIWALL>

⁸⁶⁴ Haroon Siddique, Tom McCarthy and Alan Yuhas "Crimean parliament seizure inflames Russian-Ukrainian tensions – live" *The Guardian*

⁸⁶⁵ Christine Hauser and Jennifer Preston "Update on the tensions in Ukraine" *The New York Times*

⁸⁶⁶ Ibid

⁸⁶⁷ Ukraine Crisis Timeline "Crimean Parliament Forms New Cabinet" *CSIS*, February 28, 2014, <http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm#4>

⁸⁶⁸ Joseph Watts and Will Stewart "Ukraine: Russia accused of 'armed invasion and occupation'" *Evening Standard*, February 28, 2014, <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/world/ukraine-russia-accused-of-armed-invasion-and-occupation-9160923.html>

to protect its navy staff⁸⁶⁹. Russia's ambassador to the UN, Vitaly Churkin, states that Russia military movement in Crimea is within the agreement with Ukraine on deployment of military assets⁸⁷⁰. The speaker of the Crimean parliament states that Crimea will not be separated from Ukraine and that he does not know who the troops belong to⁸⁷¹.

March 5, 2014: Russia, the US, UK, France, Germany and Ukraine initiate talks over the Ukraine crisis without reaching an agreement⁸⁷². John Kerry called the talks "the beginning of a negotiation"⁸⁷³. Russia states that an agreement has been made with the US with the objective of implementing the February 21 agreement⁸⁷⁴. The US does not mention this agreement⁸⁷⁵. In Donetsk protesters called for a referendum of the status of the region and for more autonomy⁸⁷⁶.

March 6, 2014: The Ukraine Rada invalidates the upcoming referendum in Crimea and act to dissolve the parliament in Crimea⁸⁷⁷. Obama denounces the referendum and authorizes sanctions against Russian individuals and entities⁸⁷⁸. The Eu also announces suspension of talks with Russia including on a visa deal⁸⁷⁹. Preparations for the G8 summit are also suspended⁸⁸⁰. NATO also suspends cooperation with Russia in certain areas⁸⁸¹ and the US deploys fighter jets to the Baltics to join air patrols over the Baltic states⁸⁸². On March 6, the Crimean parliament votes to join Russia, making the referendum as a means of merely ratifying this decision⁸⁸³. The referendum is moved from the 30th to the 16th of March⁸⁸⁴. The Russian State Duma begin working on a bill which would "make it easier for new territories to join Russia"⁸⁸⁵. Meanwhile Putin announces that Russia is "not considering" the annexation of Crimea⁸⁸⁶. Crimean Prime Minister

⁸⁶⁹ Ibid

⁸⁷⁰ "Ukraine accuses Russia of deploying troops in Crimea" *BBC News*, February 28, 2014,

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26392958>

⁸⁷¹ Ukraine Crisis Timeline "Russian Forces Occupy Strategic Facilities in Crimea" *CSIS*, February 28, 2014,

<http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm#3>

⁸⁷² Catherine E. Shoichet, Laura Smith-Spark and Michael Holmes "Kerry on Ukraine: Solution is tough, but situation better than yesterday" *CNN*, March 6, 2014, <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/03/05/world/europe/ukraine-russia-tensions/>

⁸⁷³ Ibid

⁸⁷⁴ Ibid

⁸⁷⁵ Ibid

⁸⁷⁶ Ibid

⁸⁷⁷ Ukraine Crisis Timeline "Ukrainian Government in Kyiv, Russia React to Crimea Vote" *CSIS*, March 6, 2014,

<http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm#7>

⁸⁷⁸ "Statement by the President on Ukraine" *The White House*, March 6, 2014,

<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/06/statement-president-ukraine>

⁸⁷⁹ "Western powers move to punish Russia" *Aljazeera*, March 6, 2014,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2014/03/western-powers-move-punish-russia-201436154643709328.html>

⁸⁸⁰ Ibid

⁸⁸¹ "Russia disappointed with results of Russian-NATO Council meeting" *TASS*, March 6, 2014,

<https://tass.com/russia/722342>

⁸⁸² Raf Sanchez and Bruno Waterfield "Ukraine crisis: US sends fighter jets to Baltic and increases pressure on Vladimir Putin" *The Telegraph*, March 6, 2014,

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/10682004/US-sends-fighter-jets-to-Baltic-and-boosts-pressure-on-Putin-over-Ukraine.html>

⁸⁸³ Shaun Walker and Ian Traynor, "Ukraine crisis: Crimea now part of Russia, local parliament declares" *The Guardian*, March 6, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/06/ukraine-crisis-crimea-part-of-russia-local-parliament-declares>

⁸⁸⁴ Ibid

⁸⁸⁵ Ibid

⁸⁸⁶ Ibid

Sergei Aksyonov refuses to negotiate with the government in Kiev because “We do not consider this government that proposes talks to us to be legitimate, that is the main issue”⁸⁸⁷.

March 8, 2014: US warns of closing diplomatic option should Russia take any further steps towards the annexation of Crimea⁸⁸⁸. Obama stresses the need for Russia to withdraw its troops back to their bases and to allow international observers into Crimea⁸⁸⁹. Russia considers cancelling the nuclear inspections required by the START treaty as a response to the suspension of US-Russia military cooperation and the imposing of sanctions⁸⁹⁰. As stated by Russian ministry of defense in a statement: “The unfounded threats towards Russia from the United States and NATO over its policy on Ukraine are seen by us as an unfriendly gesture”⁸⁹¹.

March 9, 2014: In a conversation with German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, Putin defends Russia’s actions in Ukraine⁸⁹². He stated: “The steps taken by the legitimate leadership of Crimea are based on the norms of international law and aim to ensure the legal interests of the population of the peninsula,”⁸⁹³. UK and Russian officials discuss the formation of a contact group with the aim of establishing direct talks with Ukraine⁸⁹⁴.

March 11, 2014: The Crimean Parliament declares Crimea independent of Ukraine⁸⁹⁵. The Russian Foreign Ministry compares the referendum with the accession of Kosovo from Serbia, hereby pointing to the vote as “absolutely legitimate”⁸⁹⁶.

March 12, 2014: Obama meets with the interim Prime Minister of Ukraine, Arseniy Yatsenyuk⁸⁹⁷. Obama states: would ask that you deliver a message on behalf of the American people to all the Ukrainian people, and that is that we admire their courage; we appreciate their aspirations⁸⁹⁸.

March 13, 2014: Ukraine creates national guard ahead of the referendum which is to consist of recruits from the Maidan demonstrations and military academies⁸⁹⁹. The guard is, according to Ukraine's national

⁸⁸⁷ “Crimean Leader Rejects Talks With Ukraine's Central Leadership” *The Moscow Times*, March 5, 2014, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/03/05/crimean-leader-rejects-talks-with-ukraines-central-leadership-a32696>

⁸⁸⁸ Arshad Mohammed and Roberta Rampton “Kerry urges Russia to exercise utmost restraint in Ukraine's Crimea” *Reuters*, March 8, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-usa/kerry-urges-russia-to-exercise-utmost-restraint-in-ukraines-crimea-idUSBREA270OZ20140308>

⁸⁸⁹ Ibid

⁸⁹⁰ Ukraine Crisis Timeline “Russia Considering End to START Inspections” *CSIS*, March 8, 2014, <http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm#12>

⁸⁹¹ Kathy Lally and Carol Morello “In response to U.S. sanctions over Ukraine, Russia may freeze weapons inspections” *The Washington Post*, March 8, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/in-crimea-interim-government-says-it-has-no-plans-to-cede-to-russia/2014/03/08/df1261d0-a6c3-11e3-9cff-b1406de784f0_story.html

⁸⁹² “Merkel warns Putin against 'illegal' actions in Ukraine” *DW*, March 9, 2014, <https://www.dw.com/en/merkel-warns-putin-against-illegal-actions-in-ukraine/a-17484604>

⁸⁹³ Ibid

⁸⁹⁴ Ibid

⁸⁹⁵ Nick Paton Walsh, Diana Magnay and Matt Smith “Ignoring West, Crimea readies vote on joining Russia” *CNN*, March 12, 2014, <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/03/11/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/>

⁸⁹⁶ Ukraine Crisis Timeline “Crimean Parliament Declares Independence” *CSIS*, March 11, 2014, <http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm#15>

⁸⁹⁷ “Remarks by President Obama and Ukraine Prime Minister Yatsenyuk after Bilateral Meeting” *The White House*, March 12, 2014, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/12/remarks-president-obama-and-ukraine-prime-minister-yatsenyuk-after-bilat>

⁸⁹⁸ Ibid

⁸⁹⁹ “Ukraine creates National Guard ahead of Crimea vote” *BBC News*, March 13, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26558288>

security chief Andriy Parubiy, to “ensure state security, defend the borders, and eliminate terrorist groups”⁹⁰⁰. Addressing the UNSC, the interim Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk urged Russia to “pull back its military forces deployed in Crimea to barracks and to start real talks and negotiations”⁹⁰¹. Russian ambassador to the UN, Churkin, responded by saying that Russia “does not want war” but also stated that Crimea had the right to hold a referendum on joining Russia⁹⁰². The Ukraine parliament furthermore approved a resolution confirming Ukraine’s aspiration of further integration with the EU and authorized Yatsenyuk to conclude an Association Agreement with the EU⁹⁰³. Talks at the parliament also included a debate regarding the deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission⁹⁰⁴.

March 14, 2014: Talks are held between US Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov⁹⁰⁵. The US had proposed expansion of the Peninsula’s autonomy and safeguarding the rights of the Russian speaking population⁹⁰⁶. As stated by Kerry: “After much discussion, the foreign minister made it clear that President Putin is not prepared to make any decision on Ukraine until after the referendum on Sunday.”⁹⁰⁷ The Russian foreign ministry released a statement saying: “Russia is aware of its responsibility for the lives of compatriots and fellow citizens in Ukraine and reserves the right to take people under protection,”⁹⁰⁸ The UN announces that the UN will deploy a monitoring team to Ukraine to “help establish the facts surrounding alleged human rights violations, including in Crimea, and serve to de-escalate tensions in the country”⁹⁰⁹. More Russian troops and hardware was reportedly sent to Crimea and opponents of the referendum protested on the Peninsula⁹¹⁰.

March 15, 2014: Russia vetoes an US UN resolution declaring the referendum illegal⁹¹¹. Churkin defended Crimea’s right to self-determination and stated: “Up until 1954, Crimea was part of the Russian Federation. It was given to Ukraine in violation of the norms at that time under Soviet law and without taking into account the view of the peoples of Crimea, who nevertheless remained within a single state — the USSR. When the USSR fell, Crimea became part of Ukraine automatically. The view of the people of Crimea — once again — was ignored”⁹¹².

⁹⁰⁰ Ibid

⁹⁰¹ “Ukraine PM Arseniy Yatsenyuk addresses UN” *Politico*, March 13, 2014,

<https://www.politico.com/video/2014/03/ukraine-pm-arseniy-yatsenyuk-addresses-un-003776>

⁹⁰² “Ukraine crisis: Russia tells UN it does not want war” *BBC News*, March 14, 2014,

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26564851>

⁹⁰³ “Ukraine’s Parliament Appeals To U.N. For Help On Crimea” *Huffington Post*, March 13, 2014,

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/ukraine-un-crimea_n_4955088?utm_hp_ref=world&guccounter=1

⁹⁰⁴ Ibid

⁹⁰⁵ Michael R. Gordon and Steven Lee Meyers “U.S.-Russia talks on Ukraine fail to ease tension”, *The New York Times*, March 14, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/15/world/europe/john-kerry-russia-ukraine-talks.html>

⁹⁰⁶ Ibid

⁹⁰⁷ Ibid

⁹⁰⁸ Ibid

⁹⁰⁹ “Ukraine: UN deploys human rights monitors amid ‘troubling’ signs in east, Crimea” *UN News*, March 14, 2014,

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2014/03/463932-ukraine-un-deploys-human-rights-monitors-amid-troubling-signs-east-crimea>

⁹¹⁰ Sergei L. Loiko “Crimea crisis: Russian buildup continues, so do pre-referendum protests” *Los Angeles Times*, March 14, 2014, <https://www.latimes.com/world/worldnow/la-fg-wn-crimea-russian-buildup-continues-so-do-prereferendum-protests-20140314-story.html#axzz2wAsRddMq>

⁹¹¹ Bill Chappel “Russia Vetoes U.N. Security Council Resolution On Crimea” *NPR*, March 15, 2014,

<https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2014/03/15/290404691/russia-vetoes-u-n-security-council-resolution-on-crimea?t=1571734927416>

⁹¹² Margaret Besheer “Russia Vetoes Crimea Resolution, China Abstains” *VOA news*, March 15, 2014,

<https://www.voanews.com/europe/russia-vetoes-crimea-resolution-china-abstains>

March 16, 2014: In phone call with Putin, US president Obama stated that the referendum: “violates the Ukrainian constitution and occurred under duress of Russian military intervention, would never be recognized by the United States and the international community”⁹¹³. Putin stated that the referendum was “fully consistent with international law,” and “it pointed to Kosovo’s 2008 vote to separate from Serbia as setting the precedent for Sunday’s balloting”⁹¹⁴. The referendum is held and according to Crimean Electoral Commission, 95,7% of the Crimean population voted to return to union with Russia⁹¹⁵. A Crimean official announced that 80% of the population had voted⁹¹⁶. Refat Chubarov, leader of the Tatars' unofficial parliament, said the referendum was illegal and stated “The fate of our motherland cannot be decided in such a referendum under the shadows of the guns of soldiers”⁹¹⁷.

March 17, 2014: Following the referendum, the President Obama announced a new executive order which expands the scope of sanctions against Russia⁹¹⁸. The EU considers “a visa ban and an asset freeze against a number of Russian officials”⁹¹⁹. Putin signs a decree recognizing Crimea as a sovereign state as the first step to integrating Crimea into Russia⁹²⁰.

March 18, 2014: Following a confrontation between Ukraine and Russian forces in Crimea and the death of a Ukrainian serviceman, the Ukraine ministry of defense issues an order using deadly force in case of self-defense⁹²¹. Prime Minister stated the conflict was moving: “from a political one to a military one because of Russian soldiers”⁹²². Putin signs a treaty on the reunification between Crimea and Russia and addresses the Russian Federal Assembly⁹²³. Putin stated: “To understand the reason behind such a choice it is enough to know the history of Crimea and what Russia and Crimea have always meant for each other.”⁹²⁴

March 19, 2014: In a statement made by NATO secretary general, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, he stated that NATO was “considering providing assistance to Ukraine” in order to deter Russian from committing

⁹¹³ “Readout of the President’s Call with President Putin” *The White House*, March 16, 2014, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/16/readout-president-s-call-president-putin>

⁹¹⁴ Jennifer Epstein “Obama, Putin argue over Crimea vote” *Politico*, March 16, 2014, <https://www.politico.com/story/2014/03/crimea-vote-obama-putin-104716#ixzz2wExb9H8L>

⁹¹⁵ “95.7% of Crimeans in referendum voted to join Russia - preliminary results” *RT*, March 16, 2014, <https://www.rt.com/news/crimea-vote-join-russia-210/>

⁹¹⁶ Laura Smith-Spark, Diana Magnay and Nick Paton Walsh “Ukraine crisis: Early results show Crimea votes to join Russia” *CNN*, March 16, 2014, <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/03/16/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/>

⁹¹⁷ “Crimea referendum: Voters 'back Russia union” *BBC News*, March 16, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26606097>

⁹¹⁸ “Statement by the President on Ukraine” *The White House*, March 17, 2014, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/17/statement-president-ukraine>

⁹¹⁹ “Ukraine crisis: EU ponders Russia sanctions over Crimea vote” *BBC News*, March 17, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26607466>

⁹²⁰ “Putin Defies West, Declares Crimea Independent” *VOA News*, March 17, 2014, <https://www.voanews.com/europe/putin-defies-west-declares-crimea-independent>

⁹²¹ Aleksandar Vasovic and Pavel Polityuk “UPDATE 2-Ukrainian serviceman killed, PM decries "war crime”” *Reuters*, March 18, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/ukraine-crisis-premier/update-2-ukrainian-serviceman-killed-pm-decries-war-crime-idUSL6N0MF4I120140318>

⁹²² Ibid

⁹²³ “Address by President of the Russian Federation” *President of Russia*, March 18, 2014, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603#sel=29:3:r.29:3:r>

⁹²⁴ Ibid

another military intervention⁹²⁵. He equally stated that Ukraine had asked the military alliance for assistance⁹²⁶.

March 19, 2014: Ukraine announces plans of evacuating its military personnel from the peninsula⁹²⁷. Ukraine also announced that it would leave the CIS⁹²⁸ and proposed the UN to declare Crimea a demilitarized zone⁹²⁹.

March 20, 2014: The US announces new sanctions against Russia and penalties against “key sectors of the Russian economy”⁹³⁰. Obama stated: “This is not our preferred outcome. These sanctions would not only have a significant impact on the Russian economy, but could also be disruptive to the global economy⁹³¹”. The EU equally expanded their sanctions against 12 Russian officials⁹³². Russia responded by banning nice US lawmakers and officials from entering Russia⁹³³. According to an opinion poll, Putin’s public approval rating hit a five-year record high of 75,1%⁹³⁴.

March 21, 2014: The EU and Ukraine sign the Association Agreement⁹³⁵. The agreement is designed to provide Ukraine with economic and political support⁹³⁶. Yatsenyk stated: “We want to be a part of the big European family and this is the first tremendous step in order to achieve for Ukraine its ultimate goal, as a full-fledged member.”⁹³⁷ The EU also announced that it would proceed with similar deals with Georgia and Moldova and that it has cancelled a summit with Russia in June⁹³⁸. In an address to the Russian parliament, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stated that any reference to annexation was an insult to “people, to their inalienable rights to self-determination, which they have exercised to the full”⁹³⁹. Vladimir Putin signed a law which formally included Crimea into the Russian Federation⁹⁴⁰. The Permanent Council of the

⁹²⁵ Michael R. Gordon “NATO Weighs Assistance for Ukraine to Dissuade Further Moves by Moscow”, *The New York Times*, March 19, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/20/world/europe/nato-chief-russia-europe.html>

⁹²⁶ Ibid

⁹²⁷ David M. Herszenhorn and Andrew E. Kramer “Ukraine plans to withdraw troops from Russia-occupied Crimea” *The New York Times*, March 19, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/20/world/europe/crimea.html?_r=0

⁹²⁸ “Ukraine quits CIS, sets visa regime with Russia, wants Crimea as ‘demilitarized zone’” *RT*, March 19, 2014, <https://www.rt.com/news/urkaine-cis-visa-demilitarized-917/>

⁹²⁹ “Ukraine proposes demilitarised zone in Crimea” *Aljazeera*, March 20, 2014, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2014/03/ukraine-proposes-demilitarised-zone-crimea-201431918409464439.html>

⁹³⁰ Will Englund, Kathy Lally and William Branigin “Russian parliament moves to ratify Crimea takeover as Europe, U.S. weigh more sanctions” *The Washington Post*, March 20, 2014,

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/european-leaders-weigh-additional-sanctions-against-russia/2014/03/20/c427861e-b016-11e3-95e8-39bef8e9a48b_story.html

⁹³¹ Ibid

⁹³² Anna Dolgov, “EU Adds 12 More Names to Russia Sanctions List” *The Moscow Times*, March 21, 2014, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/03/21/eu-adds-12-more-names-to-russia-sanctions-list-a33199>

⁹³³ Will Englund, Kathy Lally and William Branigin “Russian parliament moves to ratify Crimea takeover as Europe, U.S. weigh more sanctions” *The Washington Post*

⁹³⁴ “Putin’s public approval rating hits five-year record high – poll” *TASS*, March 20, 2014, <https://tass.com/russia/724554>

⁹³⁵ “Ukraine crisis: EU signs association deal” *BBC News*, March 21, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26680250>

⁹³⁶ Ibid

⁹³⁷ Ibid

⁹³⁸ Ibid

⁹³⁹ Ibid

⁹⁴⁰ Ibid

OSCE agrees on sending a Special Monitoring Mission of international observers to Ukraine⁹⁴¹. As stated by the OSCE: “Throughout the country, the mission will gather information and report on the security situation as well as establish and report facts regarding incidents, including those concerning alleged violations of fundamental OSCE principles and commitments. It will also monitor the human rights situation in the country, including the rights of national minorities.”⁹⁴².

March 22, 2014: A rally is held in Donetsk with demands for a referendum in the region and the return of Yanukovich⁹⁴³.

March 24, 2014: U.S. Air Force Gen. Philip M. Breedlove, the commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Europe, warns that Russia may have the intention of expanding its borders into Eastern Ukraine⁹⁴⁴. As stated by Breedlove: “There is absolutely sufficient force postured on the eastern border of Ukraine to run to Transnistria if the decision was made to do that, and that is very worrisome”⁹⁴⁵. Russia is expelled from the G7⁹⁴⁶.

March 25, 2014: At a press conference with Prime Minister Rutte of the Netherlands, US president Obama stated: “Russia is a regional power that is threatening some of its immediate neighbors not out of strength, but out of weakness. Ukraine has been a country in which Russia had enormous influence for decades, since the breakup of the Soviet Union. And we have considerable influence on our neighbors. We generally don’t need to invade them in order to have a strong, cooperative relationship with them”⁹⁴⁷.

March 26, 2014: A court decision in Ukraine bans the broadcasting of four Russian TV channels in Ukraine⁹⁴⁸. The Russian foreign ministry calls it a violation of international obligations and an attack on freedom of expression⁹⁴⁹.

March 27, 2014: Former Prime Minister, Yulia V. Tymoshenko announces her candidacy for the presidency alongside Petro Poroshenko⁹⁵⁰. The UNGA adopted a measure which stressed the illegality of the Crimean referendum⁹⁵¹.

⁹⁴¹ “All sides will benefit from the decision to deploy an OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, Swiss OSCE Chair says” *OSCE*, March 21, 2014, <https://www.osce.org/cio/116710>

⁹⁴² Ibid

⁹⁴³ “One Thousand Hold Pro-Russian Rally in Eastern Ukraine” *NBC News*, March 22, 2014,

<https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/ukraine-crisis/one-thousand-hold-pro-russian-rally-eastern-ukraine-n59441>

⁹⁴⁴ Carol Morello and Karen DeYoung, “NATO general warns of further Russian aggression” *The Washington Post*, March 24, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/nato-general-warns-of-further-russian-aggression/2014/03/23/2ff63bb6-b269-11e3-8020-b2d790b3c9e1_story.html

⁹⁴⁵ Ibid

⁹⁴⁶ “Russia not clinging to G8 if West does not want it – Russian FM” *RT*, March 24, 2014,

<https://www.rt.com/news/lavrov-g8-crimea-kerry-933/>

⁹⁴⁷ “Press Conference with President Obama and Prime Minister Rutte of the Netherlands” *The White House*, March 25, 2014, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/25/press-conference-president-obama-and-prime-minister-rutte-netherlands/>

⁹⁴⁸ “Ukrainian court bans Russian TV broadcast” *RT*, March 26, 2014, <https://www.rt.com/news/ukraine-court-bans-russian-tv-245/>

⁹⁴⁹ Ibid

⁹⁵⁰ Patrick Reevell and David M. Herszenhorn, “Former Prime Minister Announces Candidacy for President of Ukraine”, *The New York Times*, March 27, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/28/world/europe/ukraine.html>

⁹⁵¹ “Backing Ukraine’s territorial integrity, UN Assembly declares Crimea referendum invalid” *UN News*, March 27, 2014, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2014/03/464812-backing-ukraines-territorial-integrity-un-assembly-declares-crimea-referendum#.UzW4fvldWSp>

March 28, 2014: Putin and Obama have their first direct conversation after the referendum⁹⁵². Yanukovich called on the country to “Demand a referendum on the determination of the status of each region within Ukraine,”⁹⁵³ instead of the presidential election⁹⁵⁴. He further stated: “Everything that has happened in recent months and is happening in Ukraine is an armed coup that was conducted by the opposition with the use of arms of terrorist groups with full support of some Western states”⁹⁵⁵. In a speech, presidential candidate, Petro Poroshenko stated that the “I’m convinced it would be a betrayal of Maidan if we were not united”⁹⁵⁶. Lavrov called for “deep constitutional reform” in Ukraine and stated that “Frankly speaking, we don’t see any other way for the steady development of the Ukrainian state apart from as a federation”⁹⁵⁷. Inside Crimea, the Tartar population demanded autonomy⁹⁵⁸. In the Russian Security Council, talks were held on beginning the process of withdrawing Russia from a number of bilateral agreements with Ukraine on the issue of the Black Fleet⁹⁵⁹. In a statement the Russian foreign ministry targeted the UN resolution which declared the Crimean referendum had no validity⁹⁶⁰. The statement said that Western states had used “the full force of the unspent potential of the cold war-era propaganda machine” to push the vote through⁹⁶¹. Russian ambassador to the UN further added “Very many countries complained that they were undergoing colossal pressure on the part of Western powers to vote in support of that resolution”⁹⁶². Members of the right sector organization in Ukraine protested outside of the parliament following the death of one of their leaders⁹⁶³. They demanded an investigation into the death and the resignation of the interior minister⁹⁶⁴. The interim president condemned the organization and stated that they were bent on destabilizing the country⁹⁶⁵.

March 29, 2014: Lavrov states in a television interview with Russian media that ““We have absolutely no intention of - or interest in - crossing Ukraine's borders.”⁹⁶⁶. But also that Russia was prepared to protect: “the rights of Russians and Russian-speaking people in Ukraine, using all available political, diplomatic and legal means”⁹⁶⁷. A proposal has been drafted between the US and other European countries calling for the “halting the military build-up near Ukraine's border, the deployment of international monitors in Crimea to protect the rights of Russian speakers, and the return of Russian troops there to their bases.”⁹⁶⁸. Putin had however drawn the US attention to “the continued rampage of extremists” in Kiev and other

⁹⁵² “Ukraine crisis: Kerry re-routes plane for impromptu Paris meeting” *CBC*, March 28, 2014, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/ukraine-crisis-kerry-re-routes-plane-for-impromptu-paris-meeting-1.2589810>

⁹⁵³ “Viktor Yanukovich delivers address to Ukrainian people” *TASS*, March 28, 2014, <https://tass.com/world/725689>

⁹⁵⁴ “Ukraine crisis: Kerry re-routes plane for impromptu Paris meeting” *CBC*

⁹⁵⁵ “Viktor Yanukovich delivers address to Ukrainian people” *TASS*

⁹⁵⁶ “Ukraine crisis: Kerry re-routes plane for impromptu Paris meeting” *CBC*

⁹⁵⁷ *Ibid*

⁹⁵⁸ *Ibid*

⁹⁵⁹ “Meeting with permanent members of the Security Council” *President of Russia*, March 28, 2014, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20652>

⁹⁶⁰ Sara Miller Llana, “Russia accuses West of 'shameless blackmail' in UN vote on Ukraine” *CSM*, March 28, 2014, <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Security-Watch/terrorism-security/2014/0328/Russia-accuses-West-of-shameless-blackmail-in-UN-vote-on-Ukraine>

⁹⁶¹ *Ibid*

⁹⁶² *Ibid*

⁹⁶³ “Ukraine: UN condemns Crimea vote as IMF and US back loans” *BBC News*, March 27, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26776416>

⁹⁶⁴ *Ibid*

⁹⁶⁵ “Ukraine leader Turchynov warns of far-right threat” *BBC News*, March 28, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26784236>

⁹⁶⁶ “Ukraine crisis: Russia vows no invasion” *BBC News*, March 29, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26799326>

⁹⁶⁷ *Ibid*

⁹⁶⁸ *Ibid*

regions of Ukraine⁹⁶⁹. NATO described the movement of Russian troops near the borders of Ukraine as a “huge military build-up”⁹⁷⁰. Kerry and Lavrov plan to meet for a discussion over a “working document” on the crisis in Ukraine⁹⁷¹. According to UN envoys, Russia threatened countries ahead of the vote on the referendum resolution⁹⁷². A Russian spokesperson stated that “We never threaten anyone. We just explain the situation.”⁹⁷³ The Crimean Tartars Assembly voted in favor of seeking “ethnic and territorial autonomy” on the Peninsula.

March 30, 2014: The meeting between Lavrov and Kerry does not lead to any outcome, but both agree on the need to find a diplomatic solution⁹⁷⁴. General Philip Breedlove, NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander Europe and the head of the U.S. military’s European Command, is sent back to Europe to continue consultations with NATO allies⁹⁷⁵. Fear rise in the US over a possible Russian intervention into Ukraine. The number of US aircrafts in regular air patrols over the Baltics are increased⁹⁷⁶.

March 31, 2014: Russian Prime Minister, Dmitry Medvedev, visits Crimea for a government meeting on the socioeconomic development of Crimea⁹⁷⁷. In Russia, Putin signed an executive order establishing the Ministry of Crimean Affairs⁹⁷⁸. In a telephone call with Chancellor Angela Merkel, the German Bundesregierung pointed to Putin allegedly informing of the partial withdrawal of Russian troops from the border of Ukraine⁹⁷⁹. In a Russian statement however, Putin called for constitutional reform in Ukraine and spoke of ways to reach a settlement of the conflict in Moldova’s breakaway region of Transnistria⁹⁸⁰.

April 1, 2014: The Ukraine parliament votes to “disarm illegal groups” including the Right Sector, following a fatal shooting on the city’s main square⁹⁸¹. The resolution stated: “In line with the extreme sociopolitical situation in the country, the escalation of crime and systematic provocations from foreign citizens in southeastern Ukraine and Kiev, the Verkhovna Rada orders the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Special Services to immediately disarm the illegal groups”⁹⁸². The resolution follows a call from France, Germany and Poland for the Ukraine government to distance itself from extremist groups⁹⁸³. The call was

⁹⁶⁹ Ibid

⁹⁷⁰ Ibid

⁹⁷¹ Paul Richter and Sergei L. Loiko “Top American and Russian diplomats plan meeting to discuss Ukraine” *Los Angeles Times*, March 29, 2014, <https://www.latimes.com/world/worldnow/la-fg-wn-american-russian-diplomats-ukraine-20140329-story.html#axzz2xZKcdmvI>

⁹⁷² Louis Charbonneau “Exclusive: Russia threatened countries ahead of U.N. vote on Ukraine: envoys” *Reuters*, March 29, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-un/exclusive-russia-threatened-countries-ahead-of-u-n-vote-on-ukraine-envoys-idUSBREA2R20020140329>

⁹⁷³ Ibid

⁹⁷⁴ Lesley Wroughton and Alexei Anishchuk, “Kerry, Lavrov hold talks on de-escalating Ukraine crisis” *Reuters*, March 30, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis/kerry-lavrov-hold-talks-on-de-escalating-ukraine-crisis-idUSBREA2S0K020140330>

⁹⁷⁵ Ibid

⁹⁷⁶ Ibid

⁹⁷⁷ “Government meeting” *The Russian Government*, March 31, 2014, <http://government.ru/en/news/11368/>

⁹⁷⁸ “Executive Order establishing the Ministry of Crimean Affairs and appointing Oleg Savelyev to the post of minister” *President of Russia*, March 31, 2014, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20665>

⁹⁷⁹ “Putin informs Merkel of Russia’s partial troop withdrawal on Ukraine border” *DW*, March 31, 2014, <https://www.dw.com/en/putin-informs-merkel-of-russias-partial-troop-withdrawal-on-ukraine-border/a-17533600>

⁹⁸⁰ “Putin calls for constitutional reform in Ukraine” *TASS*, March 31, 2014, <https://tass.com/russia/725980>

⁹⁸¹ “Ukraine to Disarm Illegally Armed Groups After Kiev Shooting” *Sputniknews*, April 1, 2014, <https://sputniknews.com/world/20140401188962883-Ukraines-Right-Sector-Faces-Ban-After-Shooting-on-Maidan/>

⁹⁸² Ibid

⁹⁸³ Steve Gutterman, “Russian envoy hails EU trio’s call to disarm Ukrainian groups” *Reuters*, April 1, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-russia-eu/russian-envoy-hails-eu-trios-call-to-disarm-ukrainian-groups-idUSBREA300PD20140401>

endorsed by Russia⁹⁸⁴. NATO suspends “all practical civilian and military cooperation” with Russia⁹⁸⁵. NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen stated that Russia’s aggression “is the gravest threat to European security in a generation and it challenges our vision of a Europe whole, free and at peace⁹⁸⁶” NATO and Ukraine also announce and intensification of their cooperation and the promotion of defense reforms in Ukraine through training and other programs⁹⁸⁷. Russia warned Ukraine of further integration with NATO and as past attempts as “led to a freezing of Russian-Ukrainian political contacts, a headache between NATO and Russia and[...]to a division in Ukrainian society” and that future economic ties between Russia and Ukraine “will largely depend on the actions Ukraine takes in its foreign policy”⁹⁸⁸. Gazprom eliminates the discount on gas import prices given to Ukraine in November 2013⁹⁸⁹. The US House of Representatives pass two bills, one which includes aid to Ukraine and further sanctions towards Russia and the other providing money to increase the broadcasting of “Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Voice of America to eastern Ukraine, including Crimea, to counter pro-Russian broadcasts in the area”⁹⁹⁰. This comes as a response to reports that Russian forces have seized control of media stations in Crimea from where misleading reports about attacks against the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine⁹⁹¹.

April 2, 2014: Yanukovich states in an interview that the annexation of Crimea is “a tragedy” and that ways should be found to reunite Crimea with Ukraine⁹⁹². Ukraine plans to file a lawsuit against Russia in the International Court of Justice for the annexation of Crimea⁹⁹³. Western and US diplomats stated that based on the UNGA resolution on the Crimean referendum, the UN would continue to treat Crimea as part of Ukraine⁹⁹⁴. The government in Ukraine moved towards decentralization of power and approved a plan granting more power to the regions by replacing the appointment of regional governors with elections⁹⁹⁵.

April 3, 2014: Gen. Philip Breedlove, NATO's supreme allied commander Europe states that Russian troops were capable of moving on Ukraine within 12 hours of an order and that at present time 40.000 Russian troops were stationed at the border⁹⁹⁶. NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen stated that Russia is trying to “reestablish a Russian sphere of influence covering the former Soviet space”⁹⁹⁷. To NATO, Sergei Lavrov responded by saying “there are no restrictions on the movements of military units

⁹⁸⁴ Ibid

⁹⁸⁵ Laura Smith-Spark and Susannah Palk, “Ukraine crisis: NATO suspends cooperation with Moscow” *CNN*, April 1, 2014, <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/04/01/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/>

⁹⁸⁶ Ibid

⁹⁸⁷ Ibid

⁹⁸⁸ “Russia warns Kiev against NATO integration” *Reuters*, April 1, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-russia-nato/russia-warns-kiev-against-nato-integration-idUSBREA300UF20140401>

⁹⁸⁹ Ukraine Crisis Timeline “Russia Eliminates Gas Discount for Ukraine” *CSIS*, April 1, 2014, <http://ukraine.csis.org/east1.htm#34>

⁹⁹⁰ “U.S. House Passes Ukraine Aid Bill”, *RadioFreeEurope*, April 2, 2014, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-united-states-house-of-representatives-aid-/25317731.html>

⁹⁹¹ Ibid

⁹⁹² “Ukraine crisis: Viktor Yanukovich decries Crimea 'tragedy'” *BBC News*, April 2, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26857734>

⁹⁹³ “Ukraine Aims to Retrieve Crimea Through International Court” *The Moscow Times*, April 2, 2014, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/04/02/ukraine-aims-to-retrieve-crimea-through-international-court-a33557>

⁹⁹⁴ Louis Charbonneau “U.N. will treat Crimea as part of Ukraine, not Russia: U.S.” *Reuters*, April 2, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-un/u-n-will-treat-crimea-as-part-of-ukraine-not-russia-u-s-idUSBREA311TD20140402>

⁹⁹⁵ Ukraine Crisis Timeline “In Ukraine, More Power to Regions” *CSIS*, April 2, 2014, <http://ukraine.csis.org/east1.htm#39>

⁹⁹⁶ Laura Smith-Spark and Susannah Palk “Ukraine crisis: NATO military chief warns Russian troops could invade swiftly” *CNN*, April 3, 2014, <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/04/02/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/>

⁹⁹⁷ Ibid

within the territory of the Russian Federation”⁹⁹⁸. Lavrov also pointed to the NATO presence in Poland and elsewhere and stated “Our point is that Russia and NATO are also bound by a certain set of rules, including the Rome Declaration and the Fundamental Act of the NATO-Russian Council, according to which there must be no permanent excessive military presence on the territories of the Eastern European states”⁹⁹⁹. Russia also recalled its ambassador to NATO following NATO’s suspension of the Russia-NATO collaboration¹⁰⁰⁰. US announced the suspension of bilateral projects with Russia and stated that the funding for these projects would be funneled to Ukraine¹⁰⁰¹. A report by the Ukraine Interior Ministry, alleges that Yanukovich and the Russian FSB were involved in the plans to open fire at protesters in February, which resulted in the killing of 100 people¹⁰⁰².

April 5, 2014: Ukraine interim Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, accuses Russia of economic aggression and threatens to sue Russia over the increase in the price of natural gas import¹⁰⁰³.

April 6, 2014: In Donetsk protesters stormed the regional government demanding the authorization of a referendum on allowing the Donetsk Republic to join Russia¹⁰⁰⁴. Protests continued in other parts of the country including in Luhansk, Odessa and Kharkiv¹⁰⁰⁵.

April 7, 2014: The local government building in Donetsk is taken over by pro-Russian activists¹⁰⁰⁶. Donetsk declares itself independent from the central government in Kiev and announces an upcoming referendum on joining Russia¹⁰⁰⁷. The president of Ukraine denounced it as a part of Russia’s plan to invade Eastern Ukraine¹⁰⁰⁸.

April 8, 2014: In Luhansk pro-Russian activists hold hostages and are demanding a referendum¹⁰⁰⁹. Kerry states that “It is clear that Russian special forces and agents have been the catalyst behind the chaos of the last 24 hours” referring to the increased tensions in the Eastern part of Ukraine and calls from Luhansk and Donetsk for a referendum¹⁰¹⁰. He also stated that this move “could potentially be a contrived pretext for

⁹⁹⁸ “Lavrov Says Russia Withdrawing Troops From Ukraine Border Area”, *RadioFreeEurope*, April 3, 2014, <https://www.rferl.org/a/lavrov-russia-withdrawing-troops-border/25319695.html>

⁹⁹⁹ Ibid

¹⁰⁰⁰ Marie-Louise Gumuchian, Victoria Butenko and Laura Smith-Spark “Russia recalls ambassador to NATO amid Ukraine tensions” *CNN*, April 4, 2014, <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/04/03/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/>

¹⁰⁰¹ “U.S. Suspends Russian Projects Over Ukraine”, *RadioFreeEurope*, April 2, 2014, <https://www.rferl.org/a/us-russia-bilaterl-ukraine/25319151.html>

¹⁰⁰² Andrew Roth, “Ukraine implicates ex-president and Russia in protesters death” *The New York Times*, April 3, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/04/world/europe/ukraine.html?_r=0

¹⁰⁰³ “Ukraine To Sue Russia Over Gas Price Hike”, *RadioFreeEurope*, April 5, 2014, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-gazprom-ukraine-discount/25322237.html>

¹⁰⁰⁴ Ukraine Crisis Timeline “Pro-Russian Crowds Storm Government Buildings in eastern Ukraine” *CSIS*, April 6, 2014, <http://ukraine.csis.org/east1.htm#45>

¹⁰⁰⁵ Ibid

¹⁰⁰⁶ Adam Withnall, “Ukraine crisis: Donetsk 'declares independence from Kiev' and sets date for referendum on joining Russia” *Independent*, April 7, 2014, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/ukraine-crisis-officials-in-eastern-city-of-donetsk-proclaim-independence-from-kiev-and-set-date-for-9243750.html>

¹⁰⁰⁷ Ibid

¹⁰⁰⁸ Ibid

¹⁰⁰⁹ Ukraine Crisis Timeline “Ukraine, Pro-Russian Protestors Square Off in East” *CSIS*, April 8, 2014, <http://ukraine.csis.org/east1.htm#47>

¹⁰¹⁰ Will Englund and Kathy Lally, “Tense stand-off in Eastern Ukraine could shape country’s future”, *The Washington Post*, April 8, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/tense-stand-off-in-eastern-ukraine-could-shape-countrys-future/2014/04/08/dfcc99ae-bf0c-11e3-b195-dd0c1174052c_story.html?utm_term=.531b400f05d7

military intervention just as we saw in Crimea”¹⁰¹¹. Russia responded by saying that “One should not seek to put the blame on someone else”¹⁰¹². Right-wing groups in Russia have sought for volunteers to go to Ukraine although there are no reports that they have succeeded in this¹⁰¹³. Russia warns that any use of force in the eastern part of Ukraine could lead to civil war¹⁰¹⁴.

April 9, 2014: Plans are made for US, EU, Ukraine and Russia to meet for talks¹⁰¹⁵. A statement by the Russian Foreign Ministry stated: “Lavrov noted that this format could be useful if it is aimed not at discussing various aspects of one bilateral relationship or another, but on helping to arrange a broad and equal internal Ukrainian dialogue with the aim of agreeing mutually acceptable constitutional reform,”¹⁰¹⁶. Both expressed the wish of a peaceful solution to the situation in eastern Ukraine¹⁰¹⁷. A support group within the EU is established with the aim of advising Ukraine on political and economic reforms¹⁰¹⁸. The work of the group could also be extended to Georgia and Moldova¹⁰¹⁹. At a Cabinet meeting, Ukraine’s interior minister stated on the situation in Eastern Ukraine: “I think that a resolution of this crisis will be found in the next 48 hours.’...’There are two possible ways it can happen: either through the negotiation process or through forceful intervention.”¹⁰²⁰.

April 10, 2014: Ukraine offers the pro-Russian activists in Eastern Ukraine who have occupied government buildings and are armed, amnesty¹⁰²¹. According to Russian media, Ukraine was sending military hardware to Eastern Ukraine in preparation for the use of force against the pro-Russian activists¹⁰²².

April 12, 2014: Pro-Russian forces seize more government facilities in several cities in Eastern Ukraine¹⁰²³. Ukraine’s Interior Minister Arsen Avakov stated that special forces had been sent to the area and that “Our response will be very severe[...]There is zero tolerance for armed terrorists,”¹⁰²⁴

¹⁰¹¹ Paul Lewis, Shaun Walker and Oksana Grytsenko, “Moscow may be planning intervention in eastern Ukraine, US warns” *The Guardian*, April 9, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/08/us-moscow-crimea-style-intervention-eastern-ukraine>

¹⁰¹² “Russia denies trying to destabilize Ukraine” *Reuters*, April 8, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-russia-lavrov/russia-denies-trying-to-destabilize-ukraine-idUSBREA370XM20140408>

¹⁰¹³ Will Englund and Kathy Lally, “Tense stand-off in Eastern Ukraine could shape country’s future”, *The Washington Post*, April 8, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/tense-stand-off-in-eastern-ukraine-could-shape-countrys-future/2014/04/08/dfcc99ae-bf0c-11e3-b195-dd0c1174052c_story.html?utm_term=.531b400f05d7

¹⁰¹⁴ Laura Smith-Spark, Marie-Louise Gumuchian and Victoria Butenko, “Russia warns of civil war if Ukraine uses force to quell eastern revolts” *CNN*, April 9, 2014, <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/04/08/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/>

¹⁰¹⁵ Steve Gutterman and Adrian Croft, “Russia says four-way talks on Ukraine must foster internal dialogue” *Reuters*, April 9, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-lavrov-kerry/russia-says-four-way-talks-on-ukraine-must-foster-internal-dialogue-idUSBREA381CT20140409>

¹⁰¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁰¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁰¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁰¹⁹ Ibid

¹⁰²⁰ Mark Memmott “More Force May Be Used To Move Pro-Russia Protesters, Ukraine Says” *NHPR*, April 9, 2014, <https://www.nhpr.org/post/more-force-may-be-used-move-pro-russia-protesters-ukraine-says#stream/0>

¹⁰²¹ Laura Smith-Spark and Kellie Morgan “Ukrainian leader to protesters: Surrender and you won’t be prosecuted” *CNN*, April 10, 2014, https://edition.cnn.com/2014/04/10/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/index.html?hpt=hp_t2

¹⁰²² “Standoff between gvt, protesters intensifies, 24 hours before Kiev ultimatum ends” *RT*, April 9, 2014, <https://www.rt.com/news/kyev-forces-eastern-ukraine-512/>

¹⁰²³ Ukraine Crisis Timeline “Pro-Russian Forces Seize Additional Facilities” *CSIS*, April 12, 2014, <http://ukraine.csis.org/east1.htm#53>

¹⁰²⁴ “Separatists raise Russia flag in Ukraine city” *Aljazeera*, April 12, 2014, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2014/04/separatists-raise-russia-flag-ukraine-city-2014412142718952530.html>

April 13, 2014: The UNSC meets to discuss the situation in Ukraine. While Ukraine and the US blamed Russia for the unrest, Russia stated that the conflict was fueled by terrorists and that “The international committee must require that henchmen of Maidan stop war with their own people[...]Western sponsors of Maidan including USA should stop this.”¹⁰²⁵ Churkin continued: “Russia has been in favor, not of worsening of the crisis, not destabilize the country, we don’t want that. It is not our fault that the situation has come to this[...]Apparently Maidan was a cry for democracy but apparently in Crimea or East Ukraine it’s an act of defiance, what is the difference? U.S. is going to encourage the criminal use of force? It makes no sense”¹⁰²⁶

April 14, 2014: Pro-Russian activists seize the police station in the city of Horlivka and raise the Russian flag¹⁰²⁷. The sitting mayor is removed and replaced with a “people’s mayor” from the self-defense forces¹⁰²⁸. Ukraine President Oleksandr Turchynov, announces that “anti-terrorist operations” are soon on the way in Eastern Ukraine¹⁰²⁹. The US and EU agree to widen the sanctions on Russia for its “plot to dismember Ukraine”¹⁰³⁰. In a talk with UN General Secretary Ban Ki-Moon, the Ukraine president suggests the deployment of UN peacekeepers alongside the anti-terrorist operations¹⁰³¹. The president also announced that he was not opposed to a national referendum and that such a vote could accompany the presidential elections in May¹⁰³². Russian foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, stated that the Russian-speaking Ukrainians in Eastern Ukraine should be part of the drafting of a new constitution¹⁰³³. As he stated: “Fashioning some kind of text with the Verkhovny Rada (Ukrainian parliament) without the participation of the regions and then putting it to a referendum: that does not respond to the criteria we speak about or that the south east (of Ukraine) has spoken about and we back their stance.”¹⁰³⁴

April 15, 2014: The US states that the anti-terrorist operations Ukraine has announced in Eastern Ukraine are warranted¹⁰³⁵. As stated by White House Spokesman, Jay Carney: “The Ukrainian government has the responsibility to provide law and order and these provocations in eastern Ukraine are creating a situation in which the government has to respond,”¹⁰³⁶. The US also announced that it was considering further sanctions

¹⁰²⁵ Zachary Roth and Jane C. Timm, “U.N. holds urgent meeting on Ukraine as tensions escalate” *MSNBC*, April 14, 2014, <http://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/un-urgent-meeting-ukraine-tensions-escalate>

¹⁰²⁶ Ibid

¹⁰²⁷ “Ukraine crisis: Pro-Russian attack in Ukraine's Horlivka” *BBC News*, April 14, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27018199>

¹⁰²⁸ “Protesters in Horlivka elect “peoples mayor”” *Kyiv Post*, April 14, 2014, <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/ukraine-politics/protestors-in-horlivka-elect-peoples-mayor-343474.html?cn-reloaded=1>

¹⁰²⁹ Thomas Grove and Gabriela Baczynska, “Separatists tighten grip on east Ukraine, EU agrees more sanctions on Moscow” *Reuters*, April 14, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis/separatists-tighten-grip-on-east-ukraine-cu-agrees-more-sanctions-on-moscow-idUSBREA3A1B520140414>

¹⁰³⁰ Ibid

¹⁰³¹ “Pro-militants in Ukraine defy government threats” *Washington Post*, April 14, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/ukraine-stymied-by-a-few-hundred-men-with-guns/2014/04/14/2f4bc1fa-c3bb-11e3-bcec-b71ee10e9bc3_story.html?utm_term=.def2e7d56392

¹⁰³² “Ukraine President: Not against a national referendum on country’s future” *VOA News*, April 14, 2014, <https://www.voanews.com/archive/ukraine-president-not-against-national-referendum-countrys-future>

¹⁰³³ Ibid

¹⁰³⁴ Alissa de Carbonnel “Russia says east Ukraine must have say in preparing referendum” *Reuters*, April 14, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-lavrov/russia-says-east-ukraine-must-have-say-in-preparing-referendum-idUSBREA3D0G920140414>

¹⁰³⁵ “Ukraine actions against separatists warranted: White House” *Reuters*, April 15, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-whitehouse/ukraine-actions-against-separatists-warranted-white-house-idUSBREA3E1FK20140415>

¹⁰³⁶ Ibid

albeit it was not considering providing lethal aid to Ukraine¹⁰³⁷. Ukraine launches its anti-terrorist operations in Eastern Ukraine. In a conversation with Ban Ki-Moon, Putin stated that “he expected “clear condemnation” of the “anti-constitutional” operation by the international community”¹⁰³⁸. Interim president of Ukraine, Turchynov stated that: “along with the Russian special forces and the terrorists there are hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian citizens in the Donbass who were tricked by Russian propaganda.”¹⁰³⁹ According to head of the Ukrainian National Security Council, Andriy Parubiy, many of the right-wing nationalists of Maidan were poised to join the fight in Eastern Ukraine¹⁰⁴⁰. In a tweet he wrote: “Reserve unit of National Guard formed from #Maidan Self-defense volunteers was sent to the front line this morning,”¹⁰⁴¹

April 16, 2014: There are talks of defections on the Ukraine side in the conflict in Eastern Ukraine¹⁰⁴² with Russian media stating that many of the Ukraine soldiers have switched sides to join the pro-Russian activists¹⁰⁴³. A Ukraine officer reportedly stated that he had not “come to fight” and would never obey orders to shoot his “own people”¹⁰⁴⁴. NATO announces that it increases the defense of its eastern members¹⁰⁴⁵. NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen promised “more planes in the air, more ships on the water, more readiness on the land”¹⁰⁴⁶. Russian foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, stated that: “Certainly, no one can impose a scheme of organising a state system on Ukraine[...]But Ukrainians should begin dialogue making it all-embracing and comprehensive[...]All regions and political forces in Ukraine should participate in it on par, have equal rights in settling pressing issues[...]All this should be reflected in a reformed Constitution which would be taken by a poly-ethnic Ukrainian society as reliable foundations of a rule-of-law state intended for a far future.”¹⁰⁴⁷. Ukraine's acting President Olexander Turchynov announces the start of an “anti-terrorist operation” against pro-Russian separatists which is meant to “protect Ukrainian citizens, to stop the terror, to stop the crime, to stop the attempts to tear our country apart”¹⁰⁴⁸.

April 17, 2014: Russia, Ukraine, US and the EU meet for a four-way talk on deescalating the conflict in Ukraine¹⁰⁴⁹. A deal was reached which consists of 5 points: 1) All sides refrain from violence, and reject expressions “of extremism, racism and religious intolerance, including antisemitism”; 2) All illegal armed groups must be disarmed; all illegally seized buildings must be returned; all illegally occupied streets and other public places in Ukrainian cities and towns must be vacated. 3) Amnesty will be granted to protesters and to those who have left buildings and other public places and surrendered weapons, with the exception of those found guilty of capital crimes. 4) The OSCE would play a leading role in helping the authorities

¹⁰³⁷ Ibid

¹⁰³⁸ Andrew Kramer “Ukraine sends force to stem unrest in east” *The New York Times*, April 15, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/16/world/europe/ukraine-russia.html?hpw&rref=world&_r=0

¹⁰³⁹ Ibid

¹⁰⁴⁰ Ibid

¹⁰⁴¹ Ibid

¹⁰⁴² “Ukraine crisis: Military vehicles 'seized' in Kramatorsk” *BBC News*, April 16, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27045534>

¹⁰⁴³ “Dozens of Ukrainian troops surrender APCs in Slavyansk, refuse to ‘shoot at own people’ (PHOTO, VIDEO)” *RT*, April 16, 2014, <https://www.rt.com/news/ukraine-troops-withdraw-slavyansk-940/>

¹⁰⁴⁴ “Ukraine crisis: Military vehicles 'seized' in Kramatorsk” *BBC News*

¹⁰⁴⁵ Ibid

¹⁰⁴⁶ Ibid

¹⁰⁴⁷ “FM: Ukraine to hardly preserve unity without all regions involved in national dialogue” *TASS*, April 16, 2014, <https://tass.com/world/728158>

¹⁰⁴⁸ “Ukraine says Donetsk 'anti-terror operation' under way” *BBC News*, April 16, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27035196>

¹⁰⁴⁹ Julian Borger and Alec Luhn, “Ukraine crisis: Geneva talks produce agreement on defusing conflict” *The Guardian*, April 17, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/17/ukraine-crisis-agreement-us-russia-eu>

implement the agreement. 5) Constitutional reform would be inclusive, transparent and accountable.¹⁰⁵⁰. The agreement does however not address neither the Russian nor the NATO troop build-up in the area¹⁰⁵¹. The OSCE was made responsible for ensuring the implementation of the agreement¹⁰⁵². The US, EU and Russia will provide monitors to the OSCE. Kerry later stated that the US would hold Russia accountable for the compliance of the pro-Russian protesters in eastern Ukraine¹⁰⁵³. The US announced reports regarding the distribution of antisemitic leaflets to Jews in Donetsk, calling on them to register with the separatists¹⁰⁵⁴. Apart from pro-Russian activist activities, demonstrations were also held in Donetsk calling for the territorial integrity of Ukraine¹⁰⁵⁵.

April 18, 2014: The separatists do not comply with the Geneva agreement. A leader of the People's republic of Donetsk stated that "Lavrov did not sign anything for us, he signed on behalf of the Russian Federation". Meanwhile the separatists in Slovyansk stated that they needed more assurance about their immunity from prosecution¹⁰⁵⁶, whilst other separatists in Donetsk stated that they would not withdraw before the "illegal" Western-backed government in the capital Kiev stood down and until the pro-European demonstrators left Kiev's Independence Square¹⁰⁵⁷. US national security adviser, Susan Rice, stated: "If we don't see action commensurate with the commitments that Russia has made yesterday in Geneva[...]then obviously we've been very clear that we and our European partners remain ready to impose additional costs on Russia."¹⁰⁵⁸. "Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov acknowledged additional Russian troops were moved close to the Ukraine border "due to the instability of the political situation."¹⁰⁵⁹ He also stated that "Russia should not be addressed or treated like a schoolgirl with a checklist of things to do"¹⁰⁶⁰

April 19, 2014: Ukraine decides to suspend the anti-terrorist operations during Easter in an "Easter Truce"¹⁰⁶¹. If the separatists have not left government buildings following Easter, the anti-terrorist operations will continue¹⁰⁶². A mediator from the OSCE travels to Eastern Ukraine with the purpose of mediating the removal of the separatists from the government buildings and their disarmament¹⁰⁶³. According to Swiss envoy Christian Schoenenberger, whose country is chair of the OSCE, there is currently no political will to move out of the buildings and that the task of the OSCE is to create this political will and "inform the people, so eventually they will understand that the best option for them is to move out"¹⁰⁶⁴. An individual supporting the Donetsk regional government stated: "An Easter truce may show goodwill -

¹⁰⁵⁰ Ibid

¹⁰⁵¹ Ibid

¹⁰⁵² Ibid

¹⁰⁵³ Ibid

¹⁰⁵⁴ Ibid

¹⁰⁵⁵ Ibid

¹⁰⁵⁶ Ukraine Crisis Timeline "Despite Geneva Deal, Irregular Groups Refuse to Disarm" *CSIS*, April 18, 2014, <http://ukraine.csis.org/east1.htm#63>

¹⁰⁵⁷ "Separatists in Ukraine Ignore U.S.-Russia Deal: Report" *NBC News*, April 18, 2014,

<https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/ukraine-crisis/separatists-ukraine-ignore-u-s-russia-deal-report-n83851>

¹⁰⁵⁸ Thomas Grove and Aleksandar Vasovic, "New Russia sanctions threats as Ukraine stalemate goes on" *Reuters*, April 18, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis/new-russia-sanctions-threats-as-ukraine-stalemate-goes-on-idUSBREA3A1B520140418>

¹⁰⁵⁹ Laura Smith-Spark, Greg Botelho and Phil Black "Pro-Russia separatists in Ukraine defiant despite international deal, call for unity" *CNN*, April 19, 2014, <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/04/18/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/>

¹⁰⁶⁰ Ibid

¹⁰⁶¹ Sam Frizell "Ukraine Calls 'Easter Truce' in East" *TIME*, April 19, 2014, <https://time.com/69078/ukraine-easter-truce-donetsk-kiev/>

¹⁰⁶² Ibid

¹⁰⁶³ Alastair Macdonald and Aleksandar Vasovic "Mediator heads to east Ukraine, seeking surrenders" *Reuters*, April 19, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis/mediator-heads-to-east-ukraine-seeking-surrenders-idUSBREA3A1B520140419>

¹⁰⁶⁴ Ibid

or perhaps just Kiev's total impotence," "If it's impotence, then we've won. If they're getting ready to provoke us, then we will hit back with force."¹⁰⁶⁵ . In an interview with Russia media, Putin stated on the topic of Russia-west relations: "I think there is nothing that would hinder a normalization and normal cooperation[...]This does not depend on us. Or rather not only on us. This depends on our partners."¹⁰⁶⁶ Russia states that it only has an interest in protecting its borders and Russian-speakers in Ukraine from "fascists"¹⁰⁶⁷ . Ukraine's foreign minister responded to the separatist demands of the removal of protests from Kiev's Independence Square by stating that these protests were not illegal as they had "asked permission from the city council"¹⁰⁶⁸ .

April 20, 2014: The Easter Truce is violated with a shootout near the city of Slovyansk between separatists and unknown fighters¹⁰⁶⁹ . The Russian Foreign ministry blamed the Right Sector, which the Right Sector denied¹⁰⁷⁰ . Following the incident the Russian Foreign Ministry stated: "The Easter truce has been violated[...]This provocation[...]testifies to the lack of will on the part of the Kiev authorities to rein in and disarm nationalists and extremists."¹⁰⁷¹ The self-proclaimed mayor of the time appealed to Russia to consider sending in peacekeeping troops¹⁰⁷² . The spokesman of the Right Sector stated that the shootout was a "blasphemous provocation from Russia: blasphemous because it took place on a holy night for Christians, on Easter night. This was clearly carried out by Russian special forces."¹⁰⁷³ In an interview, Ukraine's interim Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of trying to "restore the Soviet Union"¹⁰⁷⁴ . "It's crystal clear that for today, Russia is the threat to the globe, and the threat to the European Union, and a real threat to Ukraine¹⁰⁷⁵," Photos are published in the New York Times showing Russian military involvement in Eastern Ukraine¹⁰⁷⁶ . The photos were provided by the government of Ukraine and handed over to the OSCE¹⁰⁷⁷ . Putin denied that Russian special forces were present in Eastern Ukraine¹⁰⁷⁸ . As he stated: "It's all nonsense, there are no special units, special forces or instructors there,"¹⁰⁷⁹ He did however admit that the troops in unmarked green uniforms who took part in seizing the Black Sea region of Crimea were Russian¹⁰⁸⁰ .

¹⁰⁶⁵ Ibid

¹⁰⁶⁶ Macdonald and Vasovic "Mediator heads to east Ukraine, seeking surrenders" *Reuters*

¹⁰⁶⁷ Ibid

¹⁰⁶⁸ "Ukraine crisis: Kiev calls Easter truce in east" *BBC News*, April 19, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27086511>

¹⁰⁶⁹ Ukraine Crisis Timeline "Shootout Near Slovyansk Imperils "Easter Truce"" *CSIS*, April 20, 2014, <http://ukraine.csis.org/east1.htm#65>

¹⁰⁷⁰ "Ukraine unrest: Russian outrage at fatal Sloviansk shooting" *BBC News*, April 20, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27093347>

¹⁰⁷¹ Aleksandar Vasovic and Alissa de Carbonnel, "Deadly gun attack in eastern Ukraine shakes fragile Geneva accord" *Reuters*, April 20, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis/deadly-gun-attack-in-eastern-ukraine-shakes-fragile-geneva-accord-idUSBREA3A1B520140420>

¹⁰⁷² Ibid

¹⁰⁷³ Ibid

¹⁰⁷⁴ "Ukraine unrest: Russian outrage at fatal Sloviansk shooting" *BBC News*

¹⁰⁷⁵ Ibid

¹⁰⁷⁶ "Ukraine claims photos prove Russian special forces in eastern Ukraine" *CBS News*, April 21, 2014, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ukraine-claims-photo-proof-russian-special-forces-in-eastern-ukraine/>

¹⁰⁷⁷ Ibid

¹⁰⁷⁸ Ibid

¹⁰⁷⁹ Ibid

¹⁰⁸⁰ Ibid

April 21, 2014: The US announces assistance package to Ukraine including financial aid and the provision of advisers¹⁰⁸¹. Joe Biden visits Kiev¹⁰⁸².

April 22, 2014: Ukraine relaunches the anti-terrorist operation following the kidnapping, torture and killing of the Town Councilor in Horlivka and another man, by a pro-Russian group¹⁰⁸³. The towns self-declared mayor blamed the Right Sector and stated “This is all being done by the Right Sector. They are constantly trying to discredit us,”¹⁰⁸⁴ Ukraine’s state security service accused a rogue SBU officer from their service and an officer in Russia’s GRU military intelligence for being involvement in the murder¹⁰⁸⁵. Joe Biden visits Kiev where he states: “this is a second opportunity to make good on the original promise made by the Orange Revolution. This is a genuine opportunity to get right what is always difficult to do the first time when coming out from under the oppression or control of another power.”¹⁰⁸⁶ In a phone call between John Kerry and Sergei Lavrov, Kerry stated that Russia should engage with the government of Ukraine and the OSCE and publicly call on the separatists to disarm and accept amnesty¹⁰⁸⁷. Lavrov however called on the Ukraine government to end the anti-terrorist campaign against its own population, disarm ultranationalist groups and engage in constitutional reform¹⁰⁸⁸. The Pentagon announces that it will send 600 troops to Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia¹⁰⁸⁹. The troops will participate in trainings and exercises and rotate on a monthly basis¹⁰⁹⁰.

April 23, 2014: In an interview to RT, Sergei Lavrov states: “Yes, they announced a pause in what they call “counter terrorist operation”. But now that Joe Biden visited Kiev this counter terrorist operation was declared in the active phase again. Well, it’s quite telling that they chose a moment of vice-president of the United States visit to announce the resumption of this operation because the launching of this operation happened immediately after the John Brennan’s visit to Kiev. So I don’t have any reasons not to believe that the Americans are running the show in a very close way”¹⁰⁹¹. Russia and Ukraine announce that they will meet for “energy talks”¹⁰⁹².

¹⁰⁸¹ “FACT SHEET: U.S. Crisis Support Package for Ukraine” *The White House*, April 21, 2014, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/04/21/fact-sheet-us-crisis-support-package-ukraine>

¹⁰⁸² “Background Press Briefing on Vice President Biden's Trip to Ukraine” *The White House*, April 21, 2014, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/04/21/background-press-briefing-vice-president-bidens-trip-ukraine>

¹⁰⁸³ “‘Murdered’ Ukraine politician faced hostile mob, video shows” *Reuters*, April 23, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-politician-video/murdered-ukraine-politician-faced-hostile-mob-video-shows-idUSBREA3M0EX20140423>

¹⁰⁸⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁸⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁸⁶ “Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden at a Meeting with Ukrainian Legislators” *The White House*, April 22, 2014, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/04/22/remarks-vice-president-joe-biden-meeting-ukrainian-legislators>

¹⁰⁸⁷ Ukraine Crisis Timeline “Pentagon Sends 600 Troops to Poland, Baltic States” *CSIS*, April 22, 2014, <http://ukraine.csis.org/east1.htm#72>

¹⁰⁸⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁸⁹ Phil Stewart and David Alexander, “U.S. to send 600 troops to Eastern Europe to reassure allies” *Reuters*, April 22, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-usa/u-s-to-send-600-troops-to-eastern-europe-to-reassure-allies-idUSBREA3L1CO20140422>

¹⁰⁹⁰ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁹¹ “Lavrov to RT: Americans are 'running the show' in Ukraine” *RT*, April 23, 2014, <https://www.rt.com/shows/sophieco/154364-lavrov-ukraine-standoff-sophieco/>

¹⁰⁹² “UPDATE 3-Moscow to meet Ukraine for energy talks as EU frees gas for Kiev” *Reuters*, April 23, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/ukraine-crisis-gas-talks/update-3-moscow-to-meet-ukraine-for-energy-talks-as-eu-frees-gas-for-kiev-idUSL6N0NF1YY20140423>

April 24, 2014: Following the resumption of the anti-terrorist operations, Russia announces renewed military exercises at its Ukraine borders¹⁰⁹³. Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu stated: "We are forced to react to such a development of the situation."¹⁰⁹⁴. On Russian TV, Putin stated: "If the regime in Kiev has begun using the army against the population inside the country, then this is undoubtedly a very serious crime." And that this would have consequences and inter-state relations would be affected¹⁰⁹⁵.

April 25, 2014: The leaders of the G7 countries issue a statement condemning Russia and stated: "Russia has taken no concrete actions in support of the Geneva accord."¹⁰⁹⁶. They also stated that they would impose further sanctions¹⁰⁹⁷. Referring to Russia's military exercise on its borders, the acting head of Ukraine's presidential administration, Serhiy Pashynskyi stated: "In the event of any crossing of the border by Russian troops, we will qualify this as an invasion and we will eliminate the invaders,"¹⁰⁹⁸.

April 26, 2014: Russia violates the airspace of Ukraine¹⁰⁹⁹. Ukraine Prime Minister, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, stated: "We do understand the reason Russian military did it. The only reason is to provoke Ukraine to strike missile and to accuse Ukraine of waging the war to Russia"¹¹⁰⁰. Russia denied the incident and also vowed to assist in freeing "a team of international military observers who are being detained by pro-Russian separatists who suspect the observers are "NATO spies."¹¹⁰¹.

April 28, 2014: Obama reconfirms that the US will not consider a military involvement in Ukraine¹¹⁰². As he stated: "Do people actually think us sending some additional arms into Ukraine could deter the Russian army?"¹¹⁰³. The mayor of the city Kharkiv in Eastern Ukraine is shot in the back but survives¹¹⁰⁴. Pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainians clash in protests in Donetsk¹¹⁰⁵. Russia announces that it is ready to discuss the military aspects of the conflict in Ukraine within the framework of the OSCE's Forum for Security Cooperation¹¹⁰⁶. The discussion should first and foremost "be held about "an immediate end to the active phase of the Kiev regime's deadly punitive operation against residents of southeastern Ukraine."¹¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰⁹³ "Russia orders exercises after Ukraine moves on separatists" *BBC News*, April 24, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27138300>

¹⁰⁹⁴ Ibid

¹⁰⁹⁵ Ibid

¹⁰⁹⁶ "G-7 Leaders Statement on Ukraine" *The White House*, April 25, 2014,

<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/04/25/g-7-leaders-statement-ukraine>

¹⁰⁹⁷ Ibid

¹⁰⁹⁸ Andrew, Higgins, C. Chivers and Alan Cowell "Ukraine threatens blockade in pro-Russia east" *Boston Globe*, April 26, 2014, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/news/world/2014/04/25/ukraine-says-will-blockade-pro-russian-militants/jmbhWh3kUFOG2w5uLIREP/story.html>

¹⁰⁹⁹ "Ukraine's PM Accuses Russian Military of Airspace Violations" *VOA News*, April 26, 2014,

<https://www.voanews.com/europe/ukraines-pm-accuses-russian-military-airspace-violations>

¹¹⁰⁰ Ibid

¹¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹¹⁰² Kenneth Rapoza "Obama Says U.S. Military Not An Option In Ukraine" *Forbes*, April 28, 2014,

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/kenrapoza/2014/04/28/obama-says-u-s-military-not-an-option-in-ukraine/#7ede6b9fb867>

¹¹⁰³ Ibid

¹¹⁰⁴ C.J. Chivers and Noah Sneider "One city falls to pro-Russian militants; in another, the Mayor is shot" *The New York Times*, April 28, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/29/world/europe/one-city-falls-to-pro-russian-militants-in-another-the-mayor-is-shot.html>

¹¹⁰⁵ "Ukraine crisis: Pro-Russian says operation will spread" *BBC News*, April 28, 2014,

<https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-europe-27199896/ukraine-crisis-pro-russian-says-operation-will-spread>

¹¹⁰⁶ "Russia Ready to Discuss Ukraine Within Framework of Security Cooperation Forum" *Sputniknews*, April 28, 2014, <https://sputniknews.com/russia/20140428189433592-Russia-Ready-to-Discuss-Ukraine-Within-Framework-of-Security/>

¹¹⁰⁷ Ibid

April 29, 2014: A tape is leaked in which John Kerry states that the pro-Russians in eastern Ukraine are receiving orders from Russia: “Intel is producing taped conversations of intelligence operatives taking their orders from Moscow and everybody can tell the difference in the accents, in the idioms, in the language. We know exactly who's giving those orders, we know where they are coming from”¹¹⁰⁸.

April 30, 2014: IMF approves a \$17 billion aid package to Ukraine¹¹⁰⁹. Russia plans to invest approx. \$4 billion in Eastern Ukraine and “promote that investment as a contrast to the IMF-run program, which stresses austerity”¹¹¹⁰. Ukraine's acting President Olexander Turchynov states that his forces are “helpless” in ending the unrest in Eastern Ukraine and that the goal now was to prevent the spreading of the unrest¹¹¹¹. Moscow warns that its troops are ready to act if its interests are threatened¹¹¹².

May 1, 2014: Ukraine reinstates military conscription in order “to increase the state defense potential” and because of the “interference of the Russian Federation into the interior affairs of Ukraine”¹¹¹³. In a conversation with Angela Merkel, Putin stated that: “the most important thing now is to withdraw all military units from the south-eastern parts [of Ukraine], stop the violence, and immediately start a national dialogue that would involve all regions and all political forces within the framework of a constitutional reform”¹¹¹⁴.

May 3, 2014: Moscow blames Kiev and the West for the bloodshed in Ukraine and also states that it is now impossible to convince people to disarm because their lives are under threat¹¹¹⁵. Spokesperson for Vladimir Putin, Dmitry Peskov stated: “Desperate people call, they ask for help. The vast majority want Russia’s help,”..“All of these calls are reported to President Vladimir Putin.”¹¹¹⁶.

May 5, 2014: Moldova puts its borders on alert in fear of the violence in Odessa spreading to the break-away region of Transnistria¹¹¹⁷.

May 6, 2014: Russia and Ukraine participate to a ministerial session at the Council of Europe¹¹¹⁸. One of the topics at the meeting was a new round of Geneva talks¹¹¹⁹. Both Russia and Ukraine were open to the idea but had different conditions¹¹²⁰. Ukraine Foreign Minister Andriy Deshchytsia stated that: “If Russia

¹¹⁰⁸ Bruno Waterfield “Ukraine crisis: EU sanctions target separatists and Russian spies” *The Telegraph*, April 29, 2014, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/10795372/Ukraine-crisis-EU-sanctions-target-separatists-and-Russian-spies.html>

¹¹⁰⁹ Sandrine Rastello “Ukraine Gets IMF Approval for \$17 Billion Loan Amid Unrest” *Bloomberg*, May 1, 2014, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-04-30/ukraine-gets-imf-approval-for-17-billion-loan-amid-unrest>

¹¹¹⁰ Ukraine Crisis Timeline “IMF Approves \$17 Billion for Ukraine” *CSIS*, April 30, 2014, <http://ukraine.csis.org/east1.htm#88>

¹¹¹¹ “Ukraine unrest: Kiev 'helpless' to quell parts of east” *BBC News*, April 30, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27222023>

¹¹¹² *Ibid*

¹¹¹³ “Ukraine Enacts Compulsory Military Draft” *NBC News*, May 1, 2014, <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/ukraine-crisis/ukraine-enacts-compulsory-military-draft-n94906>

¹¹¹⁴ Andrew Rettman “Merkel asks Putin to free EU hostages in Ukraine” *EUObserver*, May 2, 2014, <https://euobserver.com/foreign/123991>

¹¹¹⁵ “Moscow: Kiev and western sponsors directly responsible for bloodshed in E.Ukraine” *RT*, May 3, 2014, <https://www.rt.com/news/156596-moscow-kiev-bloodshed-responsible/>

¹¹¹⁶ *Ibid*

¹¹¹⁷ “Ukraine: Moldova on alert as Slovyansk clashes intensify” *CBC*, May 6, 2014, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/ukraine-moldova-on-alert-as-slovyansk-clashes-intensify-1.2631974>

¹¹¹⁸ “European foreign ministers meet in Vienna as Ukraine death toll rises” *DW*, May 6, 2014, <https://www.dw.com/en/european-foreign-ministers-meet-in-vienna-as-ukraine-death-toll-rises/a-17614944>

¹¹¹⁹ *Ibid*

¹¹²⁰ *Ibid*

is ready to commit itself to support these elections and to eliminate this threat and eliminate its support for the extremist elements in Ukraine, we are ready to have such a round of meetings"¹¹²¹. Lavrov however stated that "To convene in this format again, when the opposition to Kiev regime is absent from the negotiating table, that would hardly add anything,"¹¹²².

May 7, 2014: Putin states that the presidential elections scheduled in Ukraine for May 25 is a step "in the right direction"¹¹²³.

May 8, 2014: Putin states that the scheduled referendum in Eastern Ukraine by the separatists should be postponed¹¹²⁴. Putin however insisted that "a presidential election should be preceded by constitutional changes in Ukraine aimed at federalising the country and handing greater powers to the regions."¹¹²⁵ "The separatists however decide to continue with the referendum"¹¹²⁶.

May 9, 2014: Moscow celebrates Victory Day and Putin visits Crimea¹¹²⁷. In a speech given in Crimea he stated: "I think 2014 will also be an important year in the annals of Sevastopol and our whole country, as the year when people living here firmly decided to be together with Russia, and thus confirmed their faith in the historic truth and the memory of our forefathers"¹¹²⁸.

May 11, 2014: The referendum is held in Eastern Ukraine with reports of election fraud¹¹²⁹. "Russian police officers oversaw voting at a Moscow polling station erected for expat Ukrainians to vote in the Donetsk and Luhansk referendums."¹¹³⁰ According to a Pew Research Centre polling, 70% of the population in the area wish Ukraine to remain united¹¹³¹.

May 12, 2014: Following the referendum, the Donetsk People's Republic appeals to Moscow to consider absorbing the region into the Russian Federation to "restore historic justice"¹¹³². The separatists claim the referendum led to 80% of the population wishing for unity with Russia¹¹³³. The votes in Luhansk led the

¹¹²¹ Ibid

¹¹²² Ibid

¹¹²³ "Ukraine crisis: Russia's Putin 'backs 25 May election'" *BBC News*, May 7, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27314816>

¹¹²⁴ Ian Traynor, Shaun Walker, Harriet Salem and Paul Lewis, "Putin says eastern Ukraine referendum on autonomy should be postponed" *The Guardian*, May 8, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/07/ukraine-crisis-putin-referendum-autonomy-postponed>

¹¹²⁵ Ibid

¹¹²⁶ Bill Chappel "Ukraine's Separatists To Proceed With Vote, Despite Putin" *NPR*, May 8, 2014, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2014/05/08/310679566/ukraine-s-separatists-will-hold-vote-despite-putin>

¹¹²⁷ Neil Macfaquhar "From Crimea, Putin trumpets Mother Russia", *The New York Times*, May 9, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/10/world/europe/russia-celebrates-victory-day.html>

¹¹²⁸ Ibid

¹¹²⁹ Atika Shubert and Ben Brumfield, "Polls close in eastern Ukraine amid allegations of fraud and double-voting" *CNN*, May 11, 2014, <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/05/11/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/>

¹¹³⁰ Ibid

¹¹³¹ Ibid

¹¹³² Matt Robinson "Ukraine separatists appeal to Moscow for absorption into Russia" *Reuters*, may 12, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-union/ukraine-separatists-appeal-to-moscow-for-absorption-into-russia-idUSBREA4B0HW20140512>

¹¹³³ Ibid

area to declare independence rather than seeking for secession¹¹³⁴. Russia did not respond directly to the request but rather stated that it has “respect” for the decisions made at the referendums¹¹³⁵.

May 13, 2014: Clashes intensify between Ukrainian servicemen and the separatists¹¹³⁶. The Luhansk People’s Governor, Valeriy Bolotov, survived an attack against him¹¹³⁷. Interim Ukrainian President Oleksandr Turchynov stated about the referendum: “That farce the terrorists call a referendum is nothing else but a propagandist cover for killings, kidnapping, violence and other grave crimes.”¹¹³⁸. The US government releases satellite photos showing the presence of Russian troops at the Ukraine border, hereby discrediting Russia’s claims that the troops had been withdrawn¹¹³⁹. Colonel Martin Downie, spokesman for Allied Command Operations at NATO stated: “The reality is that Russia continues to have 40,000 high readiness troops massed on Ukraine’s border and another 25,000 troops in Crimea. The units on the latest satellite pictures show mechanised infantry, armoured vehicles and combat helicopters”¹¹⁴⁰. In a response to sanctions, Russia bars the United States from using Russian-made rocket engines for military satellite launches¹¹⁴¹. Russia also rejected the prolongation of the US use of the International Space Station after 2020¹¹⁴². Last month the US said “it would deny export licenses for any high-technology items that could aid Russian military capabilities and would revoke existing licenses”¹¹⁴³.

May 14, 2014: Ukraine starts national talks without the separatists¹¹⁴⁴. Ukraine stated that the separatists had to disarm before receiving an invitation¹¹⁴⁵. Interim prime minister, Arseniy P. Yatsenyuk, stated “To fight corruption and provide people with jobs is our main task[...]And that will unite our country.”¹¹⁴⁶. The framework of the talks was the peace plan agreed at the four-way talks on April 17, currently being implemented by the OSCE¹¹⁴⁷. The majority of the participants in their talk were aligned with the government in Kiev¹¹⁴⁸. The mayor of Donetsk, Aleksandr A. Lukyanchenko, urged Kiev to pay attention to the outcome of Sunday’s referendum as these show a lack of faith in the central government¹¹⁴⁹. The EU

¹¹³⁴ “East Ukraine separatists seek union with Russia” *BBC News*, May 12, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27369980>

¹¹³⁵ “Ukraine separatist votes draw Kremlin ‘respect,’ not annexation” *Los Angeles Times*, May 12, 2014, <https://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-ukraine-russia-referendum-kremlin-20140512-story.html>

¹¹³⁶ Laura Smith-Spark, Atika Shubert and Kellie Morgan, “Ukraine: 6 soldiers killed in ambush” *CNN*, May 13, 2014, <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/05/13/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/>

¹¹³⁷ Ibid

¹¹³⁸ Ibid

¹¹³⁹ “UPDATE 1-U.S. releases satellite images of Russian forces near Ukraine” *Reuters*, May 13, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/ukraine-crisis-photographs/update-1-u-s-releases-satellite-images-of-russian-forces-near-ukraine-idUSL6N0NZ67D20140513>

¹¹⁴⁰ Ibid

¹¹⁴¹ “Russia Pulls Space Cooperation in Response to Ukraine Sanctions” *Newsweek*, May 13, 2014, <https://www.newsweek.com/russia-pulls-space-cooperation-response-ukraine-sanctions-250869>

¹¹⁴² Ibid

¹¹⁴³ Ibid

¹¹⁴⁴ “Ukraine crisis talks begin without pro-Russian separatists” *DW*, May 15, 2014, <https://www.dw.com/en/ukraine-crisis-talks-begin-without-pro-russian-separatists/a-17637714>

¹¹⁴⁵ Ibid

¹¹⁴⁶ David M Herszenhorn, “Talks on Ukraine crisis open in Kiev without representation for separatists”, *The New York Times*, May 14, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/15/world/europe/ukraine-opens-talks-but-eastern-rebels-arent-invited.html?_r=0

¹¹⁴⁷ “Russia sees Ukraine on the 'brink of civil war'” *DW*, May 14, 2014, <https://www.dw.com/en/russia-sees-ukraine-on-the-brink-of-civil-war/a-17634877>

¹¹⁴⁸ David M Herszenhorn, “Talks on Ukraine crisis open in Kiev without representation for separatists”, *The New York Times*

¹¹⁴⁹ Ibid

announced that Moldova and Georgia would sign Association Agreements with the EU¹¹⁵⁰. Sergei Naryshkin, speaker of the Duma, stated that there were still reserves and resources to stop the crisis but that “The road to that lies through a dialogue only, through a dialogue of all political powers inside Ukraine.”¹¹⁵¹. In a TV interview, Sergei Lavrov states that Ukraine is at the brink of a civil war and he stated: “In east and south of Ukraine there is a war, a real war, with heavy weaponry used. And if this is conducive to free and fair elections, then I don't recognize what free and fair is.”¹¹⁵². Sergei also stated that: “The seeds for the current crisis were sown in 2008 in April during the NATO summit in Bucharest, when NATO leaders stated in a declaration that Georgia and Ukraine would be in NATO,”¹¹⁵³. He pointed to this move leading Saakashvili to believe that he could solve the issue over the breakaway regions with force¹¹⁵⁴. Sergei also stated: “The attempts to draw Ukraine into NATO would be negative for the entire system of European security and we would be categorically against it.”¹¹⁵⁵. Russia would however not oppose to Ukraine joining the EU¹¹⁵⁶. Sergei also stated: “If the next morning somebody in Washington woke up in a bad mood and decided to start a coup elsewhere – not in Ukraine, but in Latin America, in their own backyard as they perceive it – those people must be prepared for this situation”.¹¹⁵⁷

May 15, 2014: Thousands of steelworkers and miners in Donetsk reclaim control over streets from separatists¹¹⁵⁸. The workers are employed by Ukraine’s richest man, Rinat Akhmetov, who had urged his employers to retake control over their city and support the unity of Ukraine¹¹⁵⁹.

May 16, 2014: The UN monitoring mission in Ukraine release a report on the state of human rights in Eastern Ukraine. It points to a deterioration with primarily the pro-Russian groups being responsible for this. The report states: “Primarily as a result of the actions of organized armed groups, the continuation of the rhetoric of hatred and propaganda fuels the escalation of the crisis in Ukraine, with a potential of spiraling out of control”¹¹⁶⁰. It points to abuses such as kidnapping, beating, detention and killing of locals, politicians and journalists¹¹⁶¹. As a response to the UN report, the Russian Foreign Ministry stated: “The complete lack of objectivity, blatant discrepancies and double standards leave no doubts that (the report's) authors were performing a political put-up job aimed at clearing the name of the self-declared authorities in Kiev”¹¹⁶². In another event, Russia threatened to cut off gas supplies to Ukraine if it fails to pay a bill by early June¹¹⁶³.

¹¹⁵⁰ Ibid

¹¹⁵¹ Ibid

¹¹⁵² “Russia sees Ukraine on the 'brink of civil war'” *DW*

¹¹⁵³ “Dragging Ukraine into NATO negative for European security – Lavrov” *RT*, May 14, 2014,

<https://www.rt.com/news/158908-lavrov-russia-ukraine-nato/>

¹¹⁵⁴ Ibid

¹¹⁵⁵ Ibid

¹¹⁵⁶ Ibid

¹¹⁵⁷ Ibid

¹¹⁵⁸ Andrew E. Kramer “Workers seize city in eastern Ukraine from separatists”, *The New York Times*, May 15, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/16/world/europe/ukraine-workers-take-to-streets-to-calm-Mariupol.html>

¹¹⁵⁹ Ibid

¹¹⁶⁰ Nick Cumming-Bruce, “U.N. finds rising human rights violations in Ukraine”, *The New York Times*, May 16, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/17/world/europe/united-nations-human-rights-ukraine.html>

¹¹⁶¹ Barbara Tasch, “U.N.: 'Alarming Deterioration' of Human Rights in Ukraine” *TIME*, May 16, 2014, <https://time.com/102554/united-nations-eastern-ukraine-human-rights/>

¹¹⁶² “UN warns of rights abuses in Ukraine's east” *Aljazeera*, May 16, 2014,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2014/05/un-warns-rights-abuses-ukraine-east-2014516113437114816.html>

¹¹⁶³ Ibid

May 17, 2014: A second round of the national talks begin, this time in Eastern Ukraine¹¹⁶⁴. Representations from the regions was broader however the separatists were still not represented¹¹⁶⁵. The participants agreed on passing on a 12-point “Memorandum of Understanding to restore order in our country” which included a pledge to change the constitution to extend more power to Ukraine’s regions, grant a limited amnesty to separatists, condemn the unlawful use of weapons and secure the status of the Russian language¹¹⁶⁶. Overall, Kiev supports a “decentralization” plan to give more budget authority to local governments¹¹⁶⁷. The separatists however favor a federalization model that would give more overall power to governors¹¹⁶⁸. The central government is opposed to federalization proposed by Russia and the separatists as it is believed that this is a way for Russia and its supporters to divide the country and empower regional governors who are loyal to Russia¹¹⁶⁹. Tensions remained between the eastern and western representatives of Ukraine at the talks with the Eastern representatives demanding to know who backed the civil uprising in Kiev and the west demanding to know who is financing the separatists¹¹⁷⁰. Disagreements also exist over the fate of Yanukovich with the east declaring he was ousted and the west declaring that he was impeached¹¹⁷¹. The Ukraine constitution has no provision for the steps of impeachment¹¹⁷².

May 18, 2014: There are concerns over the upcoming presidential elections, particularly in terms of ensuring access and safety for voters in eastern Ukraine¹¹⁷³. In a video by Igor Strelkov, the commander of the militia’s so-called “army of the southeast” complains that there was a lack of fighters because “tens of thousands are calmly watching TV and drinking beer and expecting Russia to intervene on their behalf”¹¹⁷⁴.

May 19, 2014: In a statement from the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, Russian troops are ordered to withdraw from the Ukraine border and back to their garrisons¹¹⁷⁵. The statement also says: “President Vladimir Putin welcomes the first contacts between Kiev and supporters of federalisation, seeking to establish direct dialogue in which all parties concerned should take part”¹¹⁷⁶. NATO states that no signs of a withdrawal have so far been observed¹¹⁷⁷. Ukraine border guards however reported a decrease in Russian activity at the border¹¹⁷⁸. The EU announces two more rounds of talks between Russia and Ukraine over the row of gas prices¹¹⁷⁹.

¹¹⁶⁴ David M. Herszenhorn “Talks in East aim to ease tensions in Ukraine” *The New York Times*, May 17, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/18/world/europe/talks-on-ukraine-crisis-move-to-separatist-region.html>

¹¹⁶⁵ Ibid

¹¹⁶⁶ “Ukrainian officials hold unity talks as tension remains high” *The Washington Post*, May 17, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/ukrainian-officials-launch-unity-talks-as-tension-remains-high/2014/05/17/59058d82-d81d-4621-807a-676dbcc44644_story.html?utm_term=.51e5cc05d9ec

¹¹⁶⁷ Herszenhorn “Talks in East aim to ease tensions in Ukraine” *The New York Times*

¹¹⁶⁸ Ibid

¹¹⁶⁹ Ibid

¹¹⁷⁰ Ibid

¹¹⁷¹ Ibid

¹¹⁷² Ibid

¹¹⁷³ “Ballots or barricades for Ukraine voters?” *DW*, May 19, 2014, <https://www.dw.com/en/ballots-or-barricades-for-ukraine-voters/a-17644562>

¹¹⁷⁴ Harriet Salem “Ukraine Election Officials: It May Be Impossible to Hold the Vote in Rebel Regions” *Vice News*, May 14, 2014, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/3kejm9/ukraine-election-officials-it-may-be-impossible-to-hold-the-vote-in-rebel-regions

¹¹⁷⁵ “Russia appeals for an immediate end to use of force in southeast Ukraine” *President of Russia*, May 19, 2014, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/21035>

¹¹⁷⁶ Ibid

¹¹⁷⁷ Steve Gutterman “Kremlin again says Putin has ordered troops from Ukraine” *Reuters*, May 19, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-russia-military/kremlin-again-says-putin-has-ordered-troops-from-ukraine-idUSBREA4I04I20140519>

¹¹⁷⁸ Ibid

¹¹⁷⁹ Ibid

May 20, 2014: In a TV interview with Bloomberg, Russian Prime Minister, Dmitry Medvedev where he responds to questions about troop withdrawal, Crimea and the US policies¹¹⁸⁰. As he stated: “First, we did not annex any part of Ukraine. This is the Russian position. If you're referring to Crimea, the situation is radically different. The population of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea held a referendum and voted for self-determination and for joining Russia in accordance with the existing procedure. And that's what they did...Crimea is a special and unique story”¹¹⁸¹.

May 21, 2014: Putin states that the order to withdraw Russian troops was made in order to create “favorable conditions for Ukraine's presidential vote and end speculations”¹¹⁸². Putin also stated that that it would have made more sense for the Ukrainian authorities to have a constitutional referendum that would approve a new constitution before the election¹¹⁸³. As he stated: "It will be very difficult for us to develop relations with people, who come to power amid a punitive operation in southeastern Ukraine,"¹¹⁸⁴.

May 23, 2014: Putin states that Russia will respect the result of the Ukraine presidential election¹¹⁸⁵. He also stated that he hoped US-Russia relations would improve are the resolution of the Ukraine crisis¹¹⁸⁶. A Russian military commander said Russia would respond to NATO’s troop buildup and exercises in Poland and the Baltics¹¹⁸⁷.

May 25, 2014: Poroshenko wins the presidential elections¹¹⁸⁸. Access to polling stations in Eastern Ukraine were however restricted or not possible at all¹¹⁸⁹.

May 26, 2014: Ukraine continues its anti-terrorist operations¹¹⁹⁰. In a statement President Poroshenko pointed to the separatists in eastern Ukraine and stated: “Their goal is to turn Donbass [east Ukraine] into Somalia. I will not let anyone do this to our state and I hope that Russia will support my approach”¹¹⁹¹. Russia stated that it was “open to dialogue” with Poroshenko but that the anti-terrorist operations must end¹¹⁹².

May 30, 2014: According to US Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, Russia has made progress in pulling back its troops¹¹⁹³. He stated: “We do know that thousands of Russian troops have been pulled back and are moving away, but we also know that there are still thousands of Russian troops still there that have not yet

¹¹⁸⁰ “Dmitry Medvedev’s interview with Bloomberg TV” *The Russian Government*, May 20, 2014, <http://government.ru/en/news/12509/>

¹¹⁸¹ Ibid

¹¹⁸² “Putin Says Troops Withdraw to Help Ukraine Vote” *The Moscow Times*, May 21, 2014,

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/05/21/putin-says-troops-withdraw-to-help-ukraine-vote-a35631>

¹¹⁸³ Ibid

¹¹⁸⁴ Ibid

¹¹⁸⁵ “Vladimir Putin says Russia will respect result of Ukraine’s presidential election” *The Washington Post*, May

23, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/russian-military-chief-says-nato-troops-along-border-a-worry-ahead-of-ukraine-vote/2014/05/23/283846ec-e259-11e3-810f-764fe508b82d_story.html?utm_term=.56d42e471645

¹¹⁸⁶ Ibid

¹¹⁸⁷ Ibid

¹¹⁸⁸ Laura Smith-Spark, Nick Paton Walsh and Radina Gigova, “Billionaire Poroshenko declares victory in Ukraine”

CNN, May 25, 2014, <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/05/25/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/>

¹¹⁸⁹ Ibid

¹¹⁹⁰ “Ukraine crisis: Stand-off amid fight for Donetsk airport” *BBC News*, May 27, 2014,

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27578440>

¹¹⁹¹ Ibid

¹¹⁹² Ibid

¹¹⁹³ Rebecca Shabad, “Hagel: Russia has pulled back most troops from border with Ukraine” *The Hill*, May 30,

2014, <https://thehill.com/policy/defense/207693-russia-has-withdrawn-most-troops-from-ukraine-border-hagel-says>

moved”¹¹⁹⁴. NATO announces that its ambassadors will meet with their Russian counterparts¹¹⁹⁵. Increasing evidence emerges of the involvement of fighters from Russia and Northern Caucasus, including Chechnya¹¹⁹⁶. Ukraine states that Russian border guards do nothing to stop fighters entering Ukraine from Russia with trucks of ammunition and weapons¹¹⁹⁷.

May 31, 2014: Russia criticizes the OSCEs suggestion of pulling out its international observers due to safety concerns¹¹⁹⁸. A statement by Russia said: “amid Kiev's intentionally intensified punitive operation in the east of the country, it is essential to step up the work of international observers.”¹¹⁹⁹.

June 5, 2014: Medvedev stated that the military operation in Eastern Ukraine has forced thousands to seek refuge in Russia¹²⁰⁰. Claims which are denied by Ukraine¹²⁰¹. It has however become increasingly difficult for Ukraine to control its borders¹²⁰². Russia submits a resolution to the UNSC on the creation of humanitarian corridors and the cessation of Ukraine’s military operations¹²⁰³. Russia also announced that it would return its ambassador to Ukraine to attend the inauguration of Poroshenko¹²⁰⁴. Obama states that further sanctions will be imposed on Russia if it continues to destabilize Ukraine¹²⁰⁵. He stated: “First, the status quo is unacceptable; the continuing destabilization of eastern Ukraine must stop. Second, there are a set of things that need to happen. President Putin must recognize the legitimate election of President Poroshenko. He must stop arms crossing the border into Ukraine. He must cease Russian support for separatist groups. And third, if these things don’t happen, then sectoral sanctions will follow. The next month will be vital in judging if President Putin has taken these steps, and that is what I will urge President Putin to do when I meet him later today.”¹²⁰⁶

May 6, 2014: A brief meeting is held between Putin and Poroshenko¹²⁰⁷. They agreed detailed talks on a ceasefire would begin within few days¹²⁰⁸. Putin stated that he had welcome a plan proposed by Poroshenko (no details on it given) and stated: “I felt the attitude was right as a whole[...]If this (plan) happens, then it creates conditions for the development of relations in other areas, including the economy.”¹²⁰⁹.

¹¹⁹⁴ Ibid

¹¹⁹⁵ “NATO says Russia pulling back troops from Ukraine border” *DW*, May 30, 2014,

<https://www.dw.com/en/nato-says-russia-pulling-back-troops-from-ukraine-border/a-17673538>

¹¹⁹⁶ Richard Balmforth and Sabina Zawadzki, “Ukraine to push on with army offensive, row grows over Russian fighters reports” *Reuters*, May 30, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-defence/ukraine-to-push-on-with-army-offensive-row-grows-over-russian-fighters-reports-idUSKBN0EA0LN20140530>

¹¹⁹⁷ Ibid

¹¹⁹⁸ “Russia says monitors should stay in Ukraine” *USA Today*, May 31, 2014,

<https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2014/05/31/russia-ukraine-monitors-troops/9808251/>

¹¹⁹⁹ Ibid

¹²⁰⁰ Lukas I. Alpert “Russian Prime Minister Says Thousands Crossing Border to Flee Ukraine” *The Wall Street Journal*, June 5, 2014, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/russian-prime-minister-medvedev-says-thousands-crossing-border-to-flee-ukraine-1401971825>

¹²⁰¹ Ibid

¹²⁰² Ibid

¹²⁰³ Ibid

¹²⁰⁴ Ibid

¹²⁰⁵ “Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom in Joint Press Conference” *The White House*, June 5, 2014, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/05/remarks-president-obama-and-prime-minister-david-cameron-united-kingdom->

¹²⁰⁶ Ibid

¹²⁰⁷ John Irish, Jeff Mason, Alexei Anishchuk, “Putin, Ukraine leader break crisis ice at D-Day event” *Reuters*, June 6, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-dday-anniversary/putin-ukraine-leader-break-crisis-ice-at-d-day-event-idUSKBN0EG2V020140606>

¹²⁰⁸ Ibid

¹²⁰⁹ Ibid

June 7, 2014: Poroshenko is sworn in as President¹²¹⁰.

June 9, 2014: In a trilateral group meeting between Germany, Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE, Poroshenko states that Ukraine “must cease fire by the end of this week”¹²¹¹. He also promised that the negotiators would meet daily until the crisis is resolved¹²¹². Russia and Ukraine reach a “mutual understanding on key stages of the implementation of the plan and on a list of priorities which will contribute to a de-escalation of the situation in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine”¹²¹³. Ukraine also announced that it would deploy police officers to eastern Ukraine¹²¹⁴.

June 10, 2014: Poroshenko orders the creation of escape corridors for civilians¹²¹⁵. Russia and the US welcomes the decision¹²¹⁶. Russia however stated that ending the military operations against the separatists is key to solving the crisis and stated if this was done: “the people you call separatists will reciprocate”¹²¹⁷.

June 11, 2014: Ukraine rejects a Russian gas discount offer saying it “won’t fall into another Russian gas trap”¹²¹⁸.

June 12, 2014: Ukraine condemns reports of three Russian tanks entering Ukraine through a border checkpoint controlled by separatists in the Luhansk region¹²¹⁹. Russia denied the report and said it was “another fake piece of information”¹²²⁰. Russia also accuses Ukraine on not delivering on its promise of ending the fighting¹²²¹. As stated by Lavrov: “The lack of any progress whatsoever in efforts to stop the violence and halt military operations[...]is causing increasing concern”¹²²².

¹²¹⁰ Paul Sonne and Colleen McCain Nelson, “Petro Poroshenko Sworn In as Ukraine President” *The Wall Street Journal*, June 7, 2014, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/petro-poroshenko-sworn-in-as-ukraine-president-1402138124>

¹²¹¹ “Violence in East Ukraine Continues as Poroshenko Talks of Negotiations” *The Moscow Times*, June 9, 2014, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/06/09/violence-in-east-ukraine-continues-as-poroshenko-talks-of-negotiations-a36297>

¹²¹² Ibid

¹²¹³ “Progress reported in Ukraine-Russia talks but fighting continues” *Los Angeles Times*, June 9, 2014, <https://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-ukraine-russia-talks-progress-20140609-story.html>

¹²¹⁴ Carol Morello, “Ukraine orders police deployment in the east” *The Washington post*, June 9, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/ukraine-orders-police-deployment-in-east/2014/06/09/4fc58cd5-c7f7-4c7d-95ff-f7c3b6520e97_story.html?utm_term=.3c0d11c6cefb

¹²¹⁵ David Herszenhorn “Ukraine opens corridors for civilians to flee violence in the east”, *Boston Globe*, June 11, 2014, <http://www.bostonglobe.com/news/world/2014/06/10/ukraine-opens-corridors-for-civilians-flee-violence-east/wMKvFTPndIJ1atrINH6v2O/story.html>

¹²¹⁶

“Russia Welcomes Creation Of Humanitarian Corridors In Eastern Ukraine”, *RadioFreeEurope*, June 10, 2014, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-welcomes-creation-humanitarian-corridors-in-east-ukraine/25417133.html>

¹²¹⁷ Ibid

¹²¹⁸ “Putin: Russia offered gas deal to help Ukraine economy” *BBC News*, June 11, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-27805414>

¹²¹⁹ “Ukraine says 'Russian tank incursion' unacceptable” *BBC News*, June 12, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27815441>

¹²²⁰ Ibid

¹²²¹ Ibid

¹²²² Ibid

June 13, 2014: Ukraine offers an interim gas agreement with Russia¹²²³. Russia does not respond to the proposal¹²²⁴. Separatists shoot down military transport plane and Poroshenko promised an adequate response stating: “All those involved in cynical acts of terrorism of this magnitude must be punished”¹²²⁵.

June 14, 2014: Russia’s embassy in Kiev is attacked by demonstrators throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at the building¹²²⁶. Russia and the US condemn the attack and calls on Ukraine to provide adequate security¹²²⁷.

June 16, 2014: Poroshenko vows to recover control of its eastern borders and proposes a ceasefire with the separatists¹²²⁸. Once the borders are closed and secure the government plans to declare a ceasefire¹²²⁹.

June 17, 2014: A gas pipeline carrying Russian gas to Europe through Ukraine explodes. Ukraine treat it as a possible act of terrorism and states that the event is: “the latest attempt by the Russian side to discredit Ukraine as a partner in the gas sector”¹²³⁰. A Russian journalist dies in eastern Ukraine after being caught in a mortar fire¹²³¹. Russia condemns the act and stated in a statement: "The death of the Russian journalist near Lugansk has shown in its entirety the criminal nature of the forces that launched the military operation in the country’s east”¹²³².

June 18, 2014: Poroshenko announces plans for a unilateral ceasefire¹²³³. The ceasefire follows a conversation between Poroshenko and Putin¹²³⁴. The ceasefire is part of Poroshenko’s peace plan which is meant to offer the separatists the possibility of laying down arms or leave the country¹²³⁵. It also includes amnesty for those who have not committed grave crimes¹²³⁶. Poroshenko stated: "I can say that the period of the ceasefire will be rather short. We anticipate that immediately after this, the disarming of the illegal

¹²²³ Andrey Ostroukh and Alexander Kolyandr, “Ukrainian PM Says Russia Wrecked Gas Talks” *The Wall Street Journal*, June 13, 2014, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-proposes-interim-price-for-russian-gas-1402663086>

¹²²⁴ Ibid

¹²²⁵ Pavel Polityuk and Aleksandar Vasovic, “Ukraine separatists shoot down military plane, 49 dead” *Reuters*, June 14, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/ukraine-crisis-plane/ukraine-separatists-shoot-down-military-plane-49-dead-idINKBN0EP09920140614>

¹²²⁶ “Ukraine crisis: Russia condemns attack on Kiev embassy” *BBC News*, June 14, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27853698>

¹²²⁷ Dennis Lynch “Ukraine Crisis: Protesters Vandalize Russian Embassy In Kiev, Photos And Live Stream Of Rally”, *International Business Times*, June 14, 2014, <https://www.ibtimes.com/ukraine-crisis-protesters-vandalize-russian-embassy-kiev-photos-live-stream-rally-1601362>

¹²²⁸ “Ukraine’s president vows to seal borders, seek cease-fire this week” *Los Angeles Times*, June 16, 2014, <http://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-ukraine-russia-cessa-fire-20140616-story.html>

¹²²⁹ Ibid

¹²³⁰ “UPDATE 4-Ukraine suspects gas pipeline blast was an attack” *Reuters*, June 17, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/ukraine-crisis-blast/update-4-ukraine-suspects-gas-pipeline-blast-was-an-attack-idUSL5N0OY3XB20140617>

¹²³¹ “Russian television company confirms death of journalist in Ukraine” *TASS*, June 17, 2014, <https://tass.com/world/736445>

¹²³² “2 Russian journalists killed in Ukraine military shelling” *RT*, June 17, 2014, <https://www.rt.com/news/166496-journalist-dies-journalism-shooting/>

¹²³³ Bill Chappel, “Ukraine’s President Announces Plan For Unilateral Cease-Fire” *NPR*, June 18, 2014, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2014/06/18/323184470/ukraine-s-president-orders-unilateral-cessa-fire>

¹²³⁴ Ibid

¹²³⁵ “Poroshenko Sets Out Cease-Fire Plan for East Ukraine” *The Moscow Times*, June 18, 2014, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/06/18/poroshenko-sets-out-cessa-fire-plan-for-east-ukraine-a36505>

¹²³⁶ Ibid

military formations will take place."¹²³⁷. An insurgent leader from Donetsk said Poroshenko's plan was "senseless" stating: "They cease fire, we lay down weapons, and then they will capture us weaponless"¹²³⁸. Other pro-Russian activists join in rejecting the ceasefire¹²³⁹. Lavrov stated that any ceasefire should be "comprehensive" and not just temporary but that if the cease fire was followed by negotiations "then it could be the step President Poroshenko has promised and which in general we were all waiting for."¹²⁴⁰

June 19, 2014: NATO states that Russia has resumed its military build-up at the border. Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen stated: "I can confirm that we now see a new Russian military buildup — at least a few thousand more Russian troops deployed to the Ukrainian border, and we see troop maneuvers in the neighborhood of Ukraine[...]If they're deployed to seal the border and stop the flow of weapons and fighters that would be a positive step. But that's not what we're seeing[...]I consider this a very regrettable step backwards and it seems that Russia keeps the option to intervene further[...]So the international community would have to respond firmly if Russia were to intervene further. That would imply deeper sanctions which would have a negative impact on Russia."¹²⁴¹. Separatists reject the planned ceasefire and violent clashes erupt between Ukrainian servicemen and the separatists¹²⁴². A spokesman of the forces stated: "We issued an ultimatum to the terrorists overnight to surrender their weapons. We guarantee their safety and investigation in line with Ukrainian law[...]They refused,"¹²⁴³.

June 20, 2014: Poroshenko announces the beginning of the ceasefire which is to last until June 27¹²⁴⁴. In a statement he states: "Those who will not lay down their weapons will be destroyed,"¹²⁴⁵. Details emerge on a 15-point peace plan which includes the creation of a 10-kilometer "buffer zone" at the Russian-Ukrainian border, which will be "jointly patrolled."¹²⁴⁶. A spokesman for Putin stated that Russia had taken measures to "strengthen the protection of Russian borders"¹²⁴⁷. Valery Bolotov, head of the Lugansk People's Republic stated: "Our people will not lay down arms until Ukraine pulls out all troops from our territory,"¹²⁴⁸.

June 22, 2014: Putin declares his support for the 15-point peace plan and ceasefire as he states: "The fact that President Poroshenko has declared a ceasefire is without question an important step towards reaching a final settlement, and perhaps is one of the most important conditions for this to happen. Russia will

¹²³⁷ Shaun Walker and Alec Luhn, "Ukraine separatist vow to fight on as president unveils ceasefire plan" *The Guardian*, June 19, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/18/ukraine-president-ceasefire-plan-vladimir-putin>

¹²³⁸ "Poroshenko Sets Out Cease-Fire Plan for East Ukraine" *The Moscow Times*

¹²³⁹ Andrew Roth and David M. Herszenhorn, "Rebels Reject Ukrainian Leader's Cease-Fire Idea", *The New York Times*, June 18, 2014,

https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/19/world/europe/putin-and-poroshenko-ukraine.html?_r=0

¹²⁴⁰ "Poroshenko Sets Out Cease-Fire Plan for East Ukraine" *The Moscow Times*

¹²⁴¹ "NATO's Rasmussen: Russia Is Moving More Troops to Ukraine Border", *NBC News*, June 19, 2014,

<https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/ukraine-crisis/natos-rasmussen-russia-moving-more-troops-ukraine-border-n135411>

¹²⁴² Lina Kushch, Aleksandar Vasovic, Pavel Polityuk, Richard Balmforth, "UPDATE 1-Ukraine forces battle separatists after truce "refused"", *Reuters*, June 19, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/ukraine-crisis-fighting/update-1-ukraine-forces-battle-separatists-after-truce-refused-idUSL6N0P021A20140619>

¹²⁴³ Ibid

¹²⁴⁴ Smith-Spark, Laura and Victoria Butenko, "Ukraine implements cease-fire in restive east", *CNN*, June 20, 2014, <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/06/20/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/>

¹²⁴⁵ Ibid

¹²⁴⁶ "Ukraine president proclaims 7-day ceasefire, rolls out peace plan", *RT*, June 20, 2014,

<https://www.rt.com/news/167380-ukraine-ceasefire-clashes-east/>

¹²⁴⁷ "Ukraine crisis: Details of Poroshenko's peace plan emerge", *BBC*, June 20, 2014,

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27937596>

¹²⁴⁸ "Ukraine president proclaims 7-day ceasefire, rolls out peace plan", *RT*

certainly support these plans.”¹²⁴⁹. He however also urged that the ceasefire open up plans for dialogue which includes the separatists “so as to find solutions that will be acceptable to all sides, in order to ensure that people in southeast Ukraine have no doubt that they are an integral part of the country, have the same rights as all other citizens, and know that these rights are guaranteed, including by Ukraine’s constitution”¹²⁵⁰. The office of President Putin also “welcomed the news that Ukraine’s Choice public movement has started making contacts in Donetsk and Lugansk. Ukraine’s Choice is led by Viktor Medvedchuk (Ukrainian politician and oligarch), who has consistently supported the idea of federalism in Ukraine. At the same time he is a respected figure in Kiev and is known in the West.”¹²⁵¹

June 23, 2014: Separatists in Eastern Ukraine agree to a four-day ceasefire and to start negotiations with the government¹²⁵². A trilateral contact group meeting between the government and the separatists was held in Donetsk and attended by Donetsk separatist leaders, the head of the Ukraine mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Russia’s ambassador to Ukraine and former Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma¹²⁵³. Putin offered, pro-Russian Ukrainian politician Viktor Medvedchuk and close friend of Putin as an interlocutor on the behalf of the separatists¹²⁵⁴.

June 24, 2014: Russia cancels the resolution which allows the use of Russian Armed Forces in Ukraine¹²⁵⁵. The resolution was first submitted to the Russian Federation Council in March due to the situation in Ukraine and as a mean to ensure the protection of Russians in Ukraine¹²⁵⁶. The resolution was to permit the use of the Armed Forces “until the normalization of the social and political situation in that country.”¹²⁵⁷ The cancelling of the resolution comes in connection to the trilateral contact group talks¹²⁵⁸. Peskov stated: “Because of the beginning of the three-party talks to settle down the situation in the eastern parts of Ukraine, the head of state has addressed to the Federation Council to repeal the resolution on the use of Russian armed forces on the territory of Ukraine,”¹²⁵⁹. The ceasefire is violated as a military helicopter is shot down¹²⁶⁰. Ukraine stated that “the head of state does not exclude that the ceasefire regime may be revoked ahead of schedule”¹²⁶¹. Alexander Borodai, leader of Donetsk People's Republic stated that: “I say officially now that there has been no ceasefire and, judging by everything, there will not be any,”...“In general, all that is left to us is to continue fighting,”¹²⁶². Igor Strelkov, commander in Slovyansk stated about the

¹²⁴⁹ Alexander Garden, “Response to a journalist’s question about the peace plan in Ukraine”, *President of Russia*, June 22, 2014, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/45955>

¹²⁵⁰ Ibid

¹²⁵¹ “On the start of contacts with Ukraine’s Choice public movement in Donetsk and Lugansk”, *President of Russia*, June 22, 2014, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/45959>

¹²⁵² Michael Birnbaum, “Separatists in Ukraine agree to honor cease-fire”, *The Washington Post*, June 23, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/separatists-in-ukraine-agree-to-honor-cease-fire/2014/06/23/40582a78-fb07-11e3-b1f4-8e77c632c07b_story.html

¹²⁵³ Ibid

¹²⁵⁴ Ibid

¹²⁵⁵ “Putin asks Federation Council to cancel resolution on use of Russian forces in Ukraine”, *TASS*, June 24, 2014, <https://tass.com/russia/737498>

¹²⁵⁶ “Putin’s letter on use of Russian army in Ukraine goes to upper house”, *TASS*, March 1, 2014, <https://tass.com/russia/721586>

¹²⁵⁷ “Putin asks Upper House to repeal decision allowing use of military force in Ukraine”, *RT*, June 24, <https://www.rt.com/news/168092-putin-revoke-military-ukraine/>

¹²⁵⁸ Ibid

¹²⁵⁹ Ibid

¹²⁶⁰ “Ukraine army helicopter shot down despite ceasefire”, *BBC News*, June 24, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-28002993>

¹²⁶¹ “Ukraine army helicopter shot down despite ceasefire”, *BBC News*

¹²⁶² Ibid

ceasefire: "We should not trust a single letter," "They [Ukrainian troops] are trying to quickly and calmly take and reinforce new positions under the cover of the ceasefire treaty."¹²⁶³.

June 27, 2014: Ukraine signs the Association Agreement with the EU and declares that the country will one day become a full member of the union¹²⁶⁴. Whereas Ukraine made to show it as a defiance against Russia, Putin blamed the crisis on Western leaders stating: "The acute crisis in this neighboring country seriously troubles us," Mr. Putin said after a ceremony to receive the credentials of foreign diplomats. "The anti-constitutional coup in Kiev and attempts to artificially impose a choice between Europe and Russia on the Ukrainian people have pushed society toward a split and painful confrontation."¹²⁶⁵. The Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin said the deal would "no doubt[...]have serious consequences,"¹²⁶⁶

June 28, 2014: Sergei Lavrov accuses the US of pushing Ukraine into confrontation with Russia stating: "Our American colleagues still prefer to push the Ukrainian leadership toward a confrontational path."¹²⁶⁷

June 29, 2014: Russian cameraman Anatoly Klyan is killed in Ukraine¹²⁶⁸. Russia condemned the killing and stated that it undermined the ceasefire and showed that Ukraine was not willing to deescalate the conflict¹²⁶⁹.

June 30, 2014: Violence continues on the ground with both sides accusing the other¹²⁷⁰.

July 1, 2014: Poroshenko ends ceasefire and the anti-terrorist operation resumes¹²⁷¹. Putin condemned the renewed violence and stated: "All of us in Europe need a sort of safety net, so the Iraqi, Libyan, Syrian and Ukrainian precedents will not turn into an infectious disease"¹²⁷². He also stated: "Unfortunately President Poroshenko took the decision to restart military operations and we – I mean myself and my European colleagues – could not convince him that the road to stable, strong and long-lasting peace does not lie through war[...]Up until now (Poroshenko) was not directly linked to the order to start military operations but now he has taken on this responsibility fully, not only militarily but also politically"¹²⁷³. The Russian foreign ministry hinted that the United States was behind Poroshenko's decision¹²⁷⁴. "There is an impression

¹²⁶³ "Rebels shoot down Ukraine helicopter", *Aljazeera*, June 25, 2014,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2014/06/rebels-shoot-down-ukraine-helicopter-201462417309454272.html>

¹²⁶⁴ Andrew Higgins and David M. Herszenhorn, "Defying Russia, Ukraine Signs E.U. Trade Pact", *The New York Times*, June 27, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/28/world/europe/ukraine-signs-trade-agreement-with-european-union.html?_r=1

¹²⁶⁵ Ibid

¹²⁶⁶ Michael Birnbaum, "Ukraine signs landmark agreement with E.U.", *The Washington Post*, June 27, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/ukraine-signs-landmark-agreement-with-eu/2014/06/27/8e6ca59a-fdd2-11e3-932c-0a55b81f48ce_story.html

¹²⁶⁷ "Russia Accuses US Over Ukraine Confrontation", *Yahoo News UK*, June 28, 2014,

<https://uk.news.yahoo.com/russia-accuses-us-over-ukraine-confrontation-085320437.html?guccounter=1>

¹²⁶⁸ "Moscow Says Killing Of Cameraman Shows Kyiv Not De-Escalating Conflict", *RadioFreeEurope*, June 30, 2014, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-russian-cameraman-killed-russia-de-escalation/25440282.html>

¹²⁶⁹ Ibid

¹²⁷⁰ "Ukraine Eyes Ceasefire Extension After Diplomatic Push", *NDTV*, July 1, 2014, <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/ukraine-eyes-ceasefire-extension-after-diplomatic-push-582565>

¹²⁷¹ Michael Birnbaum, "As Ukraine cease-fire expires, violence escalates", *The Washington Post*, July 1, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/ukraine-forces-press-assault-hours-after-ceasefires-suspension/2014/07/01/f0f313e0-0104-11e4-8572-4b1b969b6322_story.html

¹²⁷² Ibid

¹²⁷³ Richard Balmforth and Natalia Zinets, "Ukraine forces attack rebel positions, Putin growls", *Reuters*, July 1, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis/ukraine-forces-attack-rebel-positions-putin-growls-idUSKBN0F52OO20140701>

¹²⁷⁴ Ibid

that the change in Kiev’s position[...]could not have come about without influence from abroad, despite the position of leading EU member states”¹²⁷⁵.

July 2, 2014: Russia, Germany, Ukraine and France meet in Berlin for four-way talks¹²⁷⁶. The group agrees on holding three-way talks with the separatists later that week¹²⁷⁷. This comes as an initiative to reach a multilateral ceasefire¹²⁷⁸. The three-way talks will be called trilateral contact group and consist of Ukraine, Russia and the separatists with the OSCE as mediator¹²⁷⁹. The agreement also included Russia allowing Ukraine border guards to cross and control the checkpoints in Donetsk and Gukovo¹²⁸⁰.

July 3, 2014: The Ukraine parliament adds Poroshenko’s bill on amending the constitution concerning the powers of government bodies and self-government bodies to their agenda¹²⁸¹. This is to be followed by public debates and has to be approved by a simple majority in the Rada¹²⁸².

July 5, 2014: Poroshenko proposes a time and venue for the trilateral contact group talks and as stated by his office: “Ukraine has proposed a place and time for the meeting and is waiting the other party’s confirmation”¹²⁸³. Ukraine states that the separatists continue to attack Ukrainian border checkpoints in Luhansk and Donetsk regions with assaults originating from both within Ukraine and from Russia¹²⁸⁴. Ukraine recapture the city of Slovyansk, a strong-hold of the separatists, with Poroshenko stating: “This is not a complete victory. But the cleansing of Slovyansk from armed-to-the-teeth gangs of animals has great symbolic importance,”¹²⁸⁵. He also promised that the military would soon “liberate” the rest of the separatist-held territories and promised humanitarian aid and legal amnesty to civilian in the areas¹²⁸⁶. Denis Pushilin, leader of Donetsk People’s Republic, suggested that the group had been let down by Russia¹²⁸⁷. He stated: “What to say. They encouraged us. Encouraged us and abandoned us[...]Putin’s words about protecting the Russian people, protecting Novorossiya, they were beautiful. But they were only words,”¹²⁸⁸. In an interview with Russian TV, Igor Strelkov, the separatist military commander stated: “If Russia does not negotiate a ceasefire or intervene with its armed forces for us, for the Russian people who live here, we will be destroyed[...]It will happen in a week, two at most[...][The fighters] are people who consciously took up arms to defend their language and their culture, to defend Russia[...][But] Russia does not want to help them unify with their people.” “It is very difficult to accept that in nearly three months in Slavyansk

¹²⁷⁵ Ibid

¹²⁷⁶ “Lavrov to Meet European Foreign Ministers to Discuss Ukraine Crisis”, *The Moscow Times*, July 2, 2014, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/07/02/lavrov-to-meet-european-foreign-ministers-to-discuss-ukraine-crisis-a36940>

¹²⁷⁷ “Berlin talks agree on contact group for Ukraine ceasefire”, *Euractiv*, July 3, 2014, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/news/berlin-talks-agree-on-contact-group-for-ukraine-ceasefire/>

¹²⁷⁸ Ibid

¹²⁷⁹ Ibid

¹²⁸⁰ Ibid

¹²⁸¹ “Rada puts Poroshenko-proposed bill amending constitution on plenary session’s agenda”, *Interfax Ukraine*, July 3, 2014, <https://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/211972.html>

¹²⁸² Ibid

¹²⁸³ “Poroshenko tells Ashton Ukraine is ready to talk”, *DW*, July 4, 2014, <https://www.dw.com/en/poroshenko-tells-ashton-ukraine-is-ready-to-talk/a-17759105>

¹²⁸⁴ Ibid

¹²⁸⁵ Karoun Demirjian, “Rebels flee Slovyansk as Ukrainian forces recapture key city”, *The Washington Post*, July 5, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/rebels-flee-slovyansk-as-ukrainian-forces-recapture-key-city/2014/07/05/eb44fc8e-0437-11e4-8fd0-3a663dfa68ac_story.html?utm_term=.6eac0ba77e0d

¹²⁸⁶ Ibid

¹²⁸⁷ Ibid

¹²⁸⁸ Ibid

practically no real help has reached us,”¹²⁸⁹. Strelkov also drew a distinction between assistance via “private channels” and the intervention by the Russian state that “we really need”¹²⁹⁰. Russia called for an UN inquiry into the killing of civilians in eastern Ukraine and said it would stop returning Ukraine military equipment from Crimea to Ukraine until peace was restored in Eastern Ukraine¹²⁹¹.

July 6, 2014: The anti-terrorist operation prepares its siege of Donetsk and Poroshenko states “My order is now in effect - tighten the ring around the terrorists...Continue the operation to liberate Donetsk and Luhansk regions,”¹²⁹². Ukraine calls it a turning point in the fight for control over Eastern Ukraine¹²⁹³.

July 7, 2014: The separatists fortify Donetsk¹²⁹⁴. Sergei Lavrov calls the situation in eastern Ukraine worse than in Belgrade ahead of the civil war that broke apart Yugoslavia and urges the resumption of peace talks¹²⁹⁵. Germany also called for the cessation of hostilities and the need for talks including the separatists¹²⁹⁶.

July 8, 2014: Ukraine’s new defense minister rules out negotiations until the separatists have disarmed¹²⁹⁷. Self-declared Prime Minister of the Donetsk People’s Republic stated in an interview that he had been in “consultations” in Russia¹²⁹⁸. Many of the separatists however now criticize President Vladimir Putin administration for giving them too little help¹²⁹⁹. OSCE confirms that Ukraine, Russia met in Kiev, however the separatists were not represented¹³⁰⁰.

July 10, 2014: A Ukrainian air force pilot, who has captured by separatists, show up in Russia where she is charged for the killing of two Russian journalists in Ukraine¹³⁰¹. She is suspected of tipping off Ukrainian troops to the whereabouts of the journalists¹³⁰². Russia claims she crossed the Russian border under the guise as a refugee¹³⁰³. Ukraine claims she was kidnapped by separatists and “illegally trafficked” to

¹²⁸⁹ Roland Oliphant, “Ukraine claims victory as rebel fighters reportedly flee Slavyansk”, *The Telegraph*, July 5, 2014, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/10947986/Ukraine-claims-victory-as-rebel-fighters-reportedly-flee-Slavyansk.html>

¹²⁹⁰ Ibid

¹²⁹¹ Karoun Demirjian, “Rebels flee Slovyan as Ukrainian forces recapture key city”, *The Washington Post*

¹²⁹² “Ukraine Presses Forward after Capture of Rebel Stronghold”, *VOA News*, July 6, 2014,

<https://www.voanews.com/europe/ukraine-presses-forward-after-capture-rebel-stronghold>

¹²⁹³ Ibid

¹²⁹⁴ David M. Herszenhorn, “Ukraine rebels are retreating for last stand”, *The New York Times*, July 7, 2014,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/08/world/europe/ukraine-rebels-are-retreating-for-last-stand.html>

¹²⁹⁵ Ibid

¹²⁹⁶ Ibid

¹²⁹⁷ Richard Balmforth, “Ukraine Presses Offensive In East As Rebels Regroup”, *Huffington Post*, July 8, 2014,

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/ukraine-offensive_n_5566397?guccounter=1

¹²⁹⁸ Ibid

¹²⁹⁹ Richard Balmforth, “Ukraine Presses Offensive In East As Rebels Regroup”, *Huffington Post*

¹³⁰⁰ Richard Balmforth, “Ukraine Presses Offensive In East As Rebels Regroup”, *Huffington Post*

¹³⁰¹ “Ukrainian pilot charged with aiding murder”, *Aljazeera*, July 10, 2014,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2014/07/ukrainian-pilot-charged-with-aiding-murder-20147922477520619.html>

¹³⁰² Ibid

¹³⁰³ Ibid

Russia¹³⁰⁴. EU announces new sanctions for 11 individuals over the Ukraine conflict¹³⁰⁵. Their assets will be frozen and travel bans imposed¹³⁰⁶.

July 14, 2014: Russia vows to respond to the alleged artillery fire which killed a Russian civilian in the Russian border town, also called, Donetsk¹³⁰⁷. The Russian foreign ministry stated: “The Russian side sees this provocation as the latest aggressive act from the Ukrainian side towards sovereign Russian territory and citizens of the Russian Federation[...]. It must be underlined that this incident demonstrates the extremely dangerous escalation in tension around the Russian-Ukrainian border, and could have irreversible consequences, the responsibility for which rests with the Ukrainian side.”¹³⁰⁸. Ukraine dismissed the claim from Russia as “nonsense” and blamed the separatists for the incident¹³⁰⁹. A Ukraine transport plane is shot down which Ukraine states was “probably” done so from Russian territory¹³¹⁰. Separatists however claimed responsibility for the incident¹³¹¹.

July 15, 2014: Ukraine accuses Russia of destroying an apartment building in Eastern Ukraine, which killed 11 civilians. Separatists however claimed Ukraine was responsible for the attack¹³¹². Russia’s support to the separatists have emerged over the past days with the separatists complaining over the low quality of the weapons provided by Russia and a lack of more proactive assistance from Russia¹³¹³.

July 17, 2014: Malaysian airline passenger plane is shot down over Eastern Ukraine¹³¹⁴.

July 18, 2014: Obama holds a press conference on the Malaysian plane and states that “Evidence indicates that the plane was shot down by a surface-to-air missile that was launched from an area that is controlled by Russian-backed separatists inside of Ukraine.”¹³¹⁵. International observers are prevented from inspecting

¹³⁰⁴ Ivan Nechepurenko, “Ukraine Cries Foul as Russia Blames Female Army Officer for Killings”, *The Moscow Times*, July 9, 2014, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/07/09/ukraine-cries-foul-as-russia-blames-female-army-officer-for-killings-a37172>

¹³⁰⁵ “EU Adds 11 More Names to Ukraine Sanctions List, Could Include Russians”, *The Moscow Times*, July 10, 2014, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/07/10/eu-adds-11-more-names-to-ukraine-sanctions-list-could-include-russians-a37184>

¹³⁰⁶ Ibid

¹³⁰⁷ Daniel McLaughlin, “Russia to ‘respond’ to alleged Ukraine cross-border fire”, *The Irish Times*, July 14, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/russia-to-respond-to-alleged-ukraine-cross-border-fire-1.1865041>

¹³⁰⁸ Ibid

¹³⁰⁹ Ibid

¹³¹⁰ Michael Birnbaum and Karoun Demirjian, “Ukraine says military plane was “probably” shot down from Russian territory”, *The Washington Post*, July 14, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/in-russia-growing-push-to-launch-strikes-on-ukraine-over-alleged-deadly-border-shelling/2014/07/14/ebf699cc-0b61-11e4-8c9a-923ecc0c7d23_story.html?utm_term=.64f8652bf2cd

¹³¹¹ Ibid

¹³¹² David M. Herszenhorn and Sabrina Tavernise, “Border tensions raise between Ukraine and Russia”, *The New York Times*, July 15, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/16/world/europe/ukraine-russia-tensions-rise-over-attacks.html>

¹³¹³ David M. Herszenhorn and Sabrina Tavernise, “Border tensions raise between Ukraine and Russia”, *The New York Times*

¹³¹⁴ “Malaysia Airlines plane crashes in Ukraine 60 km from Russian border”, *TASS*, July 17, 2014, <https://tass.com/world/741158>

¹³¹⁵ “Transcript: President Obama’s July 18 statement on Ukraine and Gaza”, *The Washington Post*, July 18, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/transcript-obamas-statement-on-ukraine-and-gaza/2014/07/18/a3224560-0e8c-11e4-8c9a-923ecc0c7d23_story.html?utm_term=.566d3a01daa7

the site¹³¹⁶. The UNSC calls for a “full, thorough and independent international investigation” into the downing of the plane and “appropriate accountability” for those responsible¹³¹⁷. Ukraine and Russia blamed each other¹³¹⁸.

July 19, 2014: Ukraine accuses Russia and the separatists of destroying evidence which proves their guilt in the downing of the Malaysian Airline¹³¹⁹. Armed men have prevented OSCE from inspecting the site¹³²⁰. Separatist leader Aleksander Borodai stated that they had not touched the site although videos have emerged of men going through the wreckage and moving bodies¹³²¹. Putin has urged the separatists to cooperate and insisted that a U.N.-mandated investigation must not leap to conclusions¹³²². Russia blames Ukraine for the incident¹³²³. Germany pointed to the incident and stated it was Russia’s last change to cooperate¹³²⁴. Russia said it would retaliate the US sanctions¹³²⁵. Lavrov and Kerry also agreed to try to get both sides of the conflict to reach a consensus¹³²⁶.

July 21, 2014: Ukraine steps up its operations against the separatists and they clash in Donetsk¹³²⁷. A leader from the separatist hands over the black box from the Malaysian Airline¹³²⁸. The UNSC unanimously passes a resolution condemning the attack on the Malaysian Airline¹³²⁹. The resolution also called for an international investigation with the United Nations civil aviation agency and demanded that armed groups at the crash site allow unfettered access¹³³⁰. Putin spoke with the Dutch Prime Minister, Mark Rutte, with both giving a “high assessment of the resolution passed by the U.N. Security Council on the investigation into the catastrophe.”¹³³¹. Obama states that Russia has a direct responsibility to compel separatists to cooperate with the investigation and states “What are they trying to hide?”¹³³².

¹³¹⁶ Anton Zverev, “Obama condemns Russia over downed plane in Ukraine, gunmen hamper inquiry”, *Reuters*, July 18, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-airplane/obama-condemns-russia-over-downed-plane-in-ukraine-gunmen-hamper-inquiry-idUSKBN0FM22N20140718>

¹³¹⁷ Ibid

¹³¹⁸ Ibid

¹³¹⁹ Anton Zverev and Peter Graff, “Ukraine, rebels argue over wreck; Europeans give Putin 'last chance'”, *Reuters*, July 19, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-airplane/ukraine-rebels-argue-over-wreck-europeans-give-putin-last-chance-idUSKBN0FO04620140719>

¹³²⁰ Scott Neuman and Carol Ritchie, “Ukraine Accuses Rebels Of Destroying Evidence At MH17 Crash Site”, *NPR*, July 19, 2014, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2014/07/19/332746427/access-to-mh17-crash-site-blocked-investigators-say?t=1573646707485>

¹³²¹ Ibid

¹³²² Anton Zverev and Peter Graff, “Ukraine, rebels argue over wreck; Europeans give Putin 'last chance'”, *Reuters*

¹³²³ Ibid

¹³²⁴ Ibid

¹³²⁵ Ibid

¹³²⁶ Ibid

¹³²⁷ Sabrina Tavernise and David M. Herszenhorn, “Ukrainian Military and Rebel Fighters Clash in Donetsk”, *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/22/world/europe/ukrainian-military-and-rebel-fighters-clash-in-donetsk.html>

¹³²⁸ Anton Zverev and Peter Graff, “Bodies, black boxes handed over from Ukraine crash site”, *Reuters*, July 21, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-airplane/bodies-black-boxes-handed-over-from-ukraine-crash-site-idUSKBN0FQ0K420140721>

¹³²⁹ Somini Sengupta, “U.N. Council, With Russia in Accord, Tells Insurgents to Open Wreckage Site”, *The New York Times*, July 21, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/22/world/europe/united-nations-security-council-measure-demands-access-to-ukraine-wreckage.html>

¹³³⁰ Ibid

¹³³¹ Anton Zverev and Peter Graff, “Bodies, black boxes handed over from Ukraine crash site”, *Reuters*

¹³³² Ibid

July 23, 2014: Alexander Khodakovsky, commander of the Vostok Battalion, acknowledges that the separatists do possess a BUK missile system, which is capable of shooting down airlines at cruising height, and that they received it from Russia¹³³³. Khodakovsky also stated that “The question is this: Ukraine received timely evidence that the volunteers have this technology, through the fault of Russia. It not only did nothing to protect security, but provoked the use of this type of weapon against a plane that was flying with peaceful civilians”¹³³⁴. Khodakovsky however later claimed that he was misquoted¹³³⁵. Other separatist leaders continue to deny that they possess such a system¹³³⁶.

July 25, 2014: The US accuses Russia of firing artillery from its border into Ukraine in order to target Ukrainian military positions¹³³⁷. The US also claims Russia is “planning to boost military shipments to separatists in a “clear escalation” of hostilities there”¹³³⁸. Ukraine Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk resigns over frustration of the parliament to pass laws¹³³⁹. The decision follows the failure of the parliament to pass a law on lessening Ukraine’s dependence on Russia gas¹³⁴⁰. The Ukraine Defense Ministry warns the parliament that the military is running out of money to pay for its operations in Eastern Ukraine¹³⁴¹. The EU agrees to expand sanctions on Russia¹³⁴².

July 26, 2014: Ukraine launches offensive to retake Donetsk and Russia accuses the US of conducting “an unrelenting campaign of slander against Russia, ever more relying on open lies.”¹³⁴³. Investigations into the Malaysian Airline crash is stalled by the ongoing battles in the area and the advancement of the Ukraine forces towards Donetsk¹³⁴⁴.

July 27, 2014: The US released satellite images which it claims backs up its accusations of Russia firing artillery into Ukraine¹³⁴⁵. Kerry and Lavrov talk over the phone and agree on the need for an immediate

¹³³³ Anton Zverev, “Exclusive: Ukraine rebel commander acknowledges fighters had BUK missile”, *Reuters*, July 23, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-commander-exclusive/exclusive-ukraine-rebel-commander-acknowledges-fighters-had-buk-missile-idUSKBN0FS1V920140723>

¹³³⁴ Ibid

¹³³⁵ Shaun Walker, “MH17: Ukraine separatist commander 'admits' rebels had Buk missile system”, *The Guardian*, July 23, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/23/mh17-ukraine-separatists-buk-missile-system>

¹³³⁶ Ibid

¹³³⁷ “US accuses Russia of firing artillery at Ukraine”, *The Economic Times*, July 25, 2014, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/us-accuses-russia-of-firing-artillery-at-ukraine/articleshow/38988300.cms>

¹³³⁸ Ibid

¹³³⁹ “US accuses Russia of firing across border at Ukraine military”, *DW*, July 25, 2014, <https://www.dw.com/en/us-accuses-russia-of-firing-across-border-at-ukraine-military/a-17808031>

¹³⁴⁰ Ibid

¹³⁴¹ Carol Morello and Michael Birnbaum, “Ukraine’s prime minister resigns as coalition falls apart”, *Washington Post*, July 24, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/intense-battles-continue-in-eastern-ukraineaustralia-to-send-police-to-guard-crash-site/2014/07/24/2c6bc1c0-1315-11e4-8936-26932bafd6ed_story.html?utm_term=.c703b1a8ce03

¹³⁴² John-Thor Dahlburg, “New EU sanctions against Russia to target businesses, arms trade”, *U.S. News*, July 25, 2014, <https://www.usnews.com/news/business/articles/2014/07/25/new-eu-sanctions-to-target-russian-businesses>

¹³⁴³ “Ukraine launches offensive to retake Donetsk”, *USA Today*, July 26, 2014, <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2014/07/26/ukraine-launches-offensive-to-retake-donetsk/13219415/>

¹³⁴⁴ Andrew Higgins and Andrew E. Kramer, “Effort to Secure Malaysia Airline Crash Site Falter in Eastern Ukraine”, *The New York Times*, July 26, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/27/world/europe/efforts-to-secure-malaysia-airlines-crash-site-stall-in-eastern-ukraine.html?_r=0&assetType=nyt_now

¹³⁴⁵ Scott Neuman, “U.S.: Satellite Images Show Russian Rockets Hitting Ukraine”, *NPR*, July 27, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2014/07/27/335829570/u-s-satellite-images-show-russian-rockets-hitting-ukraine>

ceasefire¹³⁴⁶. The US State Department further stated that Kerry urged Lavrov “to stop the flow of heavy weapons and rocket and artillery fire from Russia into Ukraine, and to begin to contribute to deescalating the conflict. He did not accept Foreign Minister Lavrov’s denial that heavy weapons from Russia were contributing to the conflict.”¹³⁴⁷.

July 28, 2014: Arseniy Yatsenyuk proposes to parliament the imposing of a war tax of 1,5% in order to pay for the military operations¹³⁴⁸.

July 30, 2014: Ukraine accuses separatists of mining the roads which lead to the crash site of the Malaysian Airline¹³⁴⁹. Belarus announces that it will host talks between Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE¹³⁵⁰. There were no indications that the separatists would be represented but Belarus states that “all interested sides” were invited¹³⁵¹. NATO military commander General Philip Breedlove also stated that the number of Russian troops and military equipment was increasing along the Ukraine border¹³⁵². Russia announced a ban on the import of most fruit and vegetables from Poland and stated that the ban could extend to the entire EU¹³⁵³.

July 31, 2014: Ukraine imposes a one-day ceasefire in order to allow the Dutch-led team to conduct its investigations at the Malaysian crash site¹³⁵⁴. Clashes however continued with Ukraine stating that it was only firing in self-defense¹³⁵⁵. The parliament votes not to accept the resignation of the Ukraine Prime Minister and agrees to impose the war tax¹³⁵⁶.

August 3, 2014: Ukraine advances on Donetsk and the separatists renew their calls for Russia to send in troops¹³⁵⁷. Pavel Gubarev, the self-proclaimed governor of the separatist Donetsk region, said they would ensure a quick victory if Russia sent troops¹³⁵⁸. As he stated: "Of course it would be great to see Russian peacekeepers here: strong artillery units, tank brigades[...]This war would be over in a day, maybe two."¹³⁵⁹

¹³⁴⁶ Carol Morello and Karen DeYoung, “As fighting continues in east Ukraine, U.S. releases images said to implicate Russia”, *Washington Post*, July 27, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/fierce-battle-between-military-and-rebels-in-eastern-ukraine-halts-plane-investigation/2014/07/27/b695809c-1582-11e4-9e3b-7f2f110c6265_story.html?utm_term=.b46ed5a51861

¹³⁴⁷ Ibid

¹³⁴⁸ “Ukraine's PM says money needed for war, reconstruction”, *Times Colonist*, July 2014, <https://www.timescolonist.com/news/ukraine-s-pm-says-money-needed-for-war-reconstruction-1.1264072>

¹³⁴⁹ Doug Stanglin, “Ukraine official: Rebels lay mines near crash site”, *USA Today*, July 30, 2014, <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2014/07/30/ukraine-rebels-malaysia-crash-site/13352413/>

¹³⁵⁰ Jill Reilly, “Pro-Russian rebels have booby-trapped MH17 crash site with landmines, claim Ukraine one day ahead of talks with Russia over access to the scene”, *Daily Mail*, July 30, 2014, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2710512/Belarus-host-talks-Russia-Ukraine-bid-allow-MH17-investigators-crash-site-s-one-breakthrough-rebels-agree-stop-SWEARING.html>

¹³⁵¹ Ibid

¹³⁵² Ibid

¹³⁵³ Ibid

¹³⁵⁴ Carol Morello, “During one-day ceasefire in Ukraine, team reaches site of plane crash, collects DNA”, *Washington Post*, July 31, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/ukraine-declares-one-day-cease-fire-in-east/2014/07/31/6371eb6a-189f-11e4-9349-84d4a85be981_story.html?utm_term=.8fd337bed6a7

¹³⁵⁵ Ibid

¹³⁵⁶ Ibid

¹³⁵⁷ Yuras Karmanau, “Ukraine's army advances on rebel stronghold of Donetsk”, *U.S. News*, August 3, 2014, <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2014/08/03/ukraines-army-on-outskirts-of-rebel-stronghold>

¹³⁵⁸ Ibid

¹³⁵⁹ Ibid

August 4, 2014: 300 Ukraine troops cross into Russia¹³⁶⁰. Ukraine states that they were forced to cross the border due to clashes with the separatists, whereas Russia claims they came to Russia to seek asylum¹³⁶¹. There are also disagreements over the exact number of troops¹³⁶². Lavrov stated: “I expect Ukrainian authorities to understand that it is absolutely unacceptable, when Ukrainians[...]are forced to fight with their own people, to treat those who refuse to do so as traitors to the motherland,”¹³⁶³. According to the Ukrainian National Security and Defense council “the troops asked Russian border guards to open a humanitarian corridor and found themselves on Russian territory”¹³⁶⁴.

August 5, 2014: According to NATO, US and Ukraine, Russia continues to increase its military presence at the border which raises the “specter of a cross-border attack with little or no warning”¹³⁶⁵. Western officials also worry that Russia will deploy the troops as peacekeepers in Eastern Ukraine, should the anti-terrorist operations succeed in removing the separatists in Donetsk¹³⁶⁶. Russia states that the situation in the Donetsk regions is on the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe and that the Ukraine government refuses to admit it¹³⁶⁷.

August 7, 2014: Alexander Borodai, the prime minister of the self-declared Donetsk People’s Republic, resigns amid signs of deepening divisions within the movement¹³⁶⁸. He is replaced by Alexander Zakharchenko¹³⁶⁹. Borodai stated at the handover: “I am a Muscovite. Donbass should be led by a genuine Donetsk native”¹³⁷⁰. Demonstrations erupt in Kiev as attempts are made to clear the independence square¹³⁷¹. Canada announces that it will send military equipment to Ukraine which includes helmets, ballistic eyewear, protective vests, first-aid kits, tents and sleeping bags¹³⁷².

¹³⁶⁰ Natalia Zinets and Richard Balmforth, “More Than 300 Ukrainian Troops Cross Into Russia, Confusion Reigns”, *Huffington Post*, August 4, 2014, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/ukraine-troops-russia_n_5648087

¹³⁶¹ Ibid

¹³⁶² “Hundreds of Ukrainian troops cross into Russia”, *CBS News*, August 4, 2014,

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/russia-hundreds-ukraine-troops-defect-russia-military-drills-border/>

¹³⁶³ Natalia Zinets and Richard Balmforth, “More Than 300 Ukrainian Troops Cross Into Russia, Confusion Reigns”, *Huffington Post*

¹³⁶⁴ “NSDC maintains contact with Ukrainian troops in Russia”, *Interfax Ukraine*, August 4, 2014,

<https://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/216823.html>

¹³⁶⁵ “US officials warn Russian troops could move quickly against Ukraine, report says”, *Fox News*, August 5, 2014,

<https://www.foxnews.com/world/us-officials-warn-russian-troops-could-move-quickly-against-ukraine-report-says>

¹³⁶⁶ Paton Walsh, Nick, Laura Smith-Spark and Tom Cohen, “Russian troop increase at Ukraine border raises concerns”, *CNN*, August 6, 2014, <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/08/05/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/>

¹³⁶⁷ “Situation in Luhansk and Donetsk on brink of humanitarian disaster — Russian FM”, *TASS*, August 5, 2014,

<https://tass.com/russia/743655>

¹³⁶⁸ Roman Olearchyk, “Rebel leader quits Donetsk amid infighting”, *Financial Times*, August 7, 2014,

<https://www.ft.com/content/c7fa5fee-1e18-11e4-bb68-00144feabd0>

¹³⁶⁹ Ibid

¹³⁷⁰ Ibid

¹³⁷¹ David Stern, “Demonstrations on streets of Kiev”, *BBC News*, August 7, 2014,

<https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-europe-28689482/demonstrations-on-streets-of-kiev>

¹³⁷² Laura Payton, “Ukraine to get helmets, vests from Canada to help protect border”, *CBC*, August 7, 2014,

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/ukraine-to-get-helmets-vests-from-canada-to-help-protect-border-1.2729999>

August 8, 2014: The Prime Minister office in Ukraine and 10 other embassies in the country have been under cyberattack¹³⁷³. Russia calls an emergency meeting at the UNSC on the humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine¹³⁷⁴.

August 9, 2014: Donetsk is surrounded at the separatists ask for a ceasefire in order to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe¹³⁷⁵. A Ukrainian spokesman stated that a ceasefire would only be possible if the separatists surrender¹³⁷⁶. Poroshenko stated that Ukraine was ready to agree on humanitarian assistance, but it must come in without military accompaniment, it must pass through border checkpoints under Ukrainian control and the mission must be international in character¹³⁷⁷. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov stated: "there was no attempt by Russian soldiers at penetration," and again called for humanitarian action, saying "this catastrophe now is the No. 1 theme for discussion."¹³⁷⁸.

August 11, 2014: Ukraine and Russia agree on a humanitarian mission led by the Red Cross¹³⁷⁹. Russia stated it was sending an aid convoy to eastern Ukraine in collaboration with the Red Cross despite Western warnings not to use humanitarian help as a pretext for an invasion¹³⁸⁰. The Red Cross sent a document to Ukraine and Russia which stipulated that "prior to the beginning of the operation, the ICRC should receive without undue delay from the authorities of the Russian Federation all necessary details concerning the aid, including the volume and type of items, and requirements for transport and storage."¹³⁸¹. NATO stated that there was a "high probability" that Russia could launch an invasion of Ukraine¹³⁸².

August 12, 2014: The US supports Ukraine in its decision to support the Russian convoy of aid only if it goes through customs check and hands over the aid to the Red Cross¹³⁸³. Mr. Lavrov stated that the delivery was agreed with the Red Cross and that he expected that the Ukrainian government would guarantee the column's security¹³⁸⁴. He also stated that the separatists would do the same: "We have already signaled to

¹³⁷³ "Polish embassy in Ukraine computers under Russian cyber attack", *Radio Poland*, August 8, 2014, <http://archiwum.thenews.pl/1/10/Artykul/178360>

¹³⁷⁴ Alex Heber, "Not Only Is The Ukraine Dealing With Separatist Fighters On The Ground It Also Has Cyber Threats To Battle", *Business Insider*, August 6, 2014, <https://www.businessinsider.com.au/fighting-on-the-ground-in-the-ukraine-isnt-the-countrys-only-problem-2014-8>

¹³⁷⁵ Yuras Karmanau, "Donetsk rebels say city is surrounded by govt forces, want cease-fire to avoid 'catastrophe'", *U.S. News*, August 9, 2014, <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2014/08/09/barricades-come-down-in-kiiev>

¹³⁷⁶ Doug Stanglin and Katharine Lackey, "Ukraine: No cease-fire until rebels surrender", August 10, 2014, <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2014/08/10/ukraine-fighting/13858395/>

¹³⁷⁷ Yuras Karmanau, "Donetsk rebels say city is surrounded by govt forces, want cease-fire to avoid 'catastrophe'", *U.S. News*

¹³⁷⁸ Ibid

¹³⁷⁹ "Russia and Ukraine agree on humanitarian operation – Lavrov", *RT*, August 11, 2014, <https://www.rt.com/news/179496-lavrov-humanitarian-corridor-agreed/>

¹³⁸⁰ Stephanie Nebehay, "ICRC lays down principles for delivering Russian aid to Ukraine", *Reuters*, August 11, 2014, <http://news.trust.org/item/20140811191244-mq7ge>

¹³⁸¹ Ibid

¹³⁸² Richard Balmforth and Peter Graff, "NATO Sees 'High Probability' Of Russian Invasion Of Ukraine", *Huffington Post*, August 11, 2014, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/nato-russia-ukraine_n_5668122

¹³⁸³ "US backs Ukraine's move to block Russian humanitarian convoy from entering eastern rebel-held region", *ABC*, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-08-13/ukraine-blocks-russian-humanitarian-convoy-from-entering-country/5666910>

¹³⁸⁴ Neil MacFarquhar, "A Russian Convoy Carrying Aid to Ukraine Is Dogged by Suspicion", *The New York Times*, August 12, 2014, <https://www.nytimes-com.chain.kent.ac.uk/2014/08/13/world/europe/russian-convoy-leaves-moscow-for-ukraine-bearing-aid.html?searchResultPosition=1>

them[...]I am certain there will be no disruptions on their part. They are on the territory whose residents need humanitarian aid.”¹³⁸⁵.

August 14, 2014: The Russian aid convoy changes course¹³⁸⁶. Ukrainian accuses Russia of repainting military vehicles white to disguise their efforts¹³⁸⁷. Ukrainian officials also claim to have stopped a purported aid convoy accompanied by Russian troops and hence vowed to stop any "uncertified" aid convoy from Russia¹³⁸⁸. Another leader of the separatists, Igor Strelkov, resigns¹³⁸⁹. Ukraine accuses him of being the direct link between Russia and the separatists¹³⁹⁰.

August 15, 2014: Ukraine claims it has destroyed part of a Russian armored column inside Ukraine¹³⁹¹. Russia denied the presence of Russian troops in Ukraine and stated that the Ukrainian report was “some kind of fantasy”¹³⁹². Russia also accuses Ukraine of sabotaging aid delivery to the country¹³⁹³. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu stated Russia was “seriously concerned” by the increased NATO activity and called for a ceasefire to get aid into Ukraine¹³⁹⁴. In an attempt to diffuse tensions, the Kremlin stated that the Ukrainian and Russian chiefs of presidential staff met in Russia on Friday¹³⁹⁵. The foreign minister of Ukraine also stated that he would meet his Russian counterpart in Berlin on Sunday¹³⁹⁶.

August 16, 2014: Separatists in Ukraine claim that a Russian military convoy with military hardware is on the way to the separatists¹³⁹⁷. NATO and Western journalists claim they saw Russian armour crossing the border¹³⁹⁸. France also prepares for talks under the Normandy format, or the four-way talk, with France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine¹³⁹⁹.

August 17, 2014: Ukraine says it has made gains against the separatists in Donetsk and Luhansk¹⁴⁰⁰. Ukraine also acknowledges that the Russian convoy does contain humanitarian aid¹⁴⁰¹. Russia stated that

¹³⁸⁵ Ibid

¹³⁸⁶ Michael Pearson and Lindsay Isaac, “Russian convoy to Ukraine abruptly changes course”, *CNN*, August 14, 2014, <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/08/13/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/>

¹³⁸⁷ Ibid

¹³⁸⁸ Ibid

¹³⁸⁹ Dennis Lynch “Igor Strelkov Quits: Leader Of Pro-Russian Separatists Steps Down In Ukraine”, *International Business Times*, August 14, 2014, <http://www.ibtimes.com/igor-strelkov-quits-leader-pro-russian-separatists-steps-down-ukraine-1658956>

¹³⁹⁰ Ibid

¹³⁹¹ Natalia Zinets and Richard Balmforth, “Kiev says forces destroyed Russian armour inside Ukraine”, *Reuters*, August 15, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis/kiev-says-forces-destroyed-russian-armour-inside-ukraine-idUSKBN0GF13120140815>

¹³⁹² Ibid

¹³⁹³ Ibid

¹³⁹⁴ Ibid

¹³⁹⁵ Ibid

¹³⁹⁶ Ibid

¹³⁹⁷ “Ukraine rebels claim Russia is sending military support”, *Vatican Radio*, August 16, 2014, http://www.archivioradiovaticana.va/storico/2014/08/16/ukraine_rebels_claim_russia_is_sending_military_support/_en-1104684

¹³⁹⁸ Ibid

¹³⁹⁹ “France Calls on Ukraine for Restraint in Its Operations Against Self-Defense Forces”, *Sputniknews*, August 16, 2014, <https://sputniknews.com/politics/20140816192072339-France-Calls-on-Ukraine-for-Restraint-in-Its-Operations-Against/>

¹⁴⁰⁰ Victoria Butenko and Joshua Berlinger, “Ukraine says it's made gains against separatists”, *CNN*, August 17, 2014, <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/08/17/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/>

¹⁴⁰¹ Ibid

the convoy contained grain, sugar, baby food, medical supplies and sleeping bags¹⁴⁰². The elected governor in Luhansk stated that she did not want to receive aid from Russia¹⁴⁰³. Lavrov meets with his Ukraine, French and German counterparts¹⁴⁰⁴. Germany's foreign minister said the talks were aimed at "restarting the political process", seeking options for a cease-fire and finding a "framework for effective border controls"¹⁴⁰⁵. The crisis risked entering an "intensified spiral of escalation" without such action."¹⁴⁰⁶.

August 18, 2014: Rockets hit a convoy carrying refugees¹⁴⁰⁷. Ukraine and the separatists disagree over who fired the rocket¹⁴⁰⁸.

August 19, 2014: Ukraine and Russia announce that Putin and Poroshenko will meet during a Customs Union-Ukraine-EU meeting in Minsk¹⁴⁰⁹.

August 20, 2014: Four people are detained in Moscow after a Soviet star on one of the city's Seven Sisters high-rises was painted blue and yellow¹⁴¹⁰. In a statement to the incident Poroshenko stated: "On the eve of Independence Day we are starting an initiative called 'Our Colours,' which is devoted to the Ukrainian flag[...]And it is symbolic that, on this day, our colours have been painted on what is perhaps the greatest skyscraper in Moscow. I urge Ukrainians throughout the world, wherever they are, on the eve of the anniversary of our independence, to decorate their homes, offices, and cars in our national colours."¹⁴¹¹.

August 21, 2014: Poroshenko states that he will tell Putin to rein in the separatists, when they meet on the 26th¹⁴¹². Poroshenko also stated: "In order to have solid positions in peace negotiations, we have to be strong, to have the unity of the people, a strong country, a strong army[...]We are capable of defending our sovereignty, our independence and our territorial integrity. Today we are fighting for the independence of Ukraine. Together we will win for sure,"¹⁴¹³. He also stated that he would soon announce the dissolution of parliament, hereby leading the way for new elections¹⁴¹⁴. UN stated that so far 2000 people had lost their

¹⁴⁰² Ibid

¹⁴⁰³ Ibid

¹⁴⁰⁴ Tom Parfitt "Ukraine army pushes into rebel stronghold of Luhansk", *The Telegraph*, August 17, 2014, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/11039930/Ukraine-army-pushes-into-rebel-stronghold-of-Luhansk.html>

¹⁴⁰⁵ Ibid

¹⁴⁰⁶ Ibid

¹⁴⁰⁷ Alessandra Prentice, "Rocket fire hits refugee convoy in Ukraine's east: rebels, army", *Reuters*, August 18, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-refugees-missile/rocket-fire-hits-refugee-convoy-in-ukraines-east-rebels-army-idUSKBN0GI0RD20140818>

¹⁴⁰⁸ Ibid

¹⁴⁰⁹ "Putin to Attend Customs Union, Ukraine, EU Summit in Minsk Next Tuesday – Kremlin", *Sputniknews*, August 19, 2014, <https://sputniknews.com/russia/20140819192155006-Putin-to-Attend-Customs-Union-Ukraine-EU-Summit-in-Minsk-Next/>

¹⁴¹⁰ Tom Balmforth and Glenn Kates, "Activists paint Moscow's 'Stalin Tower' with Ukraine colours", *The Guardian*, August 20, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/20/activists-paint-moscow-stalin-tower-ukraine-colours>

¹⁴¹¹ Ibid

¹⁴¹² Richard Balmforth, "Ukraine's Poroshenko talks tough ahead of meetings with Merkel, Putin", *Reuters*, August 21, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis/ukraines-poroshenko-talks-tough-ahead-of-meetings-with-merkel-putin-idUSKBN0GL1WN20140821>

¹⁴¹³ Ibid

¹⁴¹⁴ Ibid

lives on both sides¹⁴¹⁵. A Ukraine journalist releases photos of a Russian armored vehicle and documents captured in Luhansk¹⁴¹⁶. Russia stated that the documents were fabricated¹⁴¹⁷.

August 22, 2014: NATO claims Russia has moved military artillery units into Ukraine and was using them to fire at Ukrainian soldiers¹⁴¹⁸. A 200-aid convoy from Russia entered separatist held areas in Eastern Ukraine¹⁴¹⁹. The convoy entered without consent from Ukrainian authorities and escort from the Red Cross¹⁴²⁰. The Russian foreign ministry stated “All the excuses to delay the delivery of aid to people in the area of a humanitarian catastrophe are exhausted[...]The Russian side has made a decision to act. Our column with humanitarian cargo starts moving toward Luhansk.”¹⁴²¹. Poroshenko stated that Ukraine forces would not attack the trucks¹⁴²². The People’s Republic of Donetsk stated that it would cease fire on parts of the roads where the Russian convoy passed¹⁴²³.

August 23, 2014: OSCE states that the Russian aid convoy has returned to Russia¹⁴²⁴. Obama states that Russia’s decision to send in the convoy marked a “dangerous escalation” in the conflict¹⁴²⁵. The Russian foreign ministry stated “The Russian convoy has left Ukrainian territory and is in the territory of the Russian Federation[...]We are receiving numerous messages from the people of Luhansk grateful for such a kind attitude on the part of Russia,”¹⁴²⁶. The Red Cross, which was intended to escort the convoy, stated it had backed out due to security concerns in the area¹⁴²⁷. An honorary consul representing Lithuania was reportedly kidnapped and killed by separatists in Luhansk¹⁴²⁸. In a phone call with Poroshenko, Biden “commended Ukraine’s restraint in the face of Russia’s blatant provocation and disregard of Ukraine’s sovereignty,”¹⁴²⁹.

August 24, 2014: Ukraine celebrates Independence Day¹⁴³⁰. In the self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic, separatists marched captured Ukrainian soldiers at gunpoint through the streets with a resident

¹⁴¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁴¹⁶ “Ukraine customs checks start on Russian aid convoy”, *BBC News*, August 21, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-28882719>

¹⁴¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁴¹⁸ Andrew Higgins and Michael R. Gordon, “Russians Open Fire in Ukraine, NATO Reports”, *The New York Times*, August 22, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/23/world/europe/russian-convoy-ukraine.html>

¹⁴¹⁹ Ibid

¹⁴²⁰ Ibid

¹⁴²¹ Andrew Higgins and Michael R. Gordon, “Russians Open Fire in Ukraine, NATO Reports”, *The New York Times*

¹⁴²² Ibid

¹⁴²³ “Militia claim to cease fire on Luhansk aid route”, *Interfax*, August 22, 2014,

<http://www.interfax.com/newsinf.asp?pg=5&id=530483>

¹⁴²⁴ “All Russian aid vehicles 'leave' Ukraine”, *Aljazeera*, August 23, 2014,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2014/08/russian-aid-trucks-begin-leaving-ukraine-2014823833162998.html>

¹⁴²⁵ Ibid

¹⁴²⁶ Isabel Gorst, “Russian officials say aid convoy completed mission, has left Ukraine”, *Los Angeles Times*, August 23, 2014, <https://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-russia-ukraine-convoy-20140823-story.html>

¹⁴²⁷ Ibid

¹⁴²⁸ Ibid

¹⁴²⁹ Andrew Higgins and David M. Herszenhorn, “Germany Pledges Aid for Ukraine as Russia Hails a Returning Convoy”, *The New York Times*, August 23, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/24/world/europe/russian-convoy-ukraine.html>

¹⁴³⁰ “English-language translation of Poroshenko’s Independence Day remarks in Kyiv”, *Kyiv Post*, August 24, 2014, <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/war-against-ukraine/poroshenko-says-ukraine-engaged-in-new-war-for-independence-361879.html>

stating: “This is no independence day. This is a plague on our land, the fascists who have taken control of Kiev who are now shooting at hospitals and morgues”¹⁴³¹.

August 25, 2014: Poroshenko dissolves parliament and calls for elections in October¹⁴³². In his speech, Poroshenko stated that the current composition did not only “approve dictatorship laws that took away lives of the Heavenly Hundred,” (reference to those who died during Maidan), but also that “many of the deputies who sit or are listed in the Rada – if not direct sponsors and comrades, then sympathizers of militant separatists”¹⁴³³.

August 26, 2014: Putin and Poroshenko hold bilateral meetings in Minsk¹⁴³⁴. Poroshenko stated: “A roadmap will be prepared in order to achieve, as soon as possible, a ceasefire regime which absolutely must be bilateral in character,”¹⁴³⁵. Putin stated: “Russia, for its part, will do everything to support this peace process if it starts”¹⁴³⁶. But he also added that it was up to the Ukraine government and the separatists to work out conditions for a truce¹⁴³⁷. Ukraine states that it has captured 10 Russian paratroopers near the border¹⁴³⁸. Russia stated that they had crossed the border “by accident”¹⁴³⁹. Russia also stated that 500 Ukraine servicemen had crossed the Russian border and that “We did not give much publicity to that. We just returned all those willing to return to Ukrainian territory at safe places.”¹⁴⁴⁰. Ukraine Security Service releases videos of a group of Russian soldiers captured in Ukraine¹⁴⁴¹. One of the soldiers stated: “My vehicle was hit at and blown up[...]Then I understood it was not just a military exercise and I got scared. Now I understand we were sent to fight people we shouldn’t have been fighting[...]They sent us here without informing us or explaining why just as if we were cannon fodder,”¹⁴⁴². Lavrov denied any illegal crossing of Russian soldiers and said this was part of the information war¹⁴⁴³. According to a statement from a source in the Russian defense ministry: “The soldiers really did participate in a patrol of a section of the Russian-Ukrainian border, crossed it by accident on an unmarked section, and as far as we understand showed no resistance to the armed forces of Ukraine when they were detained,”¹⁴⁴⁴.

¹⁴³¹ David Stout, “Civil War Hangs Heavy Over Ukraine During Its Independence Day Celebrations”, *TIME*, August 25, 2014, <https://time.com/3172733/ukraine-russia-war-independence-day-petro-poroshenko/>

¹⁴³² “Poroshenko calls an early election on Oct. 26”, *Kyiv Post*, August 25, 2014, <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/ukraine-politics/president-petro-poroshenko-calls-an-early-election-on-oct-26-362001.html>

¹⁴³³ Ibid

¹⁴³⁴ “Ukraine crisis: Poroshenko vows 'roadmap' for peace”, *BBC News*, August 27, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-28940095>

¹⁴³⁵ Ibid

¹⁴³⁶ Ibid

¹⁴³⁷ Ibid

¹⁴³⁸ Ibid

¹⁴³⁹ Ibid

¹⁴⁴⁰ Ibid

¹⁴⁴¹ Andrew Higgins and Michael R. Gordon, “Putin Talks to Ukrainian Leaders as Video Shows Captured Russian Soldiers”, *The New York Times*, August 26, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/27/world/europe/ukraine.html?_r=0

¹⁴⁴² Ian Bateson, “Russian military source says captured soldiers entered Ukraine by mistake”, *Kyiv Post*, August 26, 2014, <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/war-against-ukraine/russian-military-source-says-captured-soldiers-entered-ukraine-by-mistake-362066.html>

¹⁴⁴³ Ibid

¹⁴⁴⁴ Ishaan Tharoor, “Russia says it invaded Ukraine by accident. Is that possible?”, *Washington Post*, August 26, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/08/26/russia-says-it-invaded-ukraine-by-accident-is-that-possible/?utm_term=.e1c16efddd56

August 27, 2014: No agreement is reached in Minsk and fighting continues¹⁴⁴⁵. Ukraine accuses Russia of deepening its presence in Ukraine and sending new troops to Crimea¹⁴⁴⁶. Ukraine states that another armored column had entered Ukraine from Russia¹⁴⁴⁷. In another event Lavrov stated about the Ukraine Government and the separatists: “We are now convinced that everything possible must be done to ensure that they sit down at the negotiating table and start moving from an urgent ceasefire to trying to hear each other. Until they sit down we won't be able to understand whether they will be able to live together or not[...]Unless a political dialogue is launched with the participation of all regions, we will never be able to understand whether it is realistic or unrealistic for the Ukrainians to reach an agreement. And when the current Kyiv authorities say, 'We will start a dialogue but not before Donetsk and Luhansk lay down their arms, and if they don't we'll try to achieve our goals in a military way,' it is an absolutely irresponsible attitude because when one says to people, 'Surrender first, and then we'll see what to do with you,' it sparks a chain reaction,”¹⁴⁴⁸.

August 28, 2014: Poroshenko declares that Russian forces have invaded country¹⁴⁴⁹. According to a Ukraine official two columns of Russian tanks and military vehicles fired Grad missiles at a border post in southeastern Ukraine and then entered the country¹⁴⁵⁰. NATO states at least 1000 Russian troops had entered Ukraine¹⁴⁵¹. Ukraine announces that it will call for an emergency meeting at the UNSC and the European Commission¹⁴⁵². In an interview with Russian media Alexander Zakharchenko, prime minister of the self-declared Donetsk Peoples Republic, claimed that thousands of Russian citizens were fighting alongside the separatists in southeast Ukraine as volunteers¹⁴⁵³. He said many of the Russians who had joined the separatists' ranks were retired military personnel or soldiers on leave and that “They are fighting with us, understanding that it is their duty,”¹⁴⁵⁴. He also stated that between 3,000 and 4,000 Russian citizens had fought as volunteers alongside the separatists in southeast Ukraine¹⁴⁵⁵.

August 29, 2014: The UNSC holds emergency meeting with US ambassador Samantha Power stating “It has manipulated. It has obfuscated. It has outright lied. So we have learned to measure Russia by its actions and not by its words,”¹⁴⁵⁶. Churkin stated: “The Kiev authorities have torpedoed all political agreements on resolving the crisis[...]The only thing we're seeing is a fight against dissent.”¹⁴⁵⁷. Leonid Slutsky, head of the Russian State Duma Committee for CIS Affairs, stated: “I think that very soon the international

¹⁴⁴⁵ Annie Gowen and Karoun Demirjian, “Ukraine says troops are battling combined Russian and separatist forces on new front”, *Washington Post*, August 27, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/ukraine-accuses-russia-of-stepping-up-military-activity-in-crimea/2014/08/27/1ddeabf8-2de2-11e4-9b98-848790384093_story.html?utm_term=.db16c79a2c1d

¹⁴⁴⁶ Ibid

¹⁴⁴⁷ Andrew E. Kramer and Michael R. Gordon, “Ukraine Reports Russian Invasion on a New Front”, *The New York Times*, August 27, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/28/world/europe/ukraine-russia-novoazovsk-crimea.html?_r=0

¹⁴⁴⁸ “Lavrov: talks the only way to find out if eastern regions want to be part of Ukraine”, *Interfax*, August 27, 2014, <http://www.interfax.com/newsinf.asp?id=531804>

¹⁴⁴⁹ Isabel Gorst, “Russians invading, says Ukraine leader; tanks reported crossing border”, *Los Angeles Times*, August 28, 2014, <https://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-ukraine-president-russian-forces-20140828-story.html>

¹⁴⁵⁰ Ibid

¹⁴⁵¹ Ibid

¹⁴⁵² Ibid

¹⁴⁵³ Ibid

¹⁴⁵⁴ Ibid

¹⁴⁵⁵ Ibid

¹⁴⁵⁶ Victoria Butenko, Laura Smith-Spark and Diana Magnay, “U.S. official says 1,000 Russian troops have entered Ukraine”, *CNN*, August 29, 2014, https://edition.cnn.com/2014/08/28/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/index.html?hpt=hp_t1

¹⁴⁵⁷ Ibid

community will make an objective assessment of the Kiev junta's actions, and many countries, members of the European Council, the representatives of which we are constantly in touch with, are beginning to realize that Kiev is leaking lies,"¹⁴⁵⁸.

August 29, 2014: Ukraine announces that it will seek NATO membership in response to Russia's actions¹⁴⁵⁹. NATO stated that it respected Ukraine's decision and that "Despite Moscow's hollow denials, it is now clear that Russian troops and equipment have illegally crossed the border into eastern and south-eastern Ukraine[...]This is not an isolated action, but part of a dangerous pattern over many months to destabilise Ukraine as a sovereign nation"¹⁴⁶⁰.

August 30, 2014: Putin has stated that those Russians supporting the separatists are volunteers he also stated that the separatists were "insurgents" battling an army that he likened to Nazi invaders during World War II, and he praised them for "suppressing the power operation of Kiev" in Donbas¹⁴⁶¹.

August 31, 2014: Ukraine and Russia exchange captured soldiers including the 10 paratroopers from Russia¹⁴⁶². Putin stated that he believed that the troopers had gotten lost stating: "In fact, this is the case, I'm talking seriously. I believe that they had just gotten lost because there are no boundary markers there,"¹⁴⁶³.

September 1, 2014: Poroshenko accuses Russia of "direct and undisguised aggression" in Ukraine which had changed the battlefield balance¹⁴⁶⁴. Putin calls for negotiations on the "statehood" of southern and eastern Ukraine and blames Ukraine for not going into dialogue with the separatists¹⁴⁶⁵. Putin's spokesman however said that Putin's call for talks on the statehood did not mean Russia endorsed the separatists calls for independence¹⁴⁶⁶. In Minsk separatists sit down with Ukraine for preliminary peace talks¹⁴⁶⁷. The separatists said they were willing to stay a part of Ukraine if they were granted "special status"¹⁴⁶⁸. A key condition was however that Kiev would end its military campaign¹⁴⁶⁹. US senators call for the sending of

¹⁴⁵⁸ "Kiev's Claims About Russian Troops in Ukraine Groundless – Russian Official", *Sputniknews*, August 28, 2014, <https://sputniknews.com/russia/20140828192425605-Kievs-Claims-About-Russian-Troops-in-Ukraine-Groundless--Russian/>

¹⁴⁵⁹ Richard Balmforth, "Ukraine seeks NATO membership in response to Russia joining war", *Reuters*, August 29, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-nato/ukraine-seeks-nato-membership-in-response-to-russia-joining-war-idUSKBN0GT1BT20140829>

¹⁴⁶⁰ Richard Balmforth, "Ukraine seeks NATO membership in response to Russia joining war", *Reuters*

¹⁴⁶¹ Demirjian Karoun, "European leaders step up rhetoric against Russia as Ukraine urges tougher sanctions", *Washington Post*, August 30, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/european-leaders-step-up-rhetoric-against-russia-as-ukraine-urges-tougher-sanctions/2014/08/30/88b6fbc4-3071-11e4-9b98-848790384093_story.html?utm_term=.005241c20a99

¹⁴⁶² "Ukraine and Russia exchange captured troops", *BBC News*, August 31, 2014, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-29002147>

¹⁴⁶³ "Ukraine Ready to Return Detained Russian Paratroopers – Putin", *Sputniknews*, August 29, 2014, <https://sputniknews.com/world/20140829192454815-Ukraine-Ready-to-Return-Detained-Russian-Paratroopers--Putin/>

¹⁴⁶⁴ Pavel Polityuk & Polina Devitt, "Ukraine accuses Russia of 'undisguised aggression' as rebels advance", *Reuters*, September 1, 2014, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-ukraine-crisis/ukraine-accuses-russia-of-undisguised-aggression-as-rebels-advance-idUKKBN0GS10A20140901>

¹⁴⁶⁵ Ibid

¹⁴⁶⁶ Ibid

¹⁴⁶⁷ Ibid

¹⁴⁶⁸ Ibid

¹⁴⁶⁹ Ibid

lethal weaponry to Ukraine in order to fight the “Russian invasion”¹⁴⁷⁰. A statement from the Donetsk and Luhansk People’s republic stated that they wished “to preserve Ukraine’s common economic, cultural and political space and the space of the entire Ukraine-Russian civilization.”¹⁴⁷¹.

September 2, 2014: In a conversation with Barroso, Putin states that he could “take Kiev in two weeks” if he wanted to¹⁴⁷². Russia did not deny the statement but condemned the EU official for disclosing statements from what was presumably a private phone call¹⁴⁷³. NATO stated that it would create “a very high-readiness task force” in order to respond to Russia’s actions in Ukraine¹⁴⁷⁴. In a response to the NATO decision, Mikhail Popov, deputy secretary of Russia’s Security Council, states that Russia will revise its military doctrine to account for “changing military dangers and military threats,” including NATO expansion¹⁴⁷⁵. He furthermore called the expansion of NATO “one of the leading military dangers for the Russian Federation.”¹⁴⁷⁶. Mogherini states that Russia is no longer a strategic partner of the EU¹⁴⁷⁷.

September 3, 2014: Putin outlines a seven-point peace plan¹⁴⁷⁸. Poroshenko’s office states that Putin and Poroshenko had discussed the need for a ceasefire¹⁴⁷⁹. In his plan, Putin called for Ukrainian artillery to pull back and out of range of the eastern separatists’ strongholds; an end to airstrikes; an exchange of all detainees; opening up humanitarian corridors for residents of the separatist areas; repairing damaged infrastructure; and deploying international observers to monitor the cease-fire¹⁴⁸⁰. Ukraine Prime Minister Arseniy P. Yatsenyuk called Mr. Putin’s proposal “an attempt to confuse the international community” and that “Putin’s real plan is the destruction of Ukraine and the resumption of the U.S.S.R.”¹⁴⁸¹. He also stated that peace would only happen once Russia had withdrawn its troops and proxy forces¹⁴⁸². The leader of the Donetsk Peoples Republic stated that they are ready to cease fire if Ukraine does the same¹⁴⁸³. In a speech in Estonia Obama stated: “You lost your independence once before. With NATO, you will never lose it again”¹⁴⁸⁴.

¹⁴⁷⁰ “Ukraine crisis: US senators urge arms 'to fight Russia’”, *BBC News*, September 1, 2014, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-29007631>

¹⁴⁷¹ Kim Hjelmggaard & John Bacon, “Ukraine talks begin; Russia seeks 'peaceful settlement’”, *USA Today*, September 1, 2014, <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2014/09/01/russia-ukraine-putin-poroshenko/14921287/>

¹⁴⁷² Andrew Roth, “Putin Tells European Official That He Could ‘Take Kiev in Two Weeks’”, *The New York Times*, September 2, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/03/world/europe/ukraine-crisis.html>

¹⁴⁷³ Ibid

¹⁴⁷⁴ Ralph Ellis, Faith Karimi & Victoria Butenko, “Ukraine crisis: NATO to create 'high-readiness force,' secretary general says”, *CNN*, September 2, 2014, https://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/01/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/index.html?hpt=hp_t2

¹⁴⁷⁵ Andrew Roth, “Putin Tells European Official That He Could ‘Take Kiev in Two Weeks’”, *The New York Times*
¹⁴⁷⁶ Ibid

¹⁴⁷⁷ “Mogherini: Russia is no longer the EU’s strategic partner”, *Euractiv*, September 2, 2014,

<https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/mogherini-russia-is-no-longer-the-eu-s-strategic-partner/>

¹⁴⁷⁸ Neil MacFarquhar, “Putin Lays Out Proposal to End Ukraine Conflict”, *The New York Times*, September 3, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/04/world/europe/ukraine-russia.html>

¹⁴⁷⁹ Ibid

¹⁴⁸⁰ Ibid

¹⁴⁸¹ Ibid

¹⁴⁸² Ibid

¹⁴⁸³ “Donetsk militias ready to cease fire if Kiev reciprocates - Donetsk republic PM”, *TASS*, September 3, 2014, <https://tass.com/world/747989>

¹⁴⁸⁴ “Remarks by President Obama to the People of Estonia”, *The White House*, September 3, 2014, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/03/remarks-president-obama-people-estonia>

September 4, 2014: NATO holds its summit¹⁴⁸⁵. Ukraine attended and met with US and EU leaders¹⁴⁸⁶. Lavrov stated in a statement: "It is precisely at such a moment when a chance has emerged to start solving specific problems between Kiev and the militias that some sections of the Kiev authorities make demands for Ukraine to drop its non-aligned status and start joining NATO[...]. It's a blatant attempt to derail all efforts aimed at initiating a dialogue on ensuring national reconciliation[...]. Some of our Western partners, including unfortunately the most influential players - the United States - want victory for NATO and a situation where America dictates its will to everyone[...]. This concept of exclusivity, which President (Barack) Obama has repeatedly declared, can lead to no good and has so far led to no good,"¹⁴⁸⁷. Poroshenko states that he will establish a bilateral ceasefire, which could lay the foundation for a "stage-by-stage peace plan"¹⁴⁸⁸. Putin stated that Russia could not enforce an agreement because it was not a party to the conflict¹⁴⁸⁹.

September 5, 2014 (Minsk I): Following a meeting with separatist representatives in Minsk, Poroshenko announces a bilateral ceasefire¹⁴⁹⁰. Putin's spokesman Peskov issued a statement which applauded the agreement¹⁴⁹¹. The agreement includes amnesty for those who disarm and who did not commit serious crimes; exchange of all prisoners; Militias will be disbanded; a 10-kilometer buffer zone — about six miles — will be established along the Russian-Ukrainian border with the area subject to joint patrols¹⁴⁹². The separatists have also agreed to leave the administrative buildings they control and to allow broadcasts from Ukraine to resume on local television¹⁴⁹³. The agreement also states that power will be decentralized, and the Russian language protected¹⁴⁹⁴. Ukraine Prime Minister Arseniy P. Yatsenyuk stated that the transformation of the cease-fire into a lasting peace was dependent on a long-term cease-fire, the withdrawal of the Russian Army and a wall along the border¹⁴⁹⁵. Leonid Kuchma, former Ukraine president and the Ukraine representative in the trilateral group said that a working group would be established to follow the implementation of the agreements as he stated "A working group will be set up by Monday, whose mission will be to bring all the issues to their ultimate solution. And there are plenty of issues,"¹⁴⁹⁶. The 7-point peace roadmap includes: 1) Ensure an immediate bilateral ceasefire. 2) Carry out decentralisation of power, allowing temporary local self-government in areas of Donetsk and Luhansk in eastern Ukraine under a "special status" law 3) Immediately free all hostages and illegally detained persons 4) Ensure monitoring on the Ukrainian-Russian border and a security zone 5) Ensure the holding of snap local elections in Donetsk and Luhansk 6) Remove illegal armed groups, military hardware, and all fighters and mercenaries

¹⁴⁸⁵ "On-the-Record Conference Call on the President's Meetings at the NATO Summit", *The White House*, September 4, 2014, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/04/record-conference-call-presidents-meetings-nato-summit>

¹⁴⁸⁶ Ibid

¹⁴⁸⁷ "Russia Warns NATO and U.S. Over Ukraine", *Newsweek*, September 4, 2014, <https://www.newsweek.com/russia-warns-nato-and-us-over-ukraine-summit-268347>

¹⁴⁸⁸ Steve Erlanger, Julie Hirschfeld Davis & Stephen Castle, "NATO Prepares New Sanctions Over Russian Action in Ukraine", *The New York Times*, September 4, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/05/world/as-nato-meets-ukraine-conflict-holds-center-stage.html?_r=0

¹⁴⁸⁹ Ibid

¹⁴⁹⁰ Neil MacFarquhar, "Ukraine Deal Imposes Truce Putin Devised", *The New York Times*, September 5, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/06/world/europe/ukraine-cease-fire.html>

¹⁴⁹¹ Ibid

¹⁴⁹² Ibid

¹⁴⁹³ Ibid

¹⁴⁹⁴ Ibid

¹⁴⁹⁵ Ibid

¹⁴⁹⁶ "Kuchma: Working group to be formed by Monday to implement Minsk agreements", *Interfax*, September 5, 2014, <https://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/222164.html>

from Ukrainian territory 7) Pass a law against the prosecution and punishment of people over certain events in Donetsk and Luhansk region¹⁴⁹⁷.

September 6, 2014: The ceasefire is violated with clashes in the city of Mariupol¹⁴⁹⁸. Putin and Poroshenko agree to continue the dialogue¹⁴⁹⁹ and also agree that the ceasefire is holding fairly well¹⁵⁰⁰. A report from Amnesty claims that both sides have committed war crimes¹⁵⁰¹.

September 8, 2014: Clashes continue although more sporadic¹⁵⁰². Separatist leader Andrei Purgin tells Russian media: "Despite the provocations of Ukrainian forces, the militias[...]will keep firmly to the Minsk agreement. The militias are not resorting and will not resort to arms."¹⁵⁰³. Poroshenko arrives in Mariupol and stated: "Just arrived in Mariupol[...]This is our Ukrainian land. We will never give it up to anyone."¹⁵⁰⁴.

September 9, 2014: The Dutch group investigating the downing of the Malaysian Airline points to findings which could indicate that the plane was shot down by separatists¹⁵⁰⁵.

September 10, 2014: Ukraine states that most of the Russian forces have now left Ukraine¹⁵⁰⁶. Poroshenko also stated that he would move ahead with a law which would seek to consolidate the ceasefire¹⁵⁰⁷. He also stated that he would introduce a law that would grant parts of the breakaway regions of Donetsk and Luhansk temporary self-rule¹⁵⁰⁸. As he stated "Based on the latest information I have received from our intelligence services, 70 percent of the Russian troops have moved back across the border[...]This bolsters our hope that the peace initiatives enjoy good prospects."¹⁵⁰⁹. Putin states that the conflict is used to revive NATO as he states: "The crisis in Ukraine, which was basically provoked and created by some of our Western partners, is now being used to revive this military bloc"¹⁵¹⁰. Putin also stated that Russia was being "absolutely forced to take appropriate measures in response" and warned the West against "any hysterics" towards Russia's strengthening of its security¹⁵¹¹.

¹⁴⁹⁷ "Ukraine crisis: Ceasefire shaken by fresh shelling", *BBC News*, September 8, 2014,

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-29098808>

¹⁴⁹⁸ "Ukraine crisis: Shelling near Mariupol threatens truce", *BBC News*, September 7, 2014,

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-29097836>

¹⁴⁹⁹ Ibid

¹⁵⁰⁰ "Leaders of Ukraine, Russia Say Ceasefire Holding, More Steps Needed", *Newsweek*, September 6, 2014,

<https://www.newsweek.com/leaders-ukraine-russia-say-ceasefire-holding-more-steps-needed-268823>

¹⁵⁰¹ "Ukraine crisis: Shelling near Mariupol threatens truce", *BBC News*

¹⁵⁰² Jethro Mullen & Diana Magnay, "Shelling near two cities rocks fragile ceasefire in eastern Ukraine", *CNN*,

September 8, 2014, <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/07/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/>

¹⁵⁰³ "Ukraine crisis: Ceasefire shaken by fresh shelling", *BBC News*

¹⁵⁰⁴ Andrew Higgins, "Brushing Off Threats, E.U. Votes to Toughen Its Sanctions on Russia", *The New York Times*,

September 8, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/09/world/europe/ukraine-russia-crimea-mariupol-poroshenko.html?_r=0

¹⁵⁰⁵ Andrew Higgins & Nicola Clark, "Malaysian Jet Over Ukraine Was Downed by 'High-Energy Objects,' Dutch Investigators Say", *The New York Times*, September 9, 2014,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/10/world/europe/malaysian-airliner-ukraine.html>

¹⁵⁰⁶ Neil MacFarquhar, "Most Russian Forces Now Out of Ukraine, Kiev Says", *The New York Times*, September

10, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/11/world/europe/petro-poroshenko-voices-hope-on-cease-fire.html?_r=0

¹⁵⁰⁷ Ibid

¹⁵⁰⁸ Ibid

¹⁵⁰⁹ Ibid

¹⁵¹⁰ "Ukraine crisis: Poroshenko offers rebels more autonomy", *BBC News*, September 10, 2014,

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-29140593>

¹⁵¹¹ Ibid

September 11, 2014: EU imposes new sanctions on Russia¹⁵¹². These are the sanctions which were stalled earlier¹⁵¹³. The sanctions may be lifted if Russia abides by the ceasefire¹⁵¹⁴. The US also announced new sanctions which are currently under way¹⁵¹⁵. The Russian Foreign Ministry stated in a statement: “Today, Brussels and the leaders of the EU nations need to give a clear answer to EU citizens as to why they are putting them under the risks of confrontation, economic stagnation and unemployment,”¹⁵¹⁶. Ukraine calls on EU to check up on Russian gas supplies which allegedly had been decreasing to countries such as Poland and Slovakia¹⁵¹⁷. Russia denied that this was the case¹⁵¹⁸.

September 12, 2014: Another Russian aid convoy enters Ukraine without being checked by the Ukraine border guards, customs officers or the Red Cross¹⁵¹⁹. According to the OSCE a Russian official stated that the process "would not involve Ukrainian customs and border guard officers" whereas a spokesperson from the Russia's Federal Security Service stated that "Ukrainian border guards and customs officers were invited to run checks on the convoy at the 'Donetsk' checkpoint, but the Ukrainian side rejected the offer"¹⁵²⁰. Ukraine accused the FSS of having prevented the Ukrainian border guards from approaching the trucks¹⁵²¹. The convoy reentered Russia after having unloaded the cargo in Donetsk¹⁵²². The trucks allegedly carried 1,800 tons of food, medicine, water purification equipment and power generators¹⁵²³.

September 14, 2014: Yanukovich’s former party, the Party of Regions, announces that it does not intend to take part in the upcoming election and rather forms an opposition government¹⁵²⁴. As stated by Secretary of the Party’s Presidium and MP Boris Kolesnikov: “Our party will not take part in the upcoming elections because a fourth of the country or almost 7 million electors will not be able to vote,”¹⁵²⁵.

September 15, 2014: The US and NATO allies hold peacekeeping exercises in western Ukraine under the name of “Rapid Trident”¹⁵²⁶. It is a 12-day exercise and will involve 1,800 personnel¹⁵²⁷. The US stated that the purpose was to increase interoperability among the United States, Ukraine and other participating

¹⁵¹² Adrian Croft & Arshad Mohammed, “Russia faces new U.S., EU sanctions over Ukraine crisis”, *Reuters*, September 11, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis/russia-faces-new-u-s-eu-sanctions-over-ukraine-crisis-idUSKBN0H61O720140911>

¹⁵¹³ Ibid

¹⁵¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁵¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁵¹⁷ “Ukraine calls on EU to check into Russia’s cuts in supplies of gas to Europe”, *TASS*, September 11, 2014, <https://tass.com/economy/749180>

¹⁵¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁵¹⁹ “Revised Spot Report by the OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk (OM), 13 September 2014”, *OSCE*, September 14, 2014, <https://www.osce.org/om/123529>

¹⁵²⁰ Greg Botelho, Laura Smith-Spark and Reza Sayah, “Fighting in Ukraine despite ceasefire; Russian convoy enters nation unchecked”, *CNN*, September 14, 2014, <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/13/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/>

¹⁵²¹ “Russia Says Ukraine Border Guards Refused to Inspect Aid Convoy En Route to Luhansk”, *Sputniknews*, September 13, 2014, <https://sputniknews.com/world/20140913192916665-Russia-Says-Ukraine-Border-Guards-Refused-to-Inspect-Aid-Convoy/>

¹⁵²² Greg Botelho, Laura Smith-Spark and Reza Sayah, “Fighting in Ukraine despite ceasefire; Russian convoy enters nation unchecked”, *CNN*

¹⁵²³ “Russia Says Ukraine Border Guards Refused to Inspect Aid Convoy En Route to Luhansk”, *Sputniknews*

¹⁵²⁴ “Party of Regions to boycott Ukraine early parliamentary elections”, *TASS*, September 14, 2014, <https://tass.com/world/749497>

¹⁵²⁵ Ibid

¹⁵²⁶ “US Leading Peacekeeping Drill in Western Ukraine”, *VOA News*, September 15, 2014, <https://www.voanews.com/europe/us-leading-peacekeeping-drill-western-ukraine>

¹⁵²⁷ Ibid

nations¹⁵²⁸. Also, the foreign ministers of Russia, Germany and France met in Paris to discuss the situation in Ukraine¹⁵²⁹. Prime minister of the self-declared Donetsk People's Republic, Alexander Zakharchenko, accused the Ukrainian government of violating the cease-fire and said further talks with Kyiv would make no sense¹⁵³⁰.

September 16, 2014: Ukraine and the EP ratify the Association Agreement¹⁵³¹. EP President Martin Schulz stated: "This is an historic moment[...]The two parliaments freely determined to vote today at the same time on this agreement. This is free democracy, the opposite of directed democracy. The European Parliament has always defended the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and will continue to do so"¹⁵³². Ukraine also approved a bill which gives the eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk limited self-rule, grants amnesty to many pro-Russian separatists and call for local elections¹⁵³³. The limited autonomy granted to the separatists will be in place for three years, as Poroshenko stated: "During this time we will be able to introduce the issue of profound decentralization which must also provide for respective amendments to the Constitution"¹⁵³⁴. Russia applauded the legislation¹⁵³⁵.

September 17, 2014: The Ukraine parliament passes a lustration law in order to root out corrupt practices¹⁵³⁶. All those who worked under Yanukovich as well as former senior Communist and KGB members will be affected¹⁵³⁷. As stated: "About one million civil servants of different kinds will come under this law, including the whole cabinet of ministers, the interior ministry, the intelligence services, the prosecutor's office,"¹⁵³⁸.

September 19, 2014: Russia, Ukraine representatives of the separatists and OSCE (Trilateral Contact Group) meet in Minsk for new talks¹⁵³⁹. The group will consider a memorandum which first point is how to stop hostilities in Ukraine's embattled southeast¹⁵⁴⁰. The memorandum was developed by the group to include nine provisions implementing the ceasefire¹⁵⁴¹.

September 20, 2014: The Trilateral Contact Group agree to create a 30 km buffer zone and move artillery 15km from the front line¹⁵⁴². The OSCE would be checking the buffer zone along the front line¹⁵⁴³.

¹⁵²⁸ Ibid

¹⁵²⁹ Ibid

¹⁵³⁰ Ibid

¹⁵³¹ "European Parliament ratifies EU-Ukraine Association Agreement", *European Parliament News*, September 16, 2014, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20140915IPR62504/european-parliament-ratifies-eu-ukraine-association-agreement>

¹⁵³² Ibid

¹⁵³³ "Ukraine approves special status for rebel-held east", *DW*, September 16, 2014, <https://www.dw.com/en/ukraine-approves-special-status-for-rebel-held-east/a-17924099>

¹⁵³⁴ Ibid

¹⁵³⁵ "New Ukraine Talks Start In Minsk", *RadioFreeEurope*, September 19, 2014, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-talks-start-minsk/26595904.html>

¹⁵³⁶ "Ukraine crisis: One million civil servants to be screened", *BBC News*, September 17, 2014, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-29239447>

¹⁵³⁷ Ibid

¹⁵³⁸ Ibid

¹⁵³⁹ "Contact Group on Ukraine meeting in Minsk", *TASS*, September 19, 2014, <https://tass.com/world/750396>

¹⁵⁴⁰ Ibid

¹⁵⁴¹ "Germany Sends Humanitarian Convoy to Ukraine", *Sputniknews*, October 4, 2014, <https://sputniknews.com/world/20141004193665870-Germany-Sends-Humanitarian-Convoy-to-Ukraine/>

¹⁵⁴² Thomas Grove, "Kiev, rebels agree to extra measures to ensure Ukraine cease-fire", *Reuters*, September 20, 2014, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-ukraine-crisis-talks/kyiv-rebels-agree-to-extra-measures-to-ensure-ukraine-cease-fire-idUKKBN0HE2JJ20140920>

¹⁵⁴³ Ibid

September 21, 2014: Thousands march in Moscow and other Russian cities in protest against the conflict in Ukraine¹⁵⁴⁴. A protester in Moscow, said the Russian authorities should "stop this outrageous covert war that they don't admit" waging and banners said: "Putin, I'm sick of your lies," "Don't shoot our brothers," and "I don't want a war with Ukraine."¹⁵⁴⁵. Another protester held portraits of killed Russian paratroopers in Ukraine and stated that she was "not only against us sending our troops to Ukraine, but also against us interfering whatsoever in the matters of other sovereign states."¹⁵⁴⁶. "The protests coincided with the United Nations' annual International Peace Day"¹⁵⁴⁷.

September 22, 2014: Ukraine and separatist troops begin their withdrawal from front line positions¹⁵⁴⁸.

September 23, 2014: The separatists announce that they will hold elections on November 2, five weeks earlier in defiance of the "special status" law approved by the Ukraine parliament¹⁵⁴⁹. Both the Luhansk and Donetsk regions plan to elect a Supreme Soviet and their own leaders¹⁵⁵⁰.

September 24, 2014: NATO observes a significant withdrawal of Russian troops from inside Ukraine as stated: "There has been a significant pullback of Russian conventional forces from inside Ukraine, but many thousands are still deployed in the vicinity of the border"¹⁵⁵¹.

September 25, 2014: Poroshenko outlines a strategy called "strategy 2020" which includes an ambitious reform plan targeting among other corruption¹⁵⁵². He also stated that Ukraine would never surrender the eastern regions and it plans to move as quickly as possible towards European integration¹⁵⁵³. The Ukraine government also planned to push legislation that would repeal a 2010 law barring Ukraine from membership in any military or political alliance, a step viewed as a prelude to an application to join NATO¹⁵⁵⁴.

September 27, 2014: In a speech at the UNGA, Lavrov stated that the NATO alliance "made obvious the inability of the alliance to change the genetic code it embedded during the Cold War era."¹⁵⁵⁵. He also stated: "The attempts to distort the truth and to hide the facts behind blanket accusations have been undertaken at all stages of the Ukrainian crisis"¹⁵⁵⁶.

¹⁵⁴⁴ "Thousands March Against War In Moscow, St. Petersburg", *RadioFreeEurope*, September 21, 2014, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-antiwar-marches-ukraine/26597971.html>

¹⁵⁴⁵ "Thousands March Against War In Moscow, St. Petersburg", *RadioFreeEurope*

¹⁵⁴⁶ Ibid

¹⁵⁴⁷ Ibid

¹⁵⁴⁸ "Ukraine troops and rebels 'begin withdrawing'", *Aljazeera*, September 23, 2014, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2014/09/ukraine-army-rebels-pull-back-from-east-201492215206166317.html>

¹⁵⁴⁹ "Ukraine crisis: Rebels declare early poll date", *BBC News*, September 23, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29335861>

¹⁵⁵⁰ Ibid

¹⁵⁵¹ "NATO Sees Pullback of Russian Troops From Ukraine Border", *The Moscow Times*, September 24, 2014, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/09/24/nato-sees-pullback-of-russian-troops-from-ukraine-border-a39728>

¹⁵⁵² David Herszenhorn, "Ukrainian President Sets Sights on Closer E.U. Ties", *The New York Times*, September 25, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/26/world/europe/petro-poroshenko-ukraine-eu.html>

¹⁵⁵³ Ibid

¹⁵⁵⁴ Ibid

¹⁵⁵⁵ "Russian Diplomat's Speech Depicts the West as Hypocritical", *The New York Times*, September 27, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/28/world/russian-diplomats-speech-depicts-the-west-as-hypocritical.html?_r=0

¹⁵⁵⁶ Ibid

September 28, 2014: Vigil held in Moscow for those who had lost their lives in the Ukraine conflict¹⁵⁵⁷.

September 29, 2014: Fighting continues, straining the cease fire¹⁵⁵⁸. In the Ukraine city of Kharkiv, a Lenin statue is removed by anti-Russian protesters¹⁵⁵⁹. Ukrainian Interior Minister Arsen Avakov stated: “Lenin? Let him fall down. As long as nobody suffers under his weight. As long as this bloody Communist idol does not take more victims with it when it goes[...]I ordered the police to protect the people and not the idol”¹⁵⁶⁰.

September 30, 2014: Ukraine's Prime Minister, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, told UNGA that Russian troops were still operating in eastern Ukraine and he urged the West not to lift the sanctions until Ukraine until Ukraine as regained control of its territory¹⁵⁶¹.

October 3, 2014: A red cross worker is killed when shelling occurred close to the Red Cross office in Donetsk¹⁵⁶². Ukraine signs a deal with Norwegian Statoil on supply of gas¹⁵⁶³. Fighting continues over the Donetsk airport and Lavrov and Kerry called for the ceasefire to be maintained¹⁵⁶⁴.

October 4, 2014: Germany considers sending soldiers to protect the OSCE mission in Ukraine¹⁵⁶⁵. The consideration comes after a Franco-German fact-finding mission of the border region in mid-September which found that the ceasefire could only be monitored if armed soldiers protected the monitoring staff¹⁵⁶⁶. Germany also announced that it would send a 100-aid convoy to Ukraine¹⁵⁶⁷.

October 5, 2014: A Ukraine military spokesman states that the ceasefire is being violated and stated: "The terrorists are violating the terms of the ceasefire."¹⁵⁶⁸.

¹⁵⁵⁷ “Vigil for Innocent Victims of Ukraine Conflict Took Place in Moscow”, *The Moscow Times*, September 28, 2014, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/09/28/vigil-for-innocent-victims-of-ukraine-conflict-took-place-in-moscow-a39850>

¹⁵⁵⁸ Michael Birnbaum, “Ukrainians just pulled down a massive Lenin statue. What does that signal for Russia?”, *Washington Post*, September 29, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/09/29/ukrainians-just-pulled-down-a-massive-lenin-statue-what-does-that-signal-for-russia/?utm_term=.b7879b7bacf4

¹⁵⁵⁹ Ibid

¹⁵⁶⁰ Ibid

¹⁵⁶¹ “EU to keep Russia sanctions in place over Ukraine”, *BBC News*, September 30, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29429602>

¹⁵⁶² “Red Cross worker killed in Ukraine”, *CNN*, October 3, 2014, <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/10/02/world/europe/ukraine-red-cross-worker-killed/>

¹⁵⁶³ “Norway's Statoil sells gas to Ukraine's Naftogaz”, *Reuters*, October 3, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/ukraine-crisis-statoil/norways-statoil-sells-gas-to-ukraines-naftogaz-idUSL6N0RY2UC20141003>

¹⁵⁶⁴ Laura Smith-Spark, “U.N., OSCE call for warring sides to abide by Ukraine ceasefire”, *CNN*, October 3, 2014, <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/10/03/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/>

¹⁵⁶⁵ Martin, Michelle, “Germany considers sending soldiers to eastern Ukraine: source”, *Reuters*, October 4, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-germany-military/germany-considers-sending-soldiers-to-eastern-ukraine-source-idUSKCN0HT0ER20141004>

¹⁵⁶⁶ Ibid

¹⁵⁶⁷ Ibid

¹⁵⁶⁸ “Ukraine Military Says Separatists Violated Month-Old Ceasefire”, *NBC News*, October 5, 2014, <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/ukraine-crisis/ukraine-military-says-separatists-violated-month-old-ceasefire-n218681>

October 6, 2014: The OSCE receives drones to support their monitoring work¹⁵⁶⁹. Putin stated that the work of the OSCE should be expanded¹⁵⁷⁰.

October 7, 2014: Ukraine calls for the expansion of the OSCE mission¹⁵⁷¹.

October 8, 2014: The Russian Duma adopts a law that would allow for foreign assets inside the country to be seized and for the state to pay compensation for the loss of property due to Western sanctions¹⁵⁷². The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights releases a report on the human rights situation in Ukraine¹⁵⁷³. It states that at least 331 were killed after the ceasefire¹⁵⁷⁴. The UN also pointed to the alleged presence of mass graves, which the UN was told by the separatists¹⁵⁷⁵.

October 9, 2014: Poroshenko signs the lustration law titled “On the purification of Government”¹⁵⁷⁶. The law among other prevents “Yanukovich-era officials from working in public administration for ten years and others for five years.”¹⁵⁷⁷.

October 10, 2014: “A Reuters examination of Ukraine’s probes into the Maidan shootings - based on interviews with prosecutors, defence attorneys, protesters, police officers and legal experts – has uncovered serious flaws in the case against Sadovnyk and the other two Berkut officers.”¹⁵⁷⁸. The three are accused of killing 39 unarmed protesters during Maidan¹⁵⁷⁹.

October 11, 2014: Putin and Poroshenko announce that they will meet in Italy to discuss the ceasefire and the issue of gas supplies¹⁵⁸⁰. A Ukraine military spokesman stated: “We are ready to abide by the agreement on pulling back heavy equipment[...]as soon as the terrorists stop firing at our positions and residential areas”¹⁵⁸¹.

¹⁵⁶⁹ “Drones for OSCE truce monitors arrive in Ukraine”, *DW*, October 6, 2014, <https://www.dw.com/en/drones-for-osce-truce-monitors-arrive-in-ukraine/a-17978951>

¹⁵⁷⁰ “Telephone conversation with President of Switzerland and OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Didier Burkhalter”, *President of Russia*, October 6, 2014, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46731>

¹⁵⁷¹ Ukraine Crisis Timeline “Poroshenko Calls for Expansion of OSCE Mission” *CSIS*, October 7, 2014, <http://ukraine.csis.org/minski.htm#42>

¹⁵⁷² “Russia moves closer to adopting compensation for sanctions law” *Reuters*, October 8, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/ukraine-crisis-russia-sanctions/russia-moves-closer-to-adopting-compensation-for-sanctions-law-idUSL6N0S33QE20141008>

¹⁵⁷³ “Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine” *OHCHR Report* (November 15, 2014), https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/UA/OHCHR_sixth_report_on_Ukraine.pdf

¹⁵⁷⁴ Nick Cumming-Bruce “331 have died since Ukraine signed truce, UN reports” *The New York Times*, October 8, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/09/world/europe/at-least-331-have-been-killed-in-ukraine-since-start-of-cease-fire-un-reports.html?_r=0

¹⁵⁷⁵ Ibid

¹⁵⁷⁶ “Ukrainian president signs law on lustration” *Interfax Ukraine*, October 9, 2014, <https://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/227807.html>

¹⁵⁷⁷ Ibid

¹⁵⁷⁸ Steve Stecklow and Oleksandr Akymenko “Special Report: Flaws found in Ukraine's probe of Maidan massacre” *Reuters*, October 10, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-killings-probe-special-report/special-report-flaws-found-in-ukraines-probe-of-maidan-massacre-idUSKCN0HZ0UH20141010>

¹⁵⁷⁹ Ibid

¹⁵⁸⁰ “Putin and Poroshenko to meet in Milan” *DW*, October 11, 2014, <https://www.dw.com/en/putin-and-poroshenko-to-meet-in-milan/a-17988694>

¹⁵⁸¹ Ibid

October 12, 2014: Ukraine defense minister Valery Heletey resigns¹⁵⁸². Heletey was appointed in July¹⁵⁸³. Putin orders troops to withdraw from the Ukraine border¹⁵⁸⁴. The decision comes ahead of the meeting between Poroshenko and Putin in Italy¹⁵⁸⁵. Russia states that the withdrawal happens because the period of training for the troops was complete¹⁵⁸⁶.

October 13, 2014: Ukraine reports that they are witnessing a withdrawal of Russian troops¹⁵⁸⁷.

October 14, 2014: A legislation on recognizing the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, a controversial group that collaborated with Nazi Germany, as national heroes led to clashes outside of the parliament between nationalists and riot police¹⁵⁸⁸.

October 15, 2014: Putin warns that the Ukraine crisis threatens global security and stated on the sanctions: “We hope that our partners will realise the recklessness of attempts to blackmail Russia, will remember the risks that a spat between major nuclear powers incurs for strategic stability[...]For our part, we are ready to develop constructive cooperation on the principles of equality and real consideration of mutual interests[...]How can one talk about striving for de-escalation in Ukraine if new sets of sanctions are being introduced almost at the same time as agreements to promote the peace process are reached?”¹⁵⁸⁹.

October 16, 2014: Putin warns that Russia will reduce Europe’s gas supplies if Ukraine steals gas from Russia¹⁵⁹⁰.

October 17, 2014: Putin and Poroshenko meet in Italy¹⁵⁹¹. Progress is made on the gas issue however no further progress is made on Ukraine¹⁵⁹². Putin’s spokesman stated: "Unfortunately, some participants of [the Milan] breakfast demonstrated complete unwillingness to understand the reality in south-eastern Ukraine,"¹⁵⁹³.

October 19, 2014: Germany’s foreign intelligence agency states that the separatists are to blame for the downing of the Malaysian Airline¹⁵⁹⁴.

¹⁵⁸² “Ukraine's Poroshenko Accepts Defense Minister's Resignation” *The Moscow Times*, October 13, 2014, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/10/13/ukraines-poroshenko-accepts-defense-ministers-resignation-a40314>

¹⁵⁸³ Ibid

¹⁵⁸⁴ “Ukraine crisis: Putin 'orders Russian troop pullback” *BBC News*, October 12, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29586627>

¹⁵⁸⁵ Ibid

¹⁵⁸⁶ Ibid

¹⁵⁸⁷ Ukraine Crisis Timeline “Rebel Figure Hospitalized as Ukraine See Russian Pullback” *CSIS*, October 13, 2014, <http://ukraine.csis.org/minski.htm#52>

¹⁵⁸⁸ Ibid

¹⁵⁸⁹ Alexei Anishchuk “Putin warns U.S. spat over Ukraine threatens global stability” *Reuters*, October 15, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-putin-nuclear/putin-warns-u-s-spat-over-ukraine-threatens-global-stability-idUSKCN0142FW20141015>

¹⁵⁹⁰ “Putin: Russia will reduce Europe’s gas supplies if Ukraine takes gas” *CNBC*, October 16, 2014, <https://www.cnbc.com/2014/10/16/putin-says-russia-will-reduce-gas-supplies-to-europe-if-ukraine-takes-gas-from-pipeline.html#>

¹⁵⁹¹ “Ukraine crisis: 'No breakthrough' in Putin-EU talks” *BBC News*, October 17, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29653393>

¹⁵⁹² Ibid

¹⁵⁹³ Ibid

¹⁵⁹⁴ “Spiegel: Review finds rebels shot down MH17 in Ukraine” *DW*, October 19, 2014, <https://www.dw.com/en/spiegel-review-finds-rebels-shot-down-mh17-in-ukraine/a-18006712>

October 20, 2014: Amnesty releases a report which states that their: “investigation into allegations of execution-style and other deliberate killings by pro-Russian separatists and pro-Kyiv forces has found evidence of isolated incidents attributable to both sides, but not on the scale reported by Russian media and authorities”¹⁵⁹⁵. The report also stated that a propaganda war is going on too, which has led to exaggerations about the number of executions, and a culture where deaths and injuries sustained in battle are kept off the books in hospitals and other official tallies¹⁵⁹⁶.

October 22, 2014: The US claims that Russia has refused to increase international monitoring of the border with Ukraine¹⁵⁹⁷. A senior US official stated at the OSCE: “We are concerned that[...]the mission will be unable to monitor the extent to which Russia is participating in or facilitating the flow of illegal arms, funding, and personnel to support the separatists in eastern Ukraine”¹⁵⁹⁸. Russia also stated that it would not agree to expand the OSCE monitoring work at the Russian-Ukraine border¹⁵⁹⁹.

October 23, 2014: Separatists in Donetsk states that they will end the ceasefire with the prime minister of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic, Alexander Zakharchenko, stating “The truce has been observed by us alone. But the day before yesterday we started to respond as well. It has been quieter since yesterday.”¹⁶⁰⁰. The Ukraine Prime Minister stated: ““It is clear that attempts to destabilise the situation will continue and be provoked by the Russian side. They did not succeed during the presidential election [in May] but their plans have remained[...]We need full mobilisation of the whole law-enforcement system to prevent violations of the election process and any attempts at terrorist acts during the elections.”¹⁶⁰¹.

October 24, 2014: Putin at the Valdai Club states: “Statements that Russia is trying to reinstate some sort of empire, that it is encroaching on the sovereignty of its neighbors, are groundless,”¹⁶⁰². According to NATO, Russia has withdrawn but is also still has troops inside Ukraine stating: “But the force that remains and shows no indications of leaving is still a very, very capable force,”¹⁶⁰³.

October 26, 2014: Elections are held and Poroshenko’s party took 23% of the vote¹⁶⁰⁴. Poroshenko stated: “I asked you to vote for a democratic, reformist, pro-Ukrainian and pro-European majority[...]Thank you

¹⁵⁹⁵ “Eastern Ukraine conflict: Summary killings, misrecorded and misreported” *Amnesty*, October 20, 2014, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2014/10/eastern-ukraine-conflict-summary-killings-misrecorded-and-misreported/>

¹⁵⁹⁶ Dan Lamothe “In Ukraine, executions — and propaganda about them” *Washington Post*, October 20, 2014, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2014/10/20/in-ukraine-executions-and-propaganda-about-them/>

¹⁵⁹⁷ “U.S. Says Russia Blocks Increased Monitoring of Ukraine Border” *The Moscow Times*, October 23, 2014, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/10/23/us-says-russia-blocks-increased-monitoring-of-ukraine-border-a40680>

¹⁵⁹⁸ Ibid

¹⁵⁹⁹ Ibid

¹⁶⁰⁰ “Ukraine rebels end ceasefire before polls” *Aljazeera*, October 23, 2014, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2014/10/ukraine-ceasefire-donetsk-2014102313244812646.html>

¹⁶⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁶⁰² “Putin Accuses U.S. of Trying to Build World Order Around Its Interests” *The Moscow Times*, October 24, 2014, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/10/24/putin-accuses-us-of-trying-to-build-world-order-around-its-interests-a40739>

¹⁶⁰³ Adrian Croft “Russia still has troops in Ukraine, NATO says” *Reuters*, October 24, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-nato/russia-still-has-troops-in-ukraine-nato-says-idUSKCN0ID0VP20141024?feedType=RSS&feedName=worldNew>

¹⁶⁰⁴ Richard Balmforth and Natalia Zinets, “Pro-Europe parties secure big election win in Ukraine: exit poll” *Reuters*, October 26, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-election/pro-europe-parties-secure-big-election-win-in-ukraine-exit-poll-idUSKCN0IF00R20141026>

for having heard and supported this appeal.”¹⁶⁰⁵. Lavrov stated that Russia would recognize the results and as he stated: "I think we will recognize this election because it is very important for us that Ukraine will finally have authorities that do not fight one another, do not drag Ukraine to the West or to the East, but that will deal with the real problems facing the country[...]We hope that the election[...]will allow for the swift creation of a government that will be constructive, will not seek to continue escalating confrontational tendencies in society, [in ties] with Russia," ¹⁶⁰⁶.

October 28, 2014: Russia announces that it will recognize the election taking place in the separatist areas¹⁶⁰⁷. As Lavrov stated: "We expect the elections to be held as arranged and of course we will recognize their results"¹⁶⁰⁸. Ukraine’s foreign minister stated that Lavrov’s comments were "absolutely destructive and provocative statements" that "will be interpreted by the terrorists as encouragement by Russia to hold the illegal November 2 elections."¹⁶⁰⁹. The US also condemned the election which takes place 5 weeks prior to agreed time¹⁶¹⁰.

October 30, 2014: NATO reports an “unusual level” of Russian air activity as it tracked Russian strategic bombers over the Atlantic and Black Sea and sorties of fighters over the Baltic¹⁶¹¹.

November 2, 2014: The separatists hold elections¹⁶¹². Separatist election officials said about half a million people had voted and the Ukrainian military said Russia had in recent days bolstered equipment supplies to separatists¹⁶¹³. The EU stated that the election was "a new obstacle on the path towards peace"¹⁶¹⁴.

November 4, 2014: As a response to the elections in the separatist areas, Poroshenko states that Ukraine would re-examine its commitments to the ceasefire including the granting of more autonomy to the separatist areas¹⁶¹⁵. The Ukraine Security Service said it was opening a criminal investigation into the elections¹⁶¹⁶. Separatist leaders are sworn in and Ukraine states that newly formed units will be sent to defend a number of cities in eastern Ukraine¹⁶¹⁷. NATO said conditions were now in place to create a “frozen conflict”¹⁶¹⁸. Russia stated that the election of Alexander Zakharchenko and Igor Plotnitsky as

¹⁶⁰⁵ David Herszenhorn, “Ukraine President claims win for pro-west parties” *The New York Times*, October 26, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/27/world/europe/ukrainian-parliamentary-elections.html?_r=0

¹⁶⁰⁶ “Russia to Recognize Ukraine Election Results, Says Lavrov” *The Moscow Times*, October 27, 2014, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/10/27/russia-to-recognize-ukraine-election-results-says-lavrov-a40785>

¹⁶⁰⁷ “Ukraine Denounces Russian Stance on Rebel Vote in East” *VOA News*, October 28, 2014, <https://www.voanews.com/europe/ukraine-denounces-russian-stance-rebel-vote-east>

¹⁶⁰⁸ Ibid

¹⁶⁰⁹ Ibid

¹⁶¹⁰ Ibid

¹⁶¹¹ “NATO Reports 'Unusual Level' of Russian Air Activity” *The Moscow Times*, October 30, 2014,

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/10/30/nato-reports-unusual-level-of-russian-air-activity-a40911>

¹⁶¹² Andrew E. Kramer “Rebel-backed elections to cement status quo in Ukraine” *The New York Times*, November 2, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/03/world/europe/rebel-backed-elections-in-eastern-ukraine.html?_r=0

¹⁶¹³ Ibid

¹⁶¹⁴ “Ukraine crisis: Rebel elections obstacle to peace – EU” *BBC News*, November 3, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29875093>

¹⁶¹⁵ “Ukraine to 're-examine' peace plan with rebels” *Yahoo News*, November 4, 2014,

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/ukraine-main-rebel-leader-wins-vote-separatist-exit-183201433.html?guccounter=1>

¹⁶¹⁶ Nicolas Miletitch and Sebastian Smith “Ukraine rattled by Russia troop movements as separatists vote” *Yahoo News*, November 2, 2014, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/separatist-elections-troop-movements-rattle-ukraine-153127855.html>

¹⁶¹⁷ Thomas Grove “Ukraine rebel leaders sworn in, Kiev says peace plan violated” *Reuters*, November 4, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-rebel/ukraine-rebel-leaders-sworn-in-kiev-says-peace-plan-violated-idUSKBN0IO0YJ20141104>

¹⁶¹⁸ Ibid

leaders of the Donetsk and Luhansk “people’s republics” means that Kiev should now negotiate with them directly¹⁶¹⁹. The Russian foreign ministry also stated: "The elected representatives received a mandate to solve practical issues to restore normal life in the regions," and it also stressed that it considered Donetsk and Luhansk to remain parts of Ukraine¹⁶²⁰. An official from South Ossetia, spoke at Zakharchenko’s inauguration¹⁶²¹.

November 5, 2014: The ceasefire falls apart and the Ukraine government announces that it will not pay pensions¹⁶²² and other funds to eastern Ukraine until "terrorists clear out of there."¹⁶²³

November 7, 2014: Ukraine states that Russia has sent 32 tanks, 16 howitzers and 30 trucks hauling ammunition and fighters into the Luhansk region in order to support the separatists¹⁶²⁴. Neither NATO nor the OSCE could confirm this although NATO did state “We can confirm a recent increase in Russian troops and equipment along the eastern border of Ukraine[...]Russia continues to demonstrate its lack of regard for international agreements and its determination to further destabilize Ukraine.”¹⁶²⁵.

November 8, 2014: Gorbachev warns that the world is at a brink of a new cold war over Ukraine¹⁶²⁶. Gorbachev also accused the west – particularly the US – of “triumphalism” after the collapse of the communist bloc and he called for new trust to be built through dialogue and the lifting of sanctions¹⁶²⁷.

November 9, 2014: OSCE reports heavy shelling and large columns of unmarked tanks and artillery moving in territory held by pro-Russian separatists¹⁶²⁸.

November 13, 2014: According to the OSCE, a vehicle marked "Cargo 200" - Russia's military code for soldiers killed in action –crossed from Russia into Ukraine and later returned¹⁶²⁹. Ukraine states that it has no intention of abandoning the Minsk agreement¹⁶³⁰. As stated by National Security and Defense Council spokesman Andriy Lysenko: “There is no intention of abandoning [the ceasefire] despite all[...]attempts to break these agreements by the Russian side,”¹⁶³¹. Medvedev stated: "In order to overcome existing

¹⁶¹⁹ Ibid

¹⁶²⁰ “Rebel leader sworn in after contested east Ukraine poll” *DW*, November 4, 2014, <https://www.dw.com/en/rebel-leader-sworn-in-after-contested-east-ukraine-poll/a-18038099>

¹⁶²¹ Grove “Ukraine rebel leaders sworn in, Kiev says peace plan violated” *Reuters*

¹⁶²² Ukraine Crisis Timeline “Ukraine Ends Subsidies, Benefits Payments to East as Ceasefire Teeters” *CSIS*, November 5, 2014, http://ukraine.csis.org/elections_ukr.htm#7

¹⁶²³ “Ukraine ceasefire crumbles, fighting continues in Donetsk” *DW*, November 5, 2014,

<https://www.dw.com/en/ukraine-ceasefire-crumbles-fighting-continues-in-donetsk/a-18040139>

¹⁶²⁴ Neil Macfarquhar “Ukraine accuses Russia of sending tanks across borders” *The New York Times*, November 7, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/08/world/europe/ukraine-accuses-russia-of-sending-tanks-and-troops-across-border.html?_r=0

¹⁶²⁵ Ibid

¹⁶²⁶ Chris Johnston “Mikhail Gorbachev: world on brink of new cold war over Ukraine” *The Guardian*, November 8, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/08/gorbachev-new-cold-war-ukraine-soviet-union-us-russia>

¹⁶²⁷ Ibid

¹⁶²⁸ “Heavy shelling, unmarked military columns observed in eastern Ukraine” *DW*, November 9, 2014, <https://www.dw.com/en/heavy-shelling-unmarked-military-columns-observed-in-eastern-ukraine/a-18049730>

¹⁶²⁹ “Ukraine crisis: Russian 'Cargo 200' crossed border – OSCE” *BBC News*, November 13, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30039004>

¹⁶³⁰ “Obama Calls on Russia to Respect Ukraine Cease-fire” *VOA News*, November 13, 2014, <https://www.voanews.com/europe/obama-calls-russia-respect-ukraine-cease-fire>

¹⁶³¹ Ibid

problems, sanctions need to be simply abandoned, relations should be returned into a [level] playing field; normal, peaceful, productive negotiations should be restarted, then everything will stabilize,"¹⁶³².

November 14, 2014: According to Ukraine Prime Minister Arseny Yatseniuk, Ukraine's top priority is to build an army strong enough to stop Russian military aggression¹⁶³³.

November 15, 2014: Leaders meet at G20 where Cameron tells Russia that the relations between Russia and the West has reached a crossroad and other leaders condemning Russia's actions in Ukraine¹⁶³⁴. Putin stated that he was still interested in the principle of Ukraine remaining a single political space¹⁶³⁵. In an interview to ARD, Putin stated: "The most important thing is that one does not have a one-sided view of the problem[...]Today there is fighting taking place in the east of Ukraine, the Ukrainian government has deployed troops there[...]There have even been missiles fired, but is that mentioned? There's not been a word on that[...]That means, that you (Western media) want the Ukrainian government to destroy everything there, including all their political opponents and adversaries. Is that what you want? That's not what we want and we won't allow that to happen."¹⁶³⁶. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko issues several decrees to shut state institutions and banking services in pro-Russian eastern regions¹⁶³⁷. A decree posted on the president's website said all state companies, institutions and organizations should end their work within a week and "evacuate workers, with their permission, (and) where possible remove property and documents"¹⁶³⁸. A Russian TV channel issues photo which allegedly show how a Ukraine fighter jet is responsible for the downing of the Malaysian Airline¹⁶³⁹. Bellingcat, a British investigative journalism website, described the photographs as "a crude fabrication", highlighting what it said were several inconsistencies, which included signs that the photos had been partly compiled from historical Google Earth imagery dating from 2012¹⁶⁴⁰. The U.S. State Department dismissed the Russian TV reports as yet another "preposterous" attempt by Moscow to "obfuscate the truth and ignore ultimate responsibility for the tragic downing of MH17."¹⁶⁴¹.

November 16, 2014: Putin leaves the G20 early before which he stated: "Today the situation in my view has good chances for resolution, no matter how strange it may sound, but certain structures had been established on both sides that could handle the tasks they are facing better,"¹⁶⁴². He also pointed to Ukraine's

¹⁶³² Ibid

¹⁶³³ Alessandra Prentice and Natalia Zinets "Ukraine's PM says main task is to build army to stop Russia" *Reuters*, November 14, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-military/ukraines-pm-says-main-task-is-to-build-army-to-stop-russia-idUSKCN0IY17F20141114>

¹⁶³⁴ Patrick Wintour "David Cameron tells Vladimir Putin relations at crossroads over Ukraine" *The Guardian*, November 15, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/15/david-cameron-vladimir-putin-relations-crossroads-ukraine>

¹⁶³⁵ Ibid

¹⁶³⁶ Erik Kirschbaum "Russia won't allow Ukraine to 'destroy' opponents, says Putin" *Yahoo News*, November 15, 2014, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/russia-wont-allow-ukraine-destroy-opponents-says-putin-132843298.html>

¹⁶³⁷ Alessandra Prentice and Pavel Polityuk "Ukraine to close state offices, bank services in rebel-held east" *Reuters*, November 15, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis/ukraine-to-close-state-offices-bank-services-in-rebel-held-east-idUSKCN0IZ0LX20141115>

¹⁶³⁸ Ibid

¹⁶³⁹ Jason Bush "Russian TV channel says photos show MH17 shot down by fighter jet" *Reuters*, November 15, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-mh17-images/russian-tv-channel-says-photos-show-mh17-shot-down-by-fighter-jet-idUSKCN0IZ0EU20141115>

¹⁶⁴⁰ Ibid

¹⁶⁴¹ "Russian TV claims it has satellite photo of downing of MH17" *CBS News*, November 15, 2014, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/malaysia-airlines-flight-17-russian-tv-claims-it-has-photo-of-downing-of-jetliner/>

¹⁶⁴² "Putin leaves G-20 summit as Obama, European leaders meet on Ukraine" *CBS News*, November 16, 2014, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/putin-leaves-g-20-summit-as-obama-european-leaders-meet-on-ukraine/>

decision to cut ties with eastern Ukraine stating: “Why are the authorities in Kiev now cutting off these regions with their own hands? I do not understand this,”¹⁶⁴³.

November 17, 2014: EU imposes sanctions on separatists, not Russia¹⁶⁴⁴. Poroshenko states that Ukraine is ready for a total war with Russia¹⁶⁴⁵.

November 19, 2014: Russia urges Ukraine to talk directly to separatists to end the conflict in the east, but Ukraine rejected the call and told Moscow to stop “playing games” aimed at legitimizing “terrorists”¹⁶⁴⁶. Lavrov stated “We are calling for the establishment of stable contacts between Kiev and Donbass representatives with the aim of reaching mutually acceptable agreements,”¹⁶⁴⁷. Ukraine Prime Minister stated in response “We will not hold direct talks with your mercenaries.”¹⁶⁴⁸. Igor Plotnitsky, head of the self-proclaimed LNR stated “Let’s follow the example of the ancient Slav and Cossack chieftains and face each other in a duel[...]. Whoever is declared winner dictates the rules the loser’s country has to follow,”¹⁶⁴⁹. In an interview with BBC, Putins spokesperson stated: “We would like to hear that NATO would stop approaching the Russian borders and that NATO would stop trying to ruin the balance, the balance of power[...] But we, unfortunately, are not hearing these words, and that makes us nervous, as NATO is gradually coming closer to our borders,”¹⁶⁵⁰.

November 20, 2014: The US plans to increase non-lethal aid to Ukraine and Obama’s deputy national security adviser and nominee for deputy secretary of state, Tony Blinken, stated that lethal assistance “remains on the table. It’s something that we’re looking at,”¹⁶⁵¹. In a response to the possibility of US sending lethal aid Russia responded that it sent a “very serious signal”, cautioned against “a major change in policy of the (U.S.) administration in regard to the conflict” in Ukraine and stated that: “That (would be) a direct violation of agreements reached, including (agreements reached) with the participation of the United States,”¹⁶⁵².

¹⁶⁴³ Mark Landler, “Obama says Russia’s arming of separatists breaks pact with Ukraine” *The New York Times*, November 16, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/17/world/asia/obama-close-to-calling-russian-action-in-ukraine-an-invasion.html>

¹⁶⁴⁴ Jame Kanter s “E.U. to toughen sanctions on Ukrainian separatists, but not Russia” *The New York Times*, November 17, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/18/world/europe/eu-to-toughen-sanctions-on-ukraine-separatists-but-not-russia.html?_r=0

¹⁶⁴⁵ “We’re ready for ‘total war’: Ukraine President” *CNBC*, November 17, 2014,

<https://www.cnn.com/2014/11/17/german-economy-minister-rejects-tougher-sanctions-on-russia.html#>

¹⁶⁴⁶ Natalia Zinets and Gabriela Baczyńska “Ukraine rules out direct talks with separatists” *Reuters*, November 19, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-lavrov/ukraine-rules-out-direct-talks-with-separatists-idUSKCN0J30T920141119>

¹⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁶⁴⁹ Damien Sharkov “Rebel Leader Challenges Ukrainian President to 'End War' in One-on-One Duel” *Newsweek*, November 19, 2014, <https://www.newsweek.com/rebel-leader-challenges-ukrainian-president-end-war-one-one-duel-285452>

¹⁶⁵⁰ “Russia Needs Guarantees Ukraine Will Not Join NATO: Kremlin” *Sputniknews*, November 19, 2014, <https://sputniknews.com/politics/201411191014912664/>

¹⁶⁵¹ Warren Strobel and Patricia Zengerle “Exclusive: U.S. increasing non-lethal military aid to Ukraine” *Reuters*, November 21, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-usa-exclusive/exclusive-u-s-increasing-non-lethal-military-aid-to-ukraine-idUSKCN0J426U20141121>

¹⁶⁵² Thomas Grove and Richard Balmforth “Russia warns U.S. against arms to Ukraine as Biden due in Kiev” *Reuters*, November 20, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis/russia-warns-u-s-against-arms-to-ukraine-as-biden-due-in-kiev-idUSKCN0J41US20141120>

November 21, 2014: Ukraine agrees on a five-party ruling coalition and puts NATO membership as its major goal¹⁶⁵³. Biden and Poroshenko were met with heckling from protesters during a commemoration of the Maidan¹⁶⁵⁴.

November 22, 2014: Ukraine states that 7500 Russian troops are present in Ukraine and a Colonel General stated “Unfortunately, stabilization of the situation in the East of Ukraine does not depend just on us. The external factor and the presence of 7,500 representatives of Russian armed forces in Ukraine destabilize the situation and prevent us [from stabilizing] it,”¹⁶⁵⁵. Referring to uprisings in former Soviet states including Ukraine and Georgia, Mr Putin said the world could see “what tragic consequences the wave of the so-called colour revolutions has led to[...]. We have to do all that is needed to ensure that similar things never happen in Russia,” Putin said¹⁶⁵⁶. Lavrov also stated: “As for the concept behind to the use of coercive measures, the West is making clear it does not want to force Russia to change policy but wants to secure regime change[...]. Public figures in Western countries say there is a need to impose sanctions that will destroy the economy and cause public protests,”¹⁶⁵⁷. Lavrov also stated: “Our western partners played ‘all-or-nothing’ in Ukraine, they have stepped on their own principles of democratic change of power, have supported the extremists. As the hooligans say, they wanted to ‘bluff us’, I cannot say it in other words, to make us swallow humiliation – Russians and Russian-speaking people in Ukraine[...]. Always when sanctions were used before – I worked in New-York at that time — our western partners, in regard to North Korea or Iran, or any other countries, they framed sanctions in such a way so that they wouldn’t negatively affect the social sphere, the economy, so that they would affect only the elite, selectively[...]. Now everything is different. Western leaders publicly say that sanctions should be framed in a way to ruin the economy and raise national protests[...]. This “shows that their point is not to change the Russian Federation’s policy, which is illusory in itself, but they want to change the regime,”¹⁶⁵⁸.

November 24, 2014: Lithuania is to supply Ukraine with lethal aid¹⁶⁵⁹. Ukraine also announced that it will hold a referendum on NATO membership once the criteria for membership are met¹⁶⁶⁰. Russia suspends coal supplies to Ukraine¹⁶⁶¹.

¹⁶⁵³ “New Ukraine Coalition Agreed, Sets NATO As Priority” *RadioFreeEurope*, November 21, 2014, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-parliament-coalition-agreement/26703123.html>

¹⁶⁵⁴ Karen DeYoung “Biden denounces Russia, but says Ukraine must do more to clean up its governance” *Washington Post*, November 21, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/crowds-in-ukraine-show-lingering-tensions-amid-biden-visit-to-back-pro-west-officials/2014/11/21/aea54b7c-717d-11e4-893f-86bd390a3340_story.html

¹⁶⁵⁵ Sneha Shankar “Ukraine Defense Minister Says 7,500 Russian Troops Present In Eastern Of Country” *International Business Times*, November 22, 2014, <https://www.ibtimes.com/ukraine-defense-minister-says-7500-russian-troops-present-eastern-country-1727966>

¹⁶⁵⁶ “Ukraine crisis: Lavrov warns over Russia 'regime change' goal” *BBC News*, November 22, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30158978>

¹⁶⁵⁷ Ibid

¹⁶⁵⁸ “Lavrov: West Played 'All-or-Nothing' Game in Ukraine” *Sputniknews*, November 22, 2014, <https://sputniknews.com/politics/201411221015032831/>

¹⁶⁵⁹ “Lithuania to Supply Ukraine With Military Aid” *Newsweek*, November 24, 2014, <https://www.newsweek.com/lithuania-military-aid-ukraine-286531>

¹⁶⁶⁰ “Ukraine to hold Nato vote when membership criteria are met” *BBC News*, November 24, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30176256>

¹⁶⁶¹ “Russia suspends coal supplies to Ukraine: Ukraine energy minister” *Reuters*, November 24, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-coal/russia-suspends-coal-supplies-to-ukraine-ukraine-energy-minister-idUSKCN0J81HN20141124>

November 27, 2014: An OSCE patrol was fired upon by separatists¹⁶⁶². Ukraine's parliament approves Arseny Yatseniuk for a new term as prime minister¹⁶⁶³. Poroshenko stated that 100 percent of Ukrainians favored a unitary state without federalization and stated sarcastically: "These are our warm wishes to those in the East or West who advise federalization"¹⁶⁶⁴.

November 29, 2014: The EU imposes sanctions on those separatists responsible for organizing the elections¹⁶⁶⁵. Russia urged the EU to lift the sanctions in return which Russia would lift the food embargo¹⁶⁶⁶. This was rejected by the EU¹⁶⁶⁷.

November 30, 2014: Ukraine accuses Russia of sending a convoy of 106 trucks into Ukraine without authorization and according to Ukrainian military spokesman Andriy Lysenko: "The lion's share of humanitarian supplies find their way to the rebels partly in the form of food, but mostly it is ammunition, equipment and other things for combat operations,"¹⁶⁶⁸.

December 1, 2014: NATO accuses Russia of sending weapons to the separatists and stepping up its military activities in Europe and the world¹⁶⁶⁹. NATO also stated that Russia and the separatists were not respecting the cease fire¹⁶⁷⁰. Russia accused NATO of destabilizing the northern Europe by holding military exercises transferring aircraft which are capable of carrying nuclear weapons¹⁶⁷¹.

December 2, 2014: Ukraine's parliament votes in a new government¹⁶⁷². Ukraine and the separatists agree "in principle" on a new ceasefire to take place on December 5¹⁶⁷³. The ceasefire is however violated on the same day with shelling at the Donetsk airport¹⁶⁷⁴.

¹⁶⁶² "OSCE Mission Under Fire in East Ukraine" *Sputniknews*, November 27, 2014,

<https://sputniknews.com/military/201411271015212313/>

¹⁶⁶³ Natalia Zinets and Alessandra Prentice "Ukraine puts on parliamentary show of unity in message to Russia"

Reuters, November 27, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-yatseniuk/ukraine-puts-on-parliamentary-show-of-unity-in-message-to-russia-idUSKCN0JB13I20141127>

¹⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁶⁶⁵ Robin Emmott "EU imposes sanctions on Ukraine rebel vote organizers" *Reuters*, November 29, 2014,

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-sanctions/eu-imposes-sanctions-on-ukraine-rebel-vote-organizers-idUSKCN0JD06520141129>

¹⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁶⁶⁸ "Large, unauthorized convoy enters east Ukraine from Russia: Ukrainian military" *Reuters*, November 30, 2014,

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis/large-unauthorized-convoy-enters-east-ukraine-from-russia-ukrainian-military-idUSKCN0JE0HZ20141130>

¹⁶⁶⁹ Rikard Jozwiak "NATO Chief Blasts Russia Over Military Activity" *RadioFreeEurope*, December 1, 2014,

<https://www.rferl.org/a/nato-stoltenberg-blasts-russia-destabilizing-europe/26719202.html>

¹⁶⁷⁰ *Ibid*

¹⁶⁷¹ *Ibid*

¹⁶⁷² Natalia Zinets and Alessandra Prentice "Ukraine parliament votes in new government, fresh ceasefire hopes

fade" *Reuters*, December 2, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis/ukraine-parliament-votes-in-new-government-fresh-ceasefire-hopes-fade-idUSKCN0JG0UU20141202?feedType=RSS&feedName=topNews>

¹⁶⁷³ "Ukraine Agrees New Cease-Fire 'In Principle' With Luhansk Rebels" *The Moscow Times*, December 2, 2014,

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/12/02/ukraine-agrees-new-cease-fire-in-principle-with-luhansk-rebels-a41898>

¹⁶⁷⁴ "Ukraine crisis: Donetsk shelling dashes ceasefire hopes" *BBC News*, December 2, 2014,

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30290690>

December 4, 2014: Putin addresses the Federal Assembly where he praises the “Crimean Spring”¹⁶⁷⁵. Kerry states that Russian soldiers have been fighting and dying in Ukraine and that “The result is damage to its credibility, and its own citizens wind up paying a steep economic and human price, including the price of hundreds of Russian soldiers who fight and die in a country where they had and have no right to be”¹⁶⁷⁶.

December 5, 2014: Fighting continues at the Donetsk airport with Poroshenko stating that the whole of Ukraine will be within reach of the “enemy” if the airport falls to the wrong side¹⁶⁷⁷. Both sides agree to enforce a day of silence on December 9, which is intended to prepare for creation of a non-militarized buffer zone, from which the two sides will withdraw artillery and other heavy military equipment¹⁶⁷⁸.

December 6, 2014: Poroshenko announces that talks will be held on December 9 on implementing the September ceasefire. Vice-speaker of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR) Denis Pushilin suggested that a next meeting on peace settlement should be held in Minsk on December 12¹⁶⁷⁹.

December 7, 2014: Ukraine expects Russian gas supply to resume¹⁶⁸⁰. Gazprom’s CEO Alexey Miller stated in an interview that the new pipeline between Russia and Turkey is to, in the long run, meant to bypass Ukraine¹⁶⁸¹.

December 9, 2014: Ukraine accuses the separatists of violating the day of silence and stated: “Not having any idea of observing the agreements, the rebels employed light weapons, mortars and artillery, armored tanks in residential areas,”¹⁶⁸². Leaders in Donetsk however argued that the ceasefire was observed¹⁶⁸³.

December 10, 2014: The ceasefire is violated again, and the talks set for Minsk are postponed¹⁶⁸⁴. Russia on Thursday said it was eager to convene another round of talks, but Kyiv has said it will not meet representatives of either Moscow or the separatists in Donetsk and Luhansk until the ceasefire is fully observed¹⁶⁸⁵. The separatists in Donetsk state that: “The militia have started pulling back artillery units with a caliber greater than 100 millimeters in the south of the republic,”¹⁶⁸⁶. A Russian general states that a small

¹⁶⁷⁵ “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly” *President of Russia*, December 4, 2014, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47173>

¹⁶⁷⁶ Michael R. Gordon “Kerry, saying Russians died in Ukraine, urges Moscow to carry out peace accord” *The New York Times*, December 4, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/05/world/europe/ukraine-russia-kerry-osce.html>

¹⁶⁷⁷ Natalia Zinets and Maria Tsvetkova “Ukraine’s Poroshenko tells army not to give up Donetsk airport” *Reuters*, December 5, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-donetsk/ukraines-poroshenko-tells-army-not-to-give-up-donetsk-airport-idUSKCN0JJ0ZO20141205>

¹⁶⁷⁸ Ibid

¹⁶⁷⁹ “Ukraine’s president calls for holding Contact Group meeting in Minsk Tuesday” *TASS*, December 6, 2014, <https://tass.com/world/765562>

¹⁶⁸⁰ “Ukraine expects Russian gas supplies to resume Monday: minister” *Reuters*, December 7, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-gas/ukraine-expects-russian-gas-supplies-to-resume-monday-minister-idUSKBN0JL0SS20141207>

¹⁶⁸¹ “Miller: Ukraine’s role in transit of Russian gas tends to zero with new pipeline to Turkey” *TASS*, December 6, 2014, <https://tass.com/economy/765541>

¹⁶⁸² Richard Balmforth and Pavel Polityuk “Ukraine accuses rebels of violating 'Day of Silence'; Russian gas flows resume” *Reuters*, December 9, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-military/ukraine-accuses-rebels-of-violating-day-of-silence-russian-gas-flows-resume-idUSKBN0JN0L620141209>

¹⁶⁸³ Ibid

¹⁶⁸⁴ “Ukraine reports three troops killed - first since 'Day of Silence'” *DW*, December 11, 2014, <https://www.dw.com/en/ukraine-reports-three-troops-killed-first-since-day-of-silence/a-18123199>

¹⁶⁸⁵ Ibid

¹⁶⁸⁶ “Pro-Russian rebels say withdrawing artillery in east Ukraine: Interfax” *Reuters*, December 11, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-artillery/pro-russian-rebels-say-withdrawing-artillery-in-east-ukraine-interfax-idUSKBN0JP0UI20141211>

Russian military mission is presence in eastern Ukraine on the invitation of Kiev and that it is assisting the OSCE security group¹⁶⁸⁷.

December 12, 2014: The first day where the ceasefire has not been violated with no deaths or injuries on either side¹⁶⁸⁸. According to Ukraine, Russia has removed several separatist leaders who were insubordinate¹⁶⁸⁹. Ukraine also stated that some separatist groups had gone rogue stealing coal and fighting with their Russian backers in the separatist areas¹⁶⁹⁰.

December 13, 2014: The US senate passes a bill on further sanctions and the supply of lethal aid to Ukraine¹⁶⁹¹. Russia condemned the act and stated "Undoubtedly, we will not be able to leave this without a response,". Alexander Lukashovich, a Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman also stated: "The openly confrontational nature of the Ukraine Freedom Support Act approved by both houses of the US Congress without debate and proper voting cannot cause anything but deep regret"¹⁶⁹². Ukraine welcomed the bill and hailed it as a historic decision¹⁶⁹³.

December 15, 2014: The Ukraine Freedom Support Act lands on Obamas desk who is to decide on whether to sign or veto it¹⁶⁹⁴. Medvedev stated "We are not going to support Ukraine's economy anymore. It is a burden for us. And to be honest, we are tired of it"¹⁶⁹⁵. Lavrov states that Poroshenko is a key player in ensuring peace and states "His peace plan and the corresponding initiatives of President Putin have provided the foundation for the Minsk accords, whose strict observance is the key to a viable solution of the current crisis"¹⁶⁹⁶. Lavrov also stated that Russia expected real constitutional reform in Ukraine, which should result in the adoption of a "a well-thought-out and renewed social contract that would be perceived by an entire polyethnic Ukrainian society as a solid long-term document, the foundation of a rule-of-law state that guarantees the equal rights of regions and nationalities."¹⁶⁹⁷.

December 16, 2014: President Obama states that he will sign the Ukraine Freedom Support Act which amongst other includes further sanctions and would provide Ukraine with \$350 million in arms and military equipment¹⁶⁹⁸. In response Lavrov stated: "Russia will not only survive but will come out much

¹⁶⁸⁷ "Russia says small military mission in east Ukraine at Kiev's request: RIA" *Reuters*, December 10, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-russia-military/russia-says-small-military-mission-in-east-ukraine-at-kievs-request-ria-idUSKBN0JO19I20141210>

¹⁶⁸⁸ Oren Dorell "Ukraine: First casualty-free day since cease-fire" *USA Today*, December 12, 2014, <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2014/12/12/ceasefire-holds-one-day-ukraine/20299739/>

¹⁶⁸⁹ Ibid

¹⁶⁹⁰ Ibid

¹⁶⁹¹ "Ukraine welcomes prospect of US military aid" *Aljazeera*, December 13, 2014, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2014/12/ukraine-welcomes-prospect-us-military-aid-2014121382958449175.html>

¹⁶⁹² Ibid

¹⁶⁹³ Ibid

¹⁶⁹⁴ Luke Johnson "Ukraine Aid Bill Heads To Obama" *RadioFreeEurope*, December 15, 2014, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-aid-bill-heads-to-obama/26743453.html>

¹⁶⁹⁵ "Medvedev: Russia-Ukraine Relations to Become Purely Rational, Pragmatic" *Sputniknews*, December 15, 2014, <https://sputniknews.com/politics/201412151015836648/>

¹⁶⁹⁶ Igor Rozin "Sergei Lavrov: Solution to Ukraine crisis still 'a long way away'" *Russia Beyond*, December 15, 2014, https://www.rbth.com/international/2014/12/15/sergei_lavrov_solution_to_ukraine_crisis_still_a_long_way_away_42249.html

¹⁶⁹⁷ Ibid

¹⁶⁹⁸ Peter Baker "Obama signals support for new U.S sanctions to pressure Russian economy" *The New York Times*, December 16, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/17/world/europe/obama-signing-russia-ukraine-sanctions-bill.html? r=0>

stronger[...]We have been in much worse situations in our history, and every time we have got out of our fix much stronger.”¹⁶⁹⁹. He also said there were “very serious reasons to believe” that the United States was pursuing a strategy of regime change, designed to topple Mr. Putin’s government¹⁷⁰⁰.

December 17, 2014: In a phone call between Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany, Merkel stated the need for a meeting with the contact group¹⁷⁰¹. The official statement from Merkel’s office stated: "The prerequisites for progress in the implementation of this agreement is, according to common perception, a speedy meeting of the contact group consisting of Russia, the Ukraine as well as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which has been repeatedly calling for talks,"¹⁷⁰². All leaders welcomed the latest ceasefire in Ukraine¹⁷⁰³. In connection to the Ukraine Freedom Support Act, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Sergei Ryabkov stated: "In recent weeks discussing providing[...]lethal arms to Ukraine intensified in a worrisome way,"¹⁷⁰⁴. He also stated that those seeking a solution to the crisis should not supply weapons "that will be used to kill the Russian-speaking inhabitants of Donbass" but rather they should seek to put pressure on Kiev to hold talks with the separatists¹⁷⁰⁵.

December 18, 2014: In a news conference Putin replied, when asked about the current economic developments being the price Russia has to pay for Crimea: “No. This is not the price we have to pay for Crimea... This is actually the price we have to pay for our natural aspiration to preserve ourselves as a nation, as a civilisation, as a state.”¹⁷⁰⁶. On Ukraine he amongst other stated: “Russian public opinion holds that what is now happening in southeast Ukraine is actually a punitive operation, but it is conducted by the Kiev authorities and not the other way around. The self-defence fighters of the southeast were not the ones who sent troops to Kiev. On the contrary, the Kiev authorities amassed their military forces in the southeast of Ukraine, and are using multiple rocket launchers, artillery and fighter jets. What is the problem here and how it can be solved? I’ll try to answer this question as well. The problem is that after the government coup (and no matter how others call it and what is being said in this respect, a government coup was carried out in Kiev by military means) part of the country did not agree with these developments. Instead of at least trying to engage in dialogue with them, Kiev started by sending law enforcers, the police force, but when that didn’t work out, they sent in the army, and since that didn’t work out either, they are now trying to settle the issue by using other forceful methods, the economic blockade. I believe that this path has absolutely no future whatsoever and is detrimental to Ukraine’s statehood and its people. I hope that by engaging in dialogue – and we are ready to assume the role of intermediaries in this respect – we will succeed in establishing a direct, political dialogue, and by employing such methods and political instruments we will reach a settlement and restore a single political space.”¹⁷⁰⁷.

December 20, 2014: Russia states that it will not cave in to the latest sanctions imposed on it by the West and a spokesman states: "that the West is yet again displaying a complete lack of interest" in resolving the

¹⁶⁹⁹ Ibid

¹⁷⁰⁰ Ibid

¹⁷⁰¹ “Merkel demands comprehensive truce treaty for Ukraine” *DW*, December 17, 2014, <https://www.dw.com/en/merkel-demands-comprehensive-truce-treaty-for-ukraine/a-18135990>

¹⁷⁰² Ibid

¹⁷⁰³ Ibid

¹⁷⁰⁴ “Russian Official Says Delivery of U.S. Weapons to Ukraine Will Not Solve Crisis” *The Moscow Times*, December 17, 2014, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/12/17/russian-official-says-delivery-of-us-weapons-to-ukraine-will-not-solve-crisis-a42373>

¹⁷⁰⁵ Ibid

¹⁷⁰⁶ “News conference of Vladimir Putin” *President of Russia*, December 18, 2014, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47250>

¹⁷⁰⁷ Ibid

crisis in south-east Ukraine¹⁷⁰⁸. Russia's foreign ministry spokesman Aleksandr Lukashevich also stated that: "The US and Canada still cannot come to terms with the results of the free expression of will that the residents of Crimea and Sevastopol made in March[...]The residents of Crimea today are together with the whole Russian people, who have never caved in and will not cave in to external pressure."¹⁷⁰⁹. Russia also announced that it would send another convoy with humanitarian aid to eastern Ukraine¹⁷¹⁰. Ukraine also announces that it will reintroduce compulsory military service with the secretary of the National Security and Defence Council, Oleksander Turchynov, "Victory is the only option,"¹⁷¹¹. Poroshenko also stated: "The war made us stronger, but has crushed the economy[...]There's one article of spending that we won't save on and that's security. Our financial plan should cover force majeure. Our enemy can start a full-scale offensive any minute."¹⁷¹².

December 22, 2014: New peace talks (Trilateral group) involving Russia, Ukraine, the separatists, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe will take place on December 24 and 26¹⁷¹³. Donetsk's Denis Pushilin stated that "It's important to find compromises at the negotiating table and not through weapons,"¹⁷¹⁴.

December 23, 2014: Ukraine scraps its non-alignment status with the aim of eventually joining NATO¹⁷¹⁵. In response Lavrov stated: "It will only escalate the confrontation and creates the illusion that it is possible to resolve Ukraine's deep internal crisis by passing such laws,"¹⁷¹⁶. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin said "This will lead to integration in the European and the Euro-Atlantic space,"¹⁷¹⁷.

December 24, 2014: The peace talks in the Trilateral Group end on the first day with no results¹⁷¹⁸. Separatist mediator Denis Pushilin stated: "We had a difficult preliminary meeting[...]The date and time of the next meeting is still up in the air. It is under discussion."¹⁷¹⁹. Whilst Ukraine stated: "The work begins today, and by some point around Friday [December 26] we should be able to achieve concrete results,"¹⁷²⁰. Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Konstantin Dolgov stated that the talks were a "real chance"

¹⁷⁰⁸ "Ukraine crisis: Russia defies fresh Western sanctions" *BBC News*, December 20, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30560941>

¹⁷⁰⁹ Ibid

¹⁷¹⁰ David Herszenhorn "Russia denounces new round of western sanctions" *The New York Times*, December 20, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/21/world/europe/russia-denounces-new-round-of-western-sanctions.html?_r=0%C3%B8

¹⁷¹¹ "Ukraine to spend five percent of 2015 budget on defense and security" *Reuters*, December 20, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-military/ukraine-to-spend-five-percent-of-2015-budget-on-defense-and-security-idUSKBN0JY0K620141220>

¹⁷¹² Ukraine Crisis Timeline "Planned military spending increase in 2015" *CSIS*, December 21, 2014, http://ukraine.csis.org/elections_ukr.htm#55

¹⁷¹³ "Ukraine peace talks may be held in Minsk on Dec. 24 and 26: Poroshenko" *Reuters*, December 22, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-meeting/ukraine-peace-talks-may-be-held-in-minsk-on-dec-24-and-26-poroshenko-idUSKBN0K01QU20141222>

¹⁷¹⁴ Dmitry Zaks "Ukraine's Poroshenko to hold peace talks with rebels 'this week'" *Yahoo News*, December 22, 2014, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/ukraine-peace-talks-minsk-wednesday-friday-poroshenko-193916028.html>

¹⁷¹⁵ "Ukrainian parliament angers Moscow by scrapping 'non-aligned' status" *Reuters*, December 23, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-nato/ukrainian-parliament-angers-moscow-by-scrapping-non-aligned-status-idUSKBN0K10OS20141223>

¹⁷¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁷¹⁸ "Ukraine Peace Talks End With No Indication Of Progress" *RadioFreeEurope*, December 24, 2014, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-peace-talks-due-in-minsk/26760019.html>

¹⁷¹⁹ Ibid

¹⁷²⁰ Ibid

for peace¹⁷²¹. Separatist leaders in Ukraine's eastern regions of Luhansk and Donetsk have declared their own republics and have said they will settle for no less than Ukraine becoming a loose federation in which they manage most of their own affairs.¹⁷²²

December 26, 2014: The peace talks leads to no results, but the sides do agree on a prisoner swap¹⁷²³. Ukraine announces that it will cut passenger and cargo rail services to Crimea due to "passenger safety."¹⁷²⁴

December 27, 2014: Russia agrees on a new deal to supply coal and electricity to Ukraine¹⁷²⁵.

December 29, 2014: Poroshenko states: "There's no military solution in Donbas[...]If someone wants to play that way, taking up weapons and fighting the Russian military machine -- the strongest on the continent -- we'll see how that ends."¹⁷²⁶

December 30, 2014: Ukraine decides to buy nuclear fuel for its Soviet-built nuclear plants from a U.S. supplier¹⁷²⁷.

2015

January 2, 2015: Nationalists march in Kiev in honor of Bandera who Putin previously has called "Hitler's accomplice"¹⁷²⁸. Marchers carried the flags of Svoboda and the Right Sector - both movements that helped to topple ex-President Viktor Yanukovich¹⁷²⁹. Bandera is a controversial figure in Ukraine and his "hero" status was revoked by Mr Yanukovich¹⁷³⁰. Despite leading anti-Soviet resistance fighters, Bandera was arrested and jailed by the Nazis during the war¹⁷³¹. He was assassinated by a Soviet KGB agent in Munich in 1959¹⁷³². The Russian Foreign Ministry's human rights envoy, Konstantin Dolgov, stated that "the torch marches in Ukraine are a demonstration of the continuation of movement along the path of the Nazis!"¹⁷³³. Ukraine's biggest television channel is under fire after broadcasting a New Year's Eve concert featuring Russian singers who have publicly supported separatists in eastern Ukraine¹⁷³⁴.

¹⁷²¹ Ibid

¹⁷²² Ibid

¹⁷²³ Andrew Roth "Ukraine and separatists swap prisoners as peace talks falter" *The new York Times*, December 26, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/27/world/europe/ukraine-prisoner-swap-as-peace-talks-break-down.html>

¹⁷²⁴ Ibid

¹⁷²⁵ "Russia says to supply coal, electricity to Ukraine" *Reuters*, December 27, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-russia-coal/russia-says-to-supply-coal-electricity-to-ukraine-idUSKBN0K508F20141227>

¹⁷²⁶ Carol J. Williams "No military solution to Ukraine conflict, country's president concedes" *Los Angeles Times*, December 29, 2014, <https://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-ukraine-russia-no-military-solution-20141229-story.html>

¹⁷²⁷ "Russia says Ukraine deal to buy U.S. nuclear fuel poses safety risks" *Los Angeles Times*, December 30, 2014, <https://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg--russia-ukraine-nuclear-fuel-20141230-story.html>

¹⁷²⁸ "Ukraine nationalists march in Kiev to honour Bandera" *BBC News*, January 2, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30655184>

¹⁷²⁹ Ibid

¹⁷³⁰ Ibid

¹⁷³¹ Ibid

¹⁷³² Ibid

¹⁷³³ "Moscow: Bandera Marches In Ukraine Tread 'Nazi Path'" *RadioFreeEurope*, January 2, 2015, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukrainians-march-for-bandera/26773259.html>

¹⁷³⁴ "Ukrainian Channel Under Fire Over Russian New Year's Concert" *RadioFreeEurope*, January 2, 2015, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-tv-channel-under-fire-russian-singers/26773751.html>

January 3, 2015: The Normandy format is to be resumed¹⁷³⁵. The representatives of the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and Ukrainian Armed Forces could meet after the talks¹⁷³⁶.

January 12, 2015: The Normandy peace talks in Berlin do not lead to anything¹⁷³⁷. Representatives from the ministries would meet again and as Steinmeier stated: "If there is progress made at that level in the coming days, then we are prepared to meet again next week and resume this discussion we began today,"¹⁷³⁸. Latvia's Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics stated that "the key point everyone agrees upon is that we ought to support the efforts to renew the territorial integrity of Ukraine."¹⁷³⁹ Lavrov stated that the main sticking point remains Ukraine's lack of progress in implementing constitutional reform¹⁷⁴⁰.

January 13, 2015: A passenger bus comes under attack in Eastern Ukraine killing 11¹⁷⁴¹. Poroshenko stated: "These deaths are on the conscience of the DNR and LNR gangs and on those who stand behind them," and he also said that he promised to sign a decree to send more troops for the front¹⁷⁴². Military spokesman Andriy Lysenko stated: "The Russian military and the terrorists have deliberately chosen the tactic of escalation of tension,"¹⁷⁴³.

January 15, 2015: Separatists state that they have captured the Donetsk airport and that they plan to take more territory¹⁷⁴⁴. Rebel leader in Donetsk, Alexander Zakharchenko, stated "Let our countrymen hear this: We will not just give up our land. We will either take it back peacefully, or like that,"¹⁷⁴⁵. Advancing further would undermine the peace agreement, which has been backed by Russia¹⁷⁴⁶. The separatist leaders have also declined to attend talks with Ukraine and Russia in Minsk, they have instead sent envoys and stated that they will refuse to take part in talks unless specific results are achieved¹⁷⁴⁷. Oleksander Turchynov, secretary of the national defense council stated "Russian aggression is continuing. There has been a significant surge in the intensity of firing"¹⁷⁴⁸.

¹⁷³⁵ "French Foreign Ministry: Talks on Ukraine in Normandy format to be resumed at ministerial level soon" *Kyiv Post*, January 3, 2015, <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/ukraine-politics/french-foreign-ministry-talks-on-ukraine-in-normandy-format-to-be-resumed-at-ministerial-level-soon-376618.html>

¹⁷³⁶ "Ukrainian Reconciliation Talks Can Be Held on January 16: DPR Envoy" *Sputniknews*, January 2, 2015, <https://sputniknews.com/politics/201501021016478155/>

¹⁷³⁷ "Berlin Peace Talks On Ukraine Fall Flat" *RadioFreeEurope*, January 12, 2015, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-crisis-berlin-meeting-/26788249.html>

¹⁷³⁸ Ibid

¹⁷³⁹ Ibid

¹⁷⁴⁰ Ibid

¹⁷⁴¹ Richard Balmforth "Ukraine bus attack kills 11 as airport battle worsens" *Reuters*, January 13, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-russia/ukraine-bus-attack-kills-11-as-airport-battle-worsens-idUSKBN0KM0IL20150113>

¹⁷⁴² Ibid

¹⁷⁴³ Ibid

¹⁷⁴⁴ Associated Press "Russia-backed separatists seize Donetsk airport in Ukraine" *The Guardian*, January 15, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/15/russian-backed-separatists-seize-donetsk-airport-ukraine>

¹⁷⁴⁵ Ibid

¹⁷⁴⁶ Ibid

¹⁷⁴⁷ Ibid

¹⁷⁴⁸ Zinets, Natalia "Fighting intensifies at Ukraine airport, two soldiers killed" *Reuters*, January 15, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-mobilisation/fighting-intensifies-at-ukraine-airport-two-soldiers-killed-idUSKBN0KO10H20150115>

January 16, 2015: Ukraine accuses Russia's LUKoil of financing the separatists stating that it smuggled oil products worth \$2 billion into Ukraine between 2013 and 2014¹⁷⁴⁹.

January 18, 2015: Ukraine announces new offensive in order to retake the Donetsk airport¹⁷⁵⁰. Poroshenko stated that he would not "give up an inch" of Ukrainian territory to separatists¹⁷⁵¹. Russian president's press secretary Dmitry Peskov stated: "Naturally, the Russian side will express its position which is obviously a grave concern over the resumption of large-scale operations in Donetsk, over shelling of residential quarters of the city and other settlements[...]Evidently, such situation in no way promotes the implementation of the Minsk agreements and further searches for ways to settle the conflict."¹⁷⁵².

January 19, 2015: Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin stated in response to Ukraine's new military offense that: "It's the biggest, even strategic mistake of the Ukrainian authorities to bank on a military solution to the crisis in Ukrainian society and to all of south-east Ukraine's problems[...]This can lead to irreversible consequences for the Ukrainian statehood."¹⁷⁵³. Ukraine claims that hundreds of Russian troops have crossed the border in order to assist the separatists¹⁷⁵⁴.

January 20, 2015: New peace talks in the Normandy format is to be held in Berlin¹⁷⁵⁵. Steinmeier stated: "We now need to prevent military confrontations from intensifying any more and avoid further political escalation between Kiev and Moscow. That's worth every effort,"¹⁷⁵⁶

January 21, 2015: The Ukraine Prime Minister suggests that Ukraine increases its number of troops as he stated: "The Ukrainian government is submitting a bill to the parliament on increasing the overall strength of the Ukrainian armed forces. We propose that the Ukrainian armed forces' strength be set at 250,000 people, which implies its increase by 66,000 people,"¹⁷⁵⁷. Poroshenko claims that Russia has 9000 troops in Ukraine as he stated: "I promise you, we will have an absolutely clear and stable situation in Ukraine if Russia fulfills point number four (of the Minsk plan): close the border and withdraw all the foreign troops from my territory[...]Because now, and the dates of our intelligence confirmed by independent sources, we have more than 9,000 troops of Russian Federation on my territory."¹⁷⁵⁸. "The solution is very simple --

¹⁷⁴⁹ "Ukraine Accuses Russia's LUKoil of Financing Terror in War-Torn East" *The Moscow Times*, January 16, 2015, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/01/16/ukraine-accuses-russias-lukoil-of-financing-terror-in-war-torn-east-a42957>

¹⁷⁵⁰ Neuman, Scott "Ukraine Launches Major Offensive To Retake Donetsk Airport" *NPR*, January 18, 2015, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/01/18/378138246/ukraine-launches-major-offensive-to-retake-donetsk-airport>

¹⁷⁵¹ Ibid

¹⁷⁵² "Peskov says combat operations in eastern Ukraine hamper conflict settlement" *TASS*, January 18, 2015, <https://tass.com/world/771801>

¹⁷⁵³ "Moscow warns Kiev over use of force in east Ukraine: Interfax" *Reuters*, January 19, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-russia-karasin/moscow-warns-kiev-over-use-of-force-in-east-ukraine-interfax-idUSKBN0KS1EM20150119>

¹⁷⁵⁴ "Ukraine: Russia Sending Troops to Back Rebels" *VOA News*, January 19, 2015, <https://www.voanews.com/europe/ukraine-russia-sending-troops-back-rebels>

¹⁷⁵⁵ "New round of peace talks on Ukraine set for Wednesday: Germany" *Reuters*, January 20, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-contact/new-round-of-peace-talks-on-ukraine-set-for-wednesday-germany-idUSKBN0KTILO20150120>

¹⁷⁵⁶ Ibid

¹⁷⁵⁷ "Yatsenyuk suggests Rada beef up armed forces' strength to 250,000" *Kyiv Post*, January 21, 2015, <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/war-against-ukraine/yatsenyuk-suggests-rada-beef-up-armed-forces-strength-to-250000-377968.html>

¹⁷⁵⁸ "Russia has up to 9,000 troops in Ukraine, says Poroshenko" *Euronews*, January 21, 2015, <https://www.euronews.com/2015/01/21/kiev-accuses-moscow-of-sending-troops-to-east-ukraine-ahead-of-berlin-talks>

stop supplying weapons[...]withdraw the troops and close the border,” he said. “If you want to discuss something different, it means you are not for peace, you are for war.”¹⁷⁵⁹. Lavrov responded: “I say every time: if you allege this so confidently, present the facts. But nobody can present the facts, or doesn’t want to,” “So before demanding from us that we stop doing something, please present proof that we have done it.”¹⁷⁶⁰ Russia also stated it had received assurances from the separatists that they would retreat to the separation lines agreed last September¹⁷⁶¹. NATO stated it had seen an increase in the number of tanks and other heavy artillery being used by Russian troops in eastern Ukraine in recent months¹⁷⁶².

January 22, 2015: Ukraine acknowledges that they have lost the Donetsk airport to the separatists and privately, some rebels in Donetsk admit they have received help from Moscow but deny that the number of Russian soldiers present is in the thousands¹⁷⁶³. Lavrov states that under the Minsk accords, the Donetsk airport should be handed over to the separatists with Serhiy Halushko of the Ukrainian defence ministry responding: “It’s not for Sergei Lavrov to decide which parts of Ukrainian territory should be under whose control,”¹⁷⁶⁴.

January 23, 2015: According to insiders in the Kremlin, Putin has alienated “all but a handful of hardliners” over the conflict in Ukraine¹⁷⁶⁵. Particularly oligarchs oppose as they are set to lose money¹⁷⁶⁶. Leader of Donetsk Alexander Zakharchenko, states that the separatists “will not make any attempts at ceasefire talks any more[...]we’ll attack right up to the borders of Donetsk region, but if I see a threat from other directions we’ll neutralise it[...]Kiev doesn’t understand now that we can attack in three directions simultaneously”¹⁷⁶⁷. Putin states “The Kiev authorities have given an official order to start large-scale military operations practically throughout the whole line of contact. The result is tens of killed and wounded, not only among the military on both sides but[...]among civilians[...]Those who give these criminal orders are responsible.”¹⁷⁶⁸.

January 24, 2015: Separatists announce major offensive against Mariupol¹⁷⁶⁹. Oleksandr Turchynov, secretary of Ukraine’s national defence council, described the incident where 30 people were killed by missiles, as “another bloody crime against humanity committed by the Russian military and the bands of terrorists under their complete control”¹⁷⁷⁰. Poroshenko stated on twitter that if the rebels failed to abide by the ceasefire, Kiev’s supporters would “give it to them in the teeth”¹⁷⁷¹.

¹⁷⁵⁹ Dmitry Zhdannikov and Noah Barkin “Russia has 9,000 troops in Ukraine, Poroshenko tells Davos forum” *Reuters*, January 21, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-davos-poroshenko/russia-has-9000-troops-in-ukraine-poroshenko-tells-davos-forum-idUSKBN0KU1TX20150121>

¹⁷⁶⁰ Ibid

¹⁷⁶¹ Ibid

¹⁷⁶² “Russia has up to 9,000 troops in Ukraine, says Poroshenko” *Euronews*

¹⁷⁶³ Shaun Walker and Oksana Grytsenko “Ukraine forces admit loss of Donetsk airport to rebels” *The Guardian*, January 21, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/21/russia-ukraine-war-fighting-east>

¹⁷⁶⁴ Ibid

¹⁷⁶⁵ Ukraine Crisis Timeline “Putin’s Embrace Of Conflict In Donbass Said To Alienate Some In His Inner Circle” *CSIS*, January 23, 2015, http://ukraine.csis.org/elections_ukr.htm#89

¹⁷⁶⁶ Ibid

¹⁷⁶⁷ “Ukraine rebel Zakharchenko ‘rejects truce talks’” *BBC News*, January 23, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30949527>

¹⁷⁶⁸ “Putin Points Finger at Kiev for ‘Criminal’ Civilian Deaths in Ukraine” *The Moscow Times*, January 23, 2015, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/01/23/putin-points-finger-at-kiev-for-criminal-civilian-deaths-in-ukraine-a43179>

¹⁷⁶⁹ Chris Johnston “Missile attacks kill at least 30 in Mariupol, east Ukraine” *The Guardian*, January 24, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/24/missile-attack-pro-russian-rebels-ukraine-mariupol-donetsk>

¹⁷⁷⁰ Ibid

¹⁷⁷¹ Ibid

January 25, 2015: Poroshenko states that de-escalating the conflict with the separatists was the priority of the government¹⁷⁷². As he stated: “Beginning a political process of de-escalation and regulation remains our priority. We don’t see an alternative to the Minsk agreement,”¹⁷⁷³. Russia urged for “comprehensive political dialogue”¹⁷⁷⁴. Poroshenko also stated that the rocket attacks in Mariupol, which led to 30 killed, were conducted by the separatists, as he noted: "This attack, unfortunately, was made by terrorists supported by Russia"¹⁷⁷⁵. Russia responded to this saying "The situation is a result of Ukrainian troops crudely violating the Minsk agreements by constantly shelling residential settlements"¹⁷⁷⁶. Russia vetoes a UNSC statement which condemned the shelling of Mariupol¹⁷⁷⁷. Russia said that they vetoed the statement because Britain had insisted on inserting condemnation of separatist “self-defence forces” backed by Russia and added that Western council members have never condemned the actions or statements of Ukraine’s government.¹⁷⁷⁸.

January 26, 2015: Ukraine orders a state of emergency in Donetsk and Luhansk and places all Ukraine territory on high alert¹⁷⁷⁹. Putin states that the Ukraine army is a NATO legion that is not pursuing the national interests of Ukraine but aiming to reach its geopolitical goals of constraining Russia, as he states: "We often say: Ukrainian army, Ukrainian army. But who is really fighting there? There are indeed some official military units, but they are largely so-called volunteer nationalist battalions[...]Essentially, it's not an army, it's a foreign legion, which, of course, does not pursue the national interests of Ukraine. It has totally different aims and they are connected to achieving the geopolitical goals of constraining Russia, which is absolutely against the national interests of the people of Ukraine,".¹⁷⁸⁰ The OSCE states that the shelling in Mariupol came from separatist area¹⁷⁸¹.

The National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine adopts a new package of resolutions stating: Based on the results of the discussion of emergency measures to counteract the Russian threat and manifestations of terrorism supported by the Russian Federation, a package of resolutions has been adopted to boost the country's defense capability and counter-terrorist measures, to create military-civilian administrations in the anti-terrorist operation zone to ensure the security and living of people in these territories,"¹⁷⁸². The Council also stated that Ukraine should join in on the sanctions and stated: "In order to increase pressure on Russia, the National Security and Defense Council has passed a resolution requiring that the sanctions introduced against Russia by the European Union, Switzerland, the United States and the G7, become

¹⁷⁷² “President Poroshenko says de-escalation is priority in east Ukraine” *Reuters*, January 25, 2015, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-ukraine-crisis-poroshenko/president-poroshenko-says-de-escalation-is-priority-in-east-ukraine-idUKKBN0KY0E520150125>

¹⁷⁷³ Ibid

¹⁷⁷⁴ “Ukraine conflict: Poroshenko vows to 'calm' Mariupol fighting” *BBC News*, January 25, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30974283>

¹⁷⁷⁵ Ibid

¹⁷⁷⁶ Ibid

¹⁷⁷⁷ Ben Tufft “Russia blocks UN Security Council statement condemning shelling of Ukrainian city that killed 30” *Independent*, January 25, 2015, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/russia-blocks-un-security-council-statement-condemning-shelling-of-ukrainian-city-that-killed-30-10000980.html>

¹⁷⁷⁸ Ibid

¹⁷⁷⁹ Natalia Zinets and Denis Dyomkin “Ukraine rebels move to encircle government troops in new advance” *Reuters*, January 26, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-military/ukraine-rebels-move-to-encircle-government-troops-in-new-advance-idUSKBN0KZ0L920150126>

¹⁷⁸⁰ “Ukrainian army is foreign NATO legion, with geopolitical aims of constraining Russia – Putin” *Interfax*, January 26, 2015, <http://www.interfax.com/newsinf.asp?id=567069>

¹⁷⁸¹ Louis Charbonneau and Michelle Nichols “Attacks on civilians in Mariupol, Ukraine were war crime-UN” *Yahoo News*, January 26, 2015, <https://uk.news.yahoo.com/attackers-knowingly-targeted-civilians-mariupol-ukraine-u-n-191028034.html#u0OHEXh>

¹⁷⁸² “NSDC adopts package of resolutions on boosting Ukraine's defense” *Interfax*, January 26, 2015, <https://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/246921.html>

mandatory for application in Ukraine and be expanded[...]The NSDC has instructed the Cabinet to start a procedure of filing lawsuits with the Hague Tribunal regarding the crimes against humanity, committed by the terrorists against Ukrainian citizens in 2014-15, and concerning recognition of the 'DPR' and 'LPR' as terrorist organizations,"¹⁷⁸³.

January 28, 2015: Russia states that “The latest military actions provoked by Kiev will lead to the inevitable further escalation of the conflict (and) undermine efforts taken by the international community to end the bloodshed,”¹⁷⁸⁴. Eduard Basurin, deputy commander of the rebels in Donetsk, stated: “The form in which the Minsk agreement was signed doesn’t work anymore, but we’re prepared to continue talks,”¹⁷⁸⁵. Prime Minister Arseny Yatseniuk stated: “Russia is on a path of isolation and it is driving the whole world into a state of cold war with hot conflicts,”¹⁷⁸⁶. Ukraine puts in new border restrictions to the separatist areas in an attempt to cut down on smuggling and prevent terrorists from entering¹⁷⁸⁷.

January 29, 2015: Belarus states that the next trilateral contact group talks will take place on January 30¹⁷⁸⁸.

January 30, 2015: The Minsk talks are called off and fighting continues¹⁷⁸⁹. Separatist envoy Denis Pushilin stated: "The foreign ministry of Belarus confirmed today that Kyiv (representatives) won't come, the talks have been cancelled[...]We are leaving Minsk today,"¹⁷⁹⁰. The separatists’ main negotiator also stated: "Should the negotiations collapse[...]the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics reserve the right to pursue their offensive until the entire Donetsk and Lugansk regions are freed"¹⁷⁹¹. Ukraine blamed the rebels for an attack near the community center, describing it as a "cynical terrorist act" aimed at undermining the planned meeting in Minsk of the so-called 'contact group,'¹⁷⁹².

February 4, 2015: The separatists appear to be in control of the town of Vuhlehirsk, signaling a set-back to the Ukraine forces¹⁷⁹³.

¹⁷⁸³ “Ukraine's Security and Defense Council wants Kyiv to join anti-Russian sanctions” *Interfax Ukraine*, January 26, 2015, <https://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/246769.html>

¹⁷⁸⁴ Thomas Grove “Russia says Kiev's actions will escalate Ukraine fighting” *Reuters*, January 28, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-russia-shelling/russia-says-kievs-actions-will-escalate-ukraine-fighting-idUSKBN0L127920150128>

¹⁷⁸⁵ Ibid

¹⁷⁸⁶ Ibid

¹⁷⁸⁷ Lyman, Rick “Ukraine clamps down on travel to and from rebel areas” *The New York Times*, January 28, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/29/world/europe/ukraine-clamps-down-on-travel-to-and-from-rebel-areas.html>

¹⁷⁸⁸ “Belarus says next round of Ukraine talks on Jan. 30 in Minsk: TASS” *Reuters*, January 29, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-talks/belarus-says-next-round-of-ukraine-talks-on-jan-30-in-minsk-tass-idUSKBN0L21PZ20150129>

¹⁷⁸⁹ “Fighting rages in eastern Ukraine as Minsk peace talks are called off” *DW*, January 30, 2015, <https://www.dw.com/en/fighting-rages-in-eastern-ukraine-as-minsk-peace-talks-are-called-off/a-18226574>

¹⁷⁹⁰ Ibid

¹⁷⁹¹ Onians, Charles and Yulia Silina “Ukraine rebels vow to push offensive if talks fail” *Yahoo News*, January 30, 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/ukraine-peace-talks-due-eu-hits-russia-more-043830786.html>

¹⁷⁹² “Fighting rages in eastern Ukraine as Minsk peace talks are called off” *DW*

¹⁷⁹³ Aleksandar Vasovic “Advancing Ukraine rebels appear to capture frontline town” *Reuters*, February 4, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-hospital/advancing-ukraine-rebels-appear-to-capture-frontline-town-idUSKBN0L80Y320150204>

February 5, 2015: France and Germany make surprise visits to Russia where they presented a new peace plan¹⁷⁹⁴. Hollande stated “Together with Angela Merkel we have decided to take a new initiative[...]We will make a new proposal to solve the conflict which will be based on Ukraine’s territorial integrity.”¹⁷⁹⁵. Poroshenko stated that the talks: ”gave hope that there will be a result in a ceasefire”¹⁷⁹⁶. NATO agrees to set up a network of command centres in eastern Europe and more than double the size of its rapid reaction force¹⁷⁹⁷. Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich responded “This is very worrying[...]This is about creating additional operational capabilities that would allow the alliance to react near the Russian borders[...]Such decisions will naturally be taken into account in our military planning,”¹⁷⁹⁸.

February 6, 2015: Talks between Germany, France and Russia yields little results¹⁷⁹⁹. Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatseniuk stated: “Peace in Europe depends on peace in Ukraine and for us to achieve that peace Ukraine must have the means to defend itself. Not in offensive operations, but in defense operations,”¹⁸⁰⁰. Mr. Putin, in letters this week to Mr. Hollande, and the Ms. Merkel, put forward a proposal that apparently included shifts in the cease-fire boundaries based on recent gains by pro-Russian separatist fighters¹⁸⁰¹. The proposal also included a plan to grant political autonomy to the embattled regions of Donetsk and Luhansk¹⁸⁰². In response to Russian military presence in Ukraine Arseniy P. Yatsenyuk stated: “If they need, I can give them my glasses[...]We are not fighting with rebels or guerrillas[...]We are fighting with the regular Russian military.”¹⁸⁰³

February 7, 2015: In a plea for political, economic and military assistance Poroshenko stated: “We are an independent nation and we have a right to defend our people,”¹⁸⁰⁴. Calling himself a “president of peace”, he made clear that Kiev only wanted defensive weaponry¹⁸⁰⁵. Lavrov accused Europe and the United States of supporting a “coup d’etat” against Yanukovich, and turning a blind eye to nationalists he said were intent on ethnic cleansing in eastern Ukraine¹⁸⁰⁶.

¹⁷⁹⁴ Richard Balmforth and Pavel Polityuk “German, French leaders take Ukraine peace plan to Moscow” *Reuters*, February 5, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis/german-french-leaders-take-ukraine-peace-plan-to-moscow-idUSKBN0L910W20150205>

¹⁷⁹⁵ Ibid

¹⁷⁹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷⁹⁷ “UPDATE 3-NATO strengthens forces in eastern Europe against Russia risk” *Reuters*, February 5, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/ukraine-crisis-nato/update-3-nato-strengthens-forces-in-eastern-europe-against-russia-risk-idUSL6N0VF11W20150205>

¹⁷⁹⁸ Ibid

¹⁷⁹⁹ Gleb Garanich and Gabriela Baczynska “Kremlin talks on Ukraine yield little but agreement to keep talking” *Reuters*, February 6, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis/kremlin-talks-on-ukraine-yield-little-but-agreement-to-keep-talking-idUSKBN0LA13V20150206>

¹⁸⁰⁰ Ibid

¹⁸⁰¹ David Herszenhorn “Ukraine insists any pact with Russia must adhere to terms of September accord” *The New York Times*, February 6, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/07/world/europe/ukraine-russia-peace-agreement.html>

¹⁸⁰² Ibid

¹⁸⁰³ Ibid

¹⁸⁰⁴ Stephen Brown and Noah Barkin “Merkel defends Ukraine arms stance in face of U.S. criticism” *Reuters*, February 7, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis/merkel-defends-ukraine-arms-stance-in-face-of-u-s-criticism-idUSKBN0LB01A20150207>

¹⁸⁰⁵ Ibid

¹⁸⁰⁶ Ibid

February 10, 2015: Participants in the contact group agree on a ceasefire scheme including the withdrawal of heavy weaponry¹⁸⁰⁷. As stated: "The Minsk talks have squared a scheme of withdrawal of heavy weapons. The parties have also agree a ceasefire regime and control over its observance. The sides also discussed local elections and Donbass' state structure, its form of government,"¹⁸⁰⁸. Representatives of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics (DPR and LPR) also handed over their proposals on peace settlement and as stated: "We handed over to the members of the Tripartite Contact Group a draft protocol which provided for a set of measures on military and political settlement. The sides in the Contact Group took this draft protocol and promised to give an answer after a break,"¹⁸⁰⁹.

February 11, 2015: Germany, France, Ukraine and Russian leaders meet for talks in Minsk¹⁸¹⁰. Poroshenko stated that he, French President Francois Hollande and German Chancellor Angela Merkel would speak "with one voice" to Russian President Vladimir Putin¹⁸¹¹. Expected sticking points at the talks include 1) drawing a line of division 2) withdrawing Russian troops and equipment from eastern Ukraine 3) securing the Ukraine-Russian border and 4) giving the rebels more autonomy¹⁸¹². Poroshenko also stated that the conflict would go "out of control" if a ceasefire was not agreed upon and he also said he would not rule out introducing martial law throughout Ukraine if diplomacy failed to produce results¹⁸¹³. The talks were based on the 12-point peace plane agreed to in September also called the Minsk protocol¹⁸¹⁴. Poroshenko state that he endorsed decentralization but not federalization and noted that the separatist regions could be granted rights similar to those in autonomous communities in Russia¹⁸¹⁵. The separatists want to exist separately from the rest of Ukraine and to keep their weapons¹⁸¹⁶. They are also demanding amnesty for their leaders, they want Ukraine to resume pension payments and other forms of financial support, and they are pushing for a buffer zone wide enough that the main cities cannot be shelled by Ukrainian forces¹⁸¹⁷. Russia has stated that Ukraine should create a federal system that would allow separatist areas to have their own foreign and economic policies, and this would also protect the Russian language and culture¹⁸¹⁸. Russia also plans to keep Crimea and has called on the Ukrainian Army to withdraw from the southeast¹⁸¹⁹.

February 12, 2015 (Minsk II): France, Germany, Russia, and Ukraine agree on a ceasefire which is to begin on February 15¹⁸²⁰. The agreement includes¹⁸²¹: 1) Heavy weapons to be withdrawn, beginning on 16 February and completed in two weeks 2) All prisoners to be released 3) amnesty for those involved in fighting 4) Withdrawal of all foreign troops and weapons from Ukrainian territory. 5) Disarmament of all

¹⁸⁰⁷ "Contact Group agrees heavy troops withdrawal, ceasefire regime" *TASS*, February 10, 2015,

<https://tass.com/world/776787>

¹⁸⁰⁸ Ibid

¹⁸⁰⁹ Ibid

¹⁸¹⁰ "Leaders arrive for Minsk peace talks as bloody conflict rages on in Ukraine" *DW*, February 11, 2015,

<https://www.dw.com/en/leaders-arrive-for-minsk-peace-talks-as-bloody-conflict-rages-on-in-ukraine/a-18250302>

¹⁸¹¹ Ibid

¹⁸¹² Ibid

¹⁸¹³ Ibid

¹⁸¹⁴ Neil Macfarquhar "World leaders meet in Belarus to negotiate cease-fire in Ukraine" *The New York Times*, February 11, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/12/world/europe/meeting-of-world-leaders-in-belarus-aims-to-address-ukraine-conflict.html>

¹⁸¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁸¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁸¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁸¹⁹ Ibid

¹⁸²⁰ "Ukraine crisis: Leaders agree peace roadmap" *BBC News*, February 12, 2015,

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31435812>

¹⁸²¹ "Ukraine ceasefire: New Minsk agreement key points" *BBC News*, February 12, 2015,

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31436513>

illegal groups 6) Ukraine to allow resumption of normal life in rebel areas, by lifting restrictions 7) Constitutional reform to enable decentralisation for rebel regions by the end of 2015. 8) Ukraine to control border with Russia if conditions met by the end of 2015¹⁸²². Still unresolved issues include the status of Debaltseve, a government-held town surrounded by rebels, where fighting is still going on, and further talks will also be held on self-rule in parts of Donetsk and Luhansk separatist regions¹⁸²³. In Luhansk, leader Igor Plotnitskiy said: "We hope that thanks to our efforts today, Ukraine will change and stop firing at civilians, hospitals and socially important facilities." And in Donetsk separatist leader Alexander Zakharchenko stated that Kiev would be to blame if the ceasefire collapsed and warned that there would "be no meetings and no new agreements".¹⁸²⁴

February 13, 2015: Fighting erupts in Eastern Ukraine the day after the ceasefire with the fiercest battles being over the city of Debaltseve¹⁸²⁵. The ceasefire however is not meant to start before the 15th.¹⁸²⁶ OSCE stated: "We feel that the Minsk agreements are really the only available roadmap to a sustainable ceasefire. But now unfortunately[...]there's quite serious live fire in areas like Luhansk, Debaltseve,"¹⁸²⁷. OSCE also stated that they had monitored "significant movements" of unmarked military vehicles and convoys¹⁸²⁸. The West and Ukraine continue to accuse Russia of supplying weapons and personnel to the separatists which Russia denied and Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov stated that Russia could only be a "guarantor" because it played no direct role in the conflict, as he stated: "[Russia] is not a party that has to take action in this matter. We simply cannot do that physically, because Russia is not a participant in this conflict,"¹⁸²⁹. EU accuses Russia of initially wanting to postpone the ceasefire in order to ensure that the separatists could take Debaltseve¹⁸³⁰. Poroshenko stated: "I don't want anyone to have any illusions and so I am not seen as a naive person: we are still a very long way from peace[...]Nobody has a strong belief that the peace conditions which were signed in Minsk will be implemented strictly."¹⁸³¹. Separatists at a checkpoint stated: "What sort of ceasefire? Don't make me laugh. This is already the second or third ceasefire,"¹⁸³².

February 14, 2015: Poroshenko orders the ceasefire but also states that if Ukraine was slapped once, it would not offer the other cheek¹⁸³³. He also stated: "I very much hope that the last chance to begin the long and difficult peaceful process for a political settlement will not be wasted."¹⁸³⁴. Alexander Zakharchenko stated that separatist forces planned to cease hostilities everywhere "except Debaltseve" and that he ordered

¹⁸²² "Ukraine crisis: Leaders agree peace roadmap" *BBC News*

¹⁸²³ Ibid

¹⁸²⁴ Ibid

¹⁸²⁵ "Ukraine crisis: Fierce fighting after Minsk peace deal" *BBC News*, February 13, 2015,

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31449981>

¹⁸²⁶ Ibid

¹⁸²⁷ Ibid

¹⁸²⁸ Ibid

¹⁸²⁹ Ibid

¹⁸³⁰ Ian Traynor "Putin tried to delay Ukraine ceasefire deal, EU summit told" *The Guardian*, February 13, 2015,

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/13/ukraine-service-personnel-killed-minsk-ceasefire?CMP=share_btn_tw

¹⁸³¹ Ibid

¹⁸³² Anton Zverev "Fighting rages in run-up to Ukraine ceasefire" *Reuters*, February 13, 2015,

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis/fighting-rages-in-run-up-to-ukraine-ceasefire-idUSKBN0LH14T20150213>

¹⁸³³ Zverev, Anton "Shelling halts in Ukraine's Donetsk as Poroshenko orders ceasefire" *Reuters*, February 14, 2015,

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis/shelling-halts-in-ukraines-donetsk-as-poroshenko-orders-ceasefire-idUSKBN0LH14T20150214>

¹⁸³⁴ Ibid

pro-Russian forces to “block all attempts to break out”¹⁸³⁵. A Ukraine soldier stated: “It is so much worse than what they show on television,” and he complained that most of the information about the conflict is “Ukrainian propaganda or Russian propaganda”¹⁸³⁶. “If they say seven or eight are dead, it’s really 70 or 80[...].They’re sending people into the field with no protection and no place to hide.”¹⁸³⁷. Alexander Zakharchenko also stated that, if it was not satisfied with Kiev on holding its commitment about autonomy: “If our demands about de facto independence are not fulfilled, we will declare that the whole territory of Donetsk region is ours[...].It doesn’t matter by what means it is seized. If it doesn’t work by political means, we have shown that it is possible in another way.”¹⁸³⁸

February 15, 2015: In most parts of Eastern Ukraine the ceasefire holds, except for the city of Debaltseve, where separatist attacks reportedly increased¹⁸³⁹. As stated by separatist commander Eduard Basurin: “Of course we can open fire (on Debaltseve). It is our territory[...].The territory is internal: ours. And internal is internal. But along the line of confrontation there is no shooting.”¹⁸⁴⁰. The separatists also denied access to the OSCE at Debaltseve¹⁸⁴¹. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov stated that the deal including the truce must be implemented “unconditionally”¹⁸⁴². As he stated: “All the sequences of actions have been mentioned in the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreement. All those terms have to be observed unconditionally,”¹⁸⁴³. According to journalists in the area, armored columns of troops without insignia arriving in the area in recent days¹⁸⁴⁴.

February 17, 2015: The separatists state that the town of Debaltseve has fallen into their hands¹⁸⁴⁵. Ukraine denies this¹⁸⁴⁶. In connection to the ceasefire and the fighting in Debaltseve, Putin stated: “I hope that the responsible figures in the Ukrainian leadership will not hinder soldiers in the Ukrainian army from putting down their weapons[...].If they aren’t capable of taking that decision themselves and giving that order, then (I hope) that they won’t prosecute people who want to save their lives and the lives of others.”¹⁸⁴⁷. Putin also added that the fighting in Debaltseve was “understandable and predictable”¹⁸⁴⁸. Ukraine and NATO

¹⁸³⁵ Karoun Demirjian “Amid doubts, truce in Ukraine appears to take hold” *The Washington Post*, February 14, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/us-alleges-russian-fighting-in-ukraine-hours-ahead-of-cease-fire/2015/02/14/ae2094fa-cb86-4b5d-b309-b5fe07fba733_story.html?utm_term=.8a3490cd399a

¹⁸³⁶ Ibid

¹⁸³⁷ Ibid

¹⁸³⁸ Ibid

¹⁸³⁹ Anton Zverev and Gleb Garanich “Ukraine rebels disavow ceasefire at encircled town” *Reuters*, February 15, 2015, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-ukraine-crisis/ukraine-rebels-disavow-ceasefire-at-encircled-town-idUKKBN0LH14J20150215>

¹⁸⁴⁰ Ibid

¹⁸⁴¹ Ibid

¹⁸⁴² Ibid

¹⁸⁴³ “Kremlin says accords underpinning Ukraine truce must be ‘unconditionally observed’” *Reuters*, February 15, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-peskov/kremlin-says-accords-underpinning-ukraine-truce-must-be-unconditionally-observed-idUSKBN0LJ0H220150215>

¹⁸⁴⁴ Anton Zverev and Gleb Garanich “Ukraine rebels disavow ceasefire at encircled town” *Reuters*

¹⁸⁴⁵ Anton Zverev and Vladimir Soldatkin “Putin tells Kiev to let troops surrender as Ukraine ceasefire unravels” *Reuters*, February 17, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis/putin-tells-kiev-to-let-troops-surrender-as-ukraine-ceasefire-unravels-idUSKBN0LL0OM20150217>

¹⁸⁴⁶ Ibid

¹⁸⁴⁷ Ibid

¹⁸⁴⁸ “Putin urges Ukraine troops to give up Debaltseve” *BBC News*, February 17, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31511926>

accuse Russia of reinforcing the assault on Debaltseve with Russian tanks, artillery and soldiers¹⁸⁴⁹. UNSC adopt a resolution calling on all sides to respect the Minsk agreements¹⁸⁵⁰.

February 18, 2015: Ukraine retreat from Debaltseve and suffer heavy losses¹⁸⁵¹. Nato stated that the separatist offensive had put the wider peace agreement at risk and urged Russia to "use all its influence on the separatists to make them respect the ceasefire"¹⁸⁵². Lavrov stated that he hoped that the situation in the town would "not be used to find a pretext to actually undermine [the agreement]"¹⁸⁵³. Poroshenko stated "Debaltseve was under our control, there was no encirclement, and our troops left the area in a planned and organised manner."¹⁸⁵⁴. He also called for "a firm reaction from the world to Russia's brutal violation of the Minsk agreements, the ceasefire regime and the withdrawal of heavy weaponry"¹⁸⁵⁵.

February 19, 2015: Poroshenko calls for the deployment of international peacekeepers in order to monitor the ceasefire¹⁸⁵⁶. As he stated: "The best format for us is a police mission of the EU[...]It will be the most efficient guarantor of security in the situation when the word of peace is not observed either by Russia or by those who are supported by it."¹⁸⁵⁷. Denis Pushilin, a senior separatist figure, stated: "This is an actual violation of the package of measures to implement the Minsk agreement,"¹⁸⁵⁸. Vitaly Churkin, Russia's ambassador to the United Nations stated: "When someone starts to propose some schemes instead of doing what had been agreed, it primarily arouses suspicion that they want to undermine the Minsk agreements,"¹⁸⁵⁹. Shelling resumes in Donetsk and Mariupol¹⁸⁶⁰. Gazprom announces that it has started supplying gas directly to the separatist held areas in Ukraine¹⁸⁶¹. The Normandy format meet over the phone¹⁸⁶².

February 20, 2015: Commemorations are held at Maidan in the one-year anniversary of its escalation¹⁸⁶³. In a speech Poroshenko stated: "Now, it is finally clear that we struggled on Maidan not against Yanukovich. He was just a cruel and obedient marionette[...]Moscow was preparing to the liquidation and tearing Ukraine apart long before the victory of Maidan. They were expecting the fall of Yanukovich and accelerated the course of events,"¹⁸⁶⁴. Ukraine stated that there had been reports of 300 violations of the

¹⁸⁴⁹ Zverev, Anton and Vladimir Soldatkin "Putin tells Kiev to let troops surrender as Ukraine ceasefire unravels" *Reuters*

¹⁸⁵⁰ "Putin urges Ukraine troops to give up Debaltseve" *BBC News*

¹⁸⁵¹ Andrew E. Kramer and David Herszenhorn "Ukrainian soldiers retreat from eastern town raises doubt for truce" *The New York Times*, February 18, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/19/world/europe/ukraine-conflict-debaltseve.html?_r=0

¹⁸⁵² "Ukraine troops retreat from key town of Debaltseve" *BBC News*, February 18, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31519000>

¹⁸⁵³ Ibid

¹⁸⁵⁴ Ibid

¹⁸⁵⁵ Ibid

¹⁸⁵⁶ "Ukraine calls for U.N. peacekeepers to observe ceasefire" *Reuters*, February 19, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-peacekeepers/ukraine-calls-for-u-n-peacekeepers-to-observe-ceasefire-idUSKBN0LN0BB20150219>

¹⁸⁵⁷ Ibid

¹⁸⁵⁸ Ibid

¹⁸⁵⁹ "Ukraine Fighting Shifts to Mariupol After Debaltseve Takeover" *VOA News*, February 19, 2015, <https://www.voanews.com/europe/ukraine-fighting-shifts-mariupol-after-debaltseve-takeover>

¹⁸⁶⁰ "Ukraine crisis: Shelling spreads despite ceasefire" *BBC News*, February 19, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31535512>

¹⁸⁶¹ Ibid

¹⁸⁶² Ibid

¹⁸⁶³ Laura Smith-Spark and Frederik Pleitgen "Ukraine marks year since Maidan bloodshed amid simmering conflict" *CNN*, February 20, 2015, <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/02/20/europe/ukraine-conflict/>

¹⁸⁶⁴ Ibid

ceasefire¹⁸⁶⁵. A separatist stated: “Donetsk and Luhansk regions are our home. We will take back our land[...].Every ceasefire they move up their armour and start killing us again. There won’t be a ceasefire, there will be war.”¹⁸⁶⁶.

February 22, 2015: A bomb explodes in Ukraine’s second largest city, Kharkiv, during a march marking the first anniversary of the ousting of Yanukovich¹⁸⁶⁷. Four Ukraine citizens were detained with the Ukraine Security Service stating: “They are Ukrainian citizens, who underwent instruction and received weapons in the Russian Federation, in Belgorod,”¹⁸⁶⁸. Poroshenko stated: “Today is memorial Sunday, but on this day terrorist scum revealed its predatory nature,”¹⁸⁶⁹. A counterterrorism operation was launched in the city¹⁸⁷⁰. On Sunday, Alexander Zakharchenko and Igor Plotnitsky, the leaders of the Donetsk and Luhansk people’s republics, approved a plan with a representative of Moscow to pull back heavy weapons beginning on Monday¹⁸⁷¹. Ukraine claimed that two Russian military reconnaissance planes flew over Mariupol¹⁸⁷².

February 23, 2015: Ukraine delays the pullback of heavy weapons blaming attacks from the separatists¹⁸⁷³. Military spokesman Lt. Col. Anatoliy Stelmakh stated "as long as firing on Ukrainian military positions continues, it's not possible to talk about a pullback."¹⁸⁷⁴. The US considers arming the Ukraine forces or imposing further sanctions on Russia¹⁸⁷⁵. To this prospect, Peskov stated: "An obsessive idea to force someone to pay the cost[...]is not conducive to the resolution of the situation in southeast Ukraine"¹⁸⁷⁶.

February 24, 2015: The Normandy four meet in Paris with France stating: “We ask for the reinforcement of the OSCE special monitoring mission. We ask all sides involved to completely cooperate with the OSCE to allow this organisation to fulfil its mandate, especially with regard to the surveillance and verification of the withdrawal of heavy weapons,”¹⁸⁷⁷. Following the talks, Ukraine foreign minister Pavlo Klimkin stated: "We are extremely concerned by recent attacks in the vicinity of Mariupol. We are concerned by a possible relocation of forces from Debaltseve in the direction of Mariupol."¹⁸⁷⁸. Britain announces that it will send military personnel to Ukraine to provide advice and training for the Ukraine troops¹⁸⁷⁹. In a television

¹⁸⁶⁵ Ibid

¹⁸⁶⁶ Alec Luhn “Pro-Russia victors vow to ignore deal for ceasefire in Ukraine” *The Guardian*, February 20, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/20/pro-russian-victors-vow-to-ignore-deal-for-ceasefire-in-ukraine>

¹⁸⁶⁷ Alec Luhn “Ukraine truce rocked by Kharkiv blast” *The Guardian*, February 22, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/22/ukraine-and-pro-russia-rebels-swap-dozens-of-prisoners>

¹⁸⁶⁸ Ibid

¹⁸⁶⁹ Ibid

¹⁸⁷⁰ “Kharkiv On Security Alert Following Deadly Blast At Peace March” *RadioFreeEurope*, February 23, 2015, <https://www.rferl.org/a/kharkiv-bomb-peace-march/26862841.html>

¹⁸⁷¹ Alec Luhn “Ukraine truce rocked by Kharkiv blast” *The Guardian*

¹⁸⁷² Ibid

¹⁸⁷³ Jim Heintz “Ukraine says weapons pullback not yet possible because rebel attacks are continuing” *USA Today*, February 23, 2015, <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2015/02/23/ukraine-rebel-attacks-prevent-weapons-pullback>

¹⁸⁷⁴ Ibid

¹⁸⁷⁵ “Obama to Consider Harsher Sanctions Against Russia Over Ukraine — Kerry” *The Moscow Times*, February 22, 2015, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/02/22/obama-to-consider-harsher-sanctions-against-russia-over-ukraine-kerry-a44121>

¹⁸⁷⁶ Ibid

¹⁸⁷⁷ “Foreign ministers call for more OSCE monitors in Ukraine” *Euronews*, February 24, 2015, <https://www.euronews.com/2015/02/24/foreign-ministers-call-for-more-osce-monitors-in-ukraine>

¹⁸⁷⁸ “Ukraine army to be trained by UK troops – Cameron” *BBC News*, February 24, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31610026>

¹⁸⁷⁹ Ibid

interview, Putin states that Russia would not go to war with Ukraine¹⁸⁸⁰. He also stated that "if the Minsk agreement to resolve the conflict in eastern Ukraine is fulfilled, I am convinced that the situation will gradually return to normal."¹⁸⁸¹. In regards to returning Crimea to Ukraine, Putin stated: "Regarding the return of any territories, such things are of revengeful nature, and it is not about return of some territories somewhere[...]Crimea will remain Russian, Ukrainian, Tatar, Greek, and German -- it will be a home to all these nations. With regard to its nationality, Crimean people made their choice, which we must respect."¹⁸⁸². Poroshenko has accused Putin of ordering snipers to fire on protestors in Maidan back in the day¹⁸⁸³.

February 25, 2015: The Ukraine army reports for the first time in weeks of no fatalities as the ceasefire takes it hold¹⁸⁸⁴. Separatists withdrew heavy weapons from the front¹⁸⁸⁵. Ukraine reduces gas supplies to the eastern part of the country with Putin stating: "Imagine these people finding themselves without gas supplies in the winter period[...]What do you call that? This already smacks of genocide."¹⁸⁸⁶.

February 28, 2015: Russian opposition politician and former Deputy Prime Minister, Boris Nemtsov, is shot dead in Moscow¹⁸⁸⁷. He had appealed for a march protesting the conflict in Ukraine and Poroshenko stated that Nemtsov was a bridge between Ukraine and Russia¹⁸⁸⁸. Two are killed in eastern Ukraine, shaking the ceasefire¹⁸⁸⁹. The leader of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, Alexander Zacharchenko, stated that the separatists had withdrawn 90% of their heavy weapons and warned that they reserved the right to return the weapons to the front line if authorities in Kiev did not keep their end of the bargain¹⁸⁹⁰. President Petro Poroshenko, who says a military threat from the east would remain even if a peace deal holds, stated that he would submit a bill to parliament to make a formal request for the deployment of United Nations peacekeepers to monitor the ceasefire¹⁸⁹¹.

March 3, 2015: Ukraine's foreign minister states that ties between Russia and Ukraine will only improve if Crimea is returned to Ukraine¹⁸⁹². He also stated that the border between Ukraine and Russia needed to be completely closed in order to reach a settlement in the conflict stating: "Because everything that has been destabilizing the situation in (the Ukrainian cities of) Donetsk and Lugansk - mercenaries, money,

¹⁸⁸⁰ "Interview with VGTRK" *President of Russia*, February 23, 2015,

<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47730>

¹⁸⁸¹ "War with Ukraine 'unlikely,' says Putin" *DW*, February 24, 2015, <https://www.dw.com/en/war-with-ukraine-unlikely-says-putin/a-18275687>

¹⁸⁸² Yan, Holly "Vladimir Putin: War with Ukraine would be 'apocalyptic' but unlikely" *CNN*, February 26, 2015, <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/02/24/europe/ukraine-russia-conflict/>

¹⁸⁸³ "War with Ukraine 'unlikely,' says Putin" *DW*

¹⁸⁸⁴ Natalia Zinets and Anton Zverev "Ukraine Goes Its First Day In Weeks Without Troops Killed" *Huffington Post*, February 25, 2015, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/wrapup-2-first-day-with-n_n_6750780

¹⁸⁸⁵ Ibid

¹⁸⁸⁶ "Ukraine conflict: Halt to deaths stirs truce hopes" *BBC News*, February 26, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31620385>

¹⁸⁸⁷ "Russia opposition politician Boris Nemtsov shot dead" *BBC News*, February 28, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31669061>

¹⁸⁸⁸ Ibid

¹⁸⁸⁹ Oleksandr Savochenko "Two killed as clashes threaten fragile Ukraine truce" *Yahoo News*, March 1, 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/isolated-skirmishes-hamper-ukraine-truce-002458298.html>

¹⁸⁹⁰ Laura Smith-Spark and Diana Magnay, "Shaky Ukraine ceasefire takes hold, but tensions rise over gas supply" *CNN*, February 28, 2015, <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/02/27/europe/ukraine-conflict/>

¹⁸⁹¹ "Ukraine journalist killed, but ceasefire hopes rise" *CBC*, February 28, 2015,

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/ukraine-journalist-killed-but-ceasefire-hopes-rise-1.2977114>

¹⁸⁹² "Ukraine says return of Crimea a must for mending ties with Russia" *Reuters*, March 3, 2015,

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-klimkin/ukraine-says-return-of-crimea-a-must-for-mending-ties-with-russia-idUSKBN0LZ0LW20150303>

weapons, heavy weaponry, and of course Russian rebel troops - came through the Russian-Ukrainian border.”¹⁸⁹³.

March 5, 2015: Russia denounces the arrival of US military trainers in Ukraine and Russia’s foreign ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich stated: "U.S.-Ukrainian military drills in the western Ukrainian Lviv region threaten Russia's security[...]It is evident that they are not trying to bring peace to the country[...]Kiev authorities and all the Ukrainian people should think about the possible consequences of such steps." ¹⁸⁹⁴ To the presence of NATO warships engaged in an exercise in the Black Sea he also stated: "Talking about the ships that entered [the Black Sea], I would call it a very worrisome signal, a provocative idea which does not add up to stability and confidence that the peace process in Ukraine will be stepped up[...]Any military presence in the proximity of a regional conflict is always a very dangerous maneuver which can lead to different unpleasant consequences." ¹⁸⁹⁵. In another incident, Ukraine votes to increase the size of the armed forces by a third¹⁸⁹⁶. Alexander Zaharchenko, leader of the separatists in Donesk, announced a 100,000-strong mobilisation plan to reinforce his troops¹⁸⁹⁷.

March 6, 2015: Russia and Germany call on the OSCE to double the number of observers¹⁸⁹⁸. Both Ukraine and the separatists have reported the withdrawal of heavy weaponry although fighting continues¹⁸⁹⁹. Russia announces military exercises in Crimea as well as the break-away regions of Georgia¹⁹⁰⁰.

March 7, 2015: Alexander Zakharchenko states that the separatists have fully removed heavy weapons from the front line as agreed in the ceasefire¹⁹⁰¹. He also stated that Ukraine had not done the same¹⁹⁰². Ukraine told BBC that it believed Russian troops were still entering Ukraine¹⁹⁰³.

March 8, 2015: Ukraine accuses the separatists of using the ceasefire to regroup and rearm for further offenses with Ukraine military spokesman stating: "Illegal armed groups are actively involved in combat training, gathering resources and rebuilding technical readiness,"¹⁹⁰⁴

March 9, 2015: In a Russian documentary, Putin talks about the plans to annex Crimea and stated: "We ended at about seven in the morning[...]When we were parting, I said to my colleagues: we must start

¹⁸⁹³ Ibid

¹⁸⁹⁴ "Russia denounces arrival of U.S. military trainers in Ukraine" *Los Angeles Times*, March 5, 2015, <https://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-ukraine-russia-us-trainers-20150305-story.html>

¹⁸⁹⁵ Ibid

¹⁸⁹⁶ Damien Sharkov "Ukraine to Boost Armed Forces by a Third" *Newsweek*, March 5, 2015, <https://www.newsweek.com/ukraine-boost-armed-forces-third-311506>

¹⁸⁹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸⁹⁸ "Ukraine crisis: OSCE 'must double' ceasefire monitors" *BBC News*, March 6, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31762627>

¹⁸⁹⁹ Ibid

¹⁹⁰⁰ Ibid

¹⁹⁰¹ "Ukraine crisis: Rebels 'pull heavy weapons' from front line" *BBC News*, March 7, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31779869>

¹⁹⁰² Ibid

¹⁹⁰³ Ibid

¹⁹⁰⁴ "Rebel sniper kills Ukrainian serviceman despite ceasefire – military" *Reuters*, March 8, 2015, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-ukraine-crisis-casualties/rebel-sniper-kills-ukrainian-serviceman-despite-ceasefire-military-idUKKBN0M40EC20150308>

working on returning Crimea to Russia.”¹⁹⁰⁵. He also admits that the plan to annex Crimea was ordered weeks before the referendum¹⁹⁰⁶.

March 12, 2015: OSCE states it will extend its observation mission another year and double the number of observers¹⁹⁰⁷.

March 16, 2015: As an apparent response to the military exercise taking place in Norway, Putin orders military exercise with the Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu stating: “The main task of the [combat readiness drill] is to assess the armed forces from the Northern Fleet’s capabilities in fulfilling tasks in providing military security of the Russian Federation in the Arctic region,”¹⁹⁰⁸.

March 17, 2015: Peskov states that the issue of Crimea is not up for discussion and an unidentified official from the defense ministry stated that long-range Iskander ballistic missiles were being sent to the Kaliningrad exclave bordering NATO members Lithuania and Poland for the war games¹⁹⁰⁹.

March 18, 2015: Ukraine changes the conditions for the special status of the separatist held areas in Eastern Ukraine which states that the status will only come into force after local elections monitored by international observers are held in the areas according to Ukrainian law¹⁹¹⁰. Russia and the separatists state that the new law threatens the ceasefire¹⁹¹¹. The Russian foreign ministry stated that Ukraine had “totally ignored” the Minsk provisions and it called for dialogue with the separatists¹⁹¹². Donetsk rebel leader, Denis Pushilin, stated that the new conditions “breach the spirit and letter of the Minsk accords” and that “the Minsk process is in fact interrupted” because Mr Poroshenko “does not respect the Donbas [Donetsk and Luhansk] people, he does not want peace”¹⁹¹³. Russia marks the anniversary of the Crimean annexation with Putin stating: “We understood that in terms of Crimea it was not a matter of just some territory, however strategically important it is[...]. It was a matter of millions of Russian people, our compatriots, who needed our help and support.”¹⁹¹⁴,¹⁹¹⁵. Also, South Ossetia signed an “alliance and integration” treaty with Russia which integrates the security services, the military, the economy and border guards of South Ossetia with those of Russia¹⁹¹⁶.

¹⁹⁰⁵ Agence France-Press “Vladimir Putin describes secret meeting when Russia decided to seize Crimea” *The Guardian*, March 9, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/09/vladimir-putin-describes-secret-meeting-when-russia-decided-to-seize-crimea>

¹⁹⁰⁶ “Putin reveals secrets of Russia’s Crimea takeover plot” *BBC News*, March 9, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31796226>

¹⁹⁰⁷ “OSCE will extend Ukraine mission one year, may expand its size” *Reuters*, March 12, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-osce/osce-will-extend-ukraine-mission-one-year-may-expand-its-size-idUSKBN0M825020150312>

¹⁹⁰⁸ “Putin Orders Northern Fleet to Full Alert for Combat Readiness Drills” *Sputniknews*, March 16, 2015, <https://sputniknews.com/military/201503161019541658/>

¹⁹⁰⁹ Timothy Heritage and Darya Korsunskaya “Russia rules out handing back Crimea, expands war games” *Reuters*, March 17, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-crimea-russia/russia-rules-out-handing-back-crimea-expands-war-games-idUSKBN0MD0Z220150317>

¹⁹¹⁰ “Ukraine crisis: Rebel ‘status’ row threatens truce deal” *BBC News*, March 18, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31923136>

¹⁹¹¹ Ibid

¹⁹¹² Ibid

¹⁹¹³ Ibid

¹⁹¹⁴ Shaun Walker “Russia celebrates anniversary of Crimea takeover – and eyes second annexation” *The Guardian*, March 18, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/18/russia-celebrates-anniversary-crimea-takeover-eyes-second-annexation>

¹⁹¹⁵ “Concert celebrating Crimea and Sevastopol’s reunification with Russia” *President of Russia*, March 18, 2015, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47878>

¹⁹¹⁶ Walker “Russia celebrates anniversary of Crimea takeover – and eyes second annexation” *The Guardian*,

March 20, 2015: In a piece in the wall street journal, Poroshenko states that “Crimea is still is Ukraine” and that Crimea is not merely a Ukraine issue¹⁹¹⁷. In an interview Poroshenko states: “We are now, together with our European, American and the world partners (committed) to defending freedom, democracy and the independence of my state – and we do not allow anybody to blackmail us.”¹⁹¹⁸

March 21, 2015: Lavrov states that Russia has a fear that Ukraine may stage provocations in order to sway the US: "Provocateurs in Kyiv[...]could try to 'whip something up' in the expectation that this will influence the world public and weapons will flow into Ukraine[...]I am convinced that Berlin and Paris, as the most important players[...]should prevent such a turn of events."¹⁹¹⁹. Lavrov also voiced Russia’s opposition to the deployment of UN peacekeepers in Ukraine¹⁹²⁰.

March 25, 2015: The Ukraine far-right Azov battalion prepares to defend the port city of Mariupol in southeastern Ukraine against a widely expected attack by pro-Russian separatists¹⁹²¹. Azov commander Andriy Biletsky stated: “We don’t like the ceasefire at all. As with the previous ones, it’ll only lead to another offensive by the enemy[...]Appeasing the aggressor will only lead to more aggression. This war will inevitably continue - either until our complete defeat or until our full victory and return to our land in all east Ukraine and Crimea. We believe in the second scenario,”¹⁹²². Azov originates from Biletsky’s paramilitary national socialist group called “Patriot of Ukraine”, which propagated slogans of white supremacy, racial purity, the need for authoritarian power and a centralized national economy.¹⁹²³ It became enrolled in the Ukraine national guard in September where it received an increased supplies of heavy weaponry¹⁹²⁴.

March 26, 2015: Ukraine receives Humvees from the US with Poroshenko stating: 'And I as the president of Ukraine, as commander-in-chief, on behalf of the Ukrainian people, would like to thank to the United States of America for its comprehensive and firm position regarding the resolution of the conflict in the Donbass, for recognising Russia as an aggressor which annexed Crimea and which launched direct military aggression in particular areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.'¹⁹²⁵.

March 29, 2015: Poroshenko states that a summit will be held with the EU under the Association Agreement which will focus on an EU monitoring mission in Ukraine, the state of the Minsk II agreement and Ukraine’s economic situation¹⁹²⁶.

¹⁹¹⁷ Poroshenko, Petro “Crimea Is Still Ukraine” *The Wall Street Journal*, March 19, 2015,

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/petro-poroshenko-crimea-is-still-ukraine-1426797603>

¹⁹¹⁸ “Poroshenko: 'Russia will not blackmail Ukraine’” *Euronews*, March 19, 2015,

<https://www.euronews.com/2015/03/19/poroshenko-russia-will-not-blackmail-ukraine>

¹⁹¹⁹ “Russia urges France, Germany to prevent Ukrainian 'provocations’” *DW*, March 21, 2015,

<https://www.dw.com/en/russia-urges-france-germany-to-prevent-ukrainian-provocations/a-18331877>

¹⁹²⁰ Ibid

¹⁹²¹ Gabriela Baczyńska “Ultra-nationalist Ukrainian battalion gears up for more fighting” *Reuters*, March 25, 2015,

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-azov/ultra-nationalist-ukrainian-battalion-gears-up-for-more-fighting-idUSKBN0ML0XJ20150325>

¹⁹²² Ibid

¹⁹²³ Ibid

¹⁹²⁴ Ibid

¹⁹²⁵ Darren Boyle “Take that Putin! U.S. delivers ten armoured Humvees to help Ukraine's defence against Russian-backed separatists as part of \$75million non-lethal military aid deal” *Daily Mail*, March 26, 2015,

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3012717/Take-Putin-U-S-delivers-ten-armoured-Humvees-help-Ukraine-s-defence-against-Russian-backed-separatists-75million-non-lethal-military-aid-deal.html>

¹⁹²⁶ Ukraine Crisis Timeline “Dates for EU-Ukraine Summit, US Training in Ukraine Announced” *CSIS*, March 29, 2015, <http://ukraine.csis.org/index.htm#49>

March 31, 2015: Friends of Boris Nemtsov state that a report that provides evidence of Russian soldier presence in Ukraine will be released in April¹⁹²⁷. Igor Strelkov, a former commander of the separatists in eastern Ukraine, stated that heavily armed "vacationers" from Russia began arriving en masse in eastern Ukraine last August but that this year they were discharged before deployment¹⁹²⁸. The report is based on statements from Russian soldiers and their families¹⁹²⁹.

April 1, 2015: Russia shuts down a television station which served the Crimean Tartars which Tartar members stated where an example of the continued discrimination they faced due to their opposition against the Russian annexation of Crimea¹⁹³⁰. Poroshenko posted a picture of himself on social media with Tatar leaders whom Russia had expelled from Crimea stating: "You can turn off the TV, but you cannot stop the Crimean people's pursuit of freedom and the truth."¹⁹³¹ Vladimir A. Konstantinov, speaker of Crimea's Parliament, stated: "The West, through Ukraine, tried to tear off Crimea from Russia through the Crimean Tatars[...]They were used as a fifth column."¹⁹³² Tartar schools, mosques and political organizations have repeatedly been raided by law enforcement officers¹⁹³³. Crimea's leader Sergei Aksyonov stated: "The channel is whipping up tensions and creating a sense of insecurity in the public by raising hopes that Crimea will return to Ukraine[...]It has been explained to ATR's management that such channels cannot operate in our republic in this time of semi-war."¹⁹³⁴

April 2, 2015: Russia, the separatists and Ukraine discuss in the contact group format the extension of the pull back of weapons to include tanks and smaller weapons systems¹⁹³⁵.

April 6, 2015: Poroshenko endorses a referendum on the federalization of Ukraine stating to a commission: "I'm ready to hold a referendum about the structure of the government, if you think it's necessary,"¹⁹³⁶. He however also stated that federalization was an "infection" that was forced upon Ukraine by Russia¹⁹³⁷. He also stated that 90% of the Ukrainians supported a unitary government and stated: "When Ukraine united, they came at us with aggression, with war, trying to establish federalisation with iron and blood. I won't let that happen; the Ukrainian people won't let that happen,"¹⁹³⁸. The peace plan includes constitutional reform in the form of decentralization, the format of decentralization is however not yet established¹⁹³⁹. Poroshenko also stated that Ukrainian would remain the only official state language as three-quarters of the population was in favor of this although the separatists are seeking greater official recognition of the

¹⁹²⁷ "Nemtsov Allies Plan to Publish Report on Russian Soldiers in Ukraine" *The Moscow Times*, March 31, 2015, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/03/31/nemtsov-allies-plan-to-publish-report-on-russian-soldiers-in-ukraine-a45304>

¹⁹²⁸ Ibid

¹⁹²⁹ Ibid

¹⁹³⁰ Neil Macfarquhar "Russia shuts down TV station serving Crimean Tartars" *The New York Times*, April 1, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/02/world/europe/russia-shuts-down-tv-station-serving-crimean-tatars.html?_r=0

¹⁹³¹ Ibid

¹⁹³² Ibid

¹⁹³³ Ibid

¹⁹³⁴ Vitaly Shevchenko "Crimean Tatar media 'silenced by Russia'" *BBC News*, April 1, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-32145218>

¹⁹³⁵ "Ukraine and rebels discuss broadening weapons withdrawal: aide" *Reuters*, April 2, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-weapons/ukraine-and-rebels-discuss-broadening-weapons-withdrawal-aide-idUSKBN0MT1LJ20150402>

¹⁹³⁶ Alec Luhn, "Poroshenko endorses referendum on federalisation of Ukraine" *The Guardian*, April 6, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/06/poroshenko-endorses-referendum-on-federalisation-of-ukraine>

¹⁹³⁷ Ibid

¹⁹³⁸ Ibid

¹⁹³⁹ Ibid

Russian language¹⁹⁴⁰. Ukraine's defence ministry also announced that ultranationalist MP Dmytro Yarosh was to become an aide to military chief Viktor Muzhenko and that his Right Sector fighting group would be integrated into the armed forces¹⁹⁴¹. An official of the separatists, Andrei Purgin stated that none of their representatives were invited to sit on the constitutional commission to start with, "which already says a lot[...]. Everything that Kyiv does shows that they have to decide to find agreement but dictate their terms to us, which contradicts the Minsk accords,"¹⁹⁴². He also stated that "Poroshenko's statement does not mean anything" because there are no details of the referendum — if it happens at all¹⁹⁴³. In relation to Poroshenko's statement on the Russian language, Purgin stated: "he doesn't listen to the voice of the east: we speak Russian here."¹⁹⁴⁴.

April 10, 2015: According to Amnesty International separatists have executed at least 4 Ukrainian servicemen¹⁹⁴⁵. In another event, both Ukraine and the separatists accuse each other of violating the ceasefire agreement by firing at each other¹⁹⁴⁶.

April 12, 2015: Ahead of a trilateral group meeting in Berlin, Germany's foreign minister urges Ukraine and Russia to continue to work with the implementation of the Minsk agreement and its next phase which was "the preparation of local elections in the areas occupied by the separatists, but also humanitarian aid access and reconstruction in eastern Ukraine,"¹⁹⁴⁷.

April 14, 2015: Ukraine accuses the separatists of using heavy weaponry which is meant to be withdrawn and the separatists accused Ukraine of firing tank and artillery rounds at rebel positions¹⁹⁴⁸.

April 16, 2015: Putin holds his annual "Direct Line" press conference where he amongst other states: "I can tell you outright and unequivocally that there are no Russian troops in Ukraine[...] What does it matter where ethnic Russians live, here or in a neighbouring state, over a state border, if they can freely visit their relatives, if their living standards are improving, if their rights are not infringed upon, if they can speak their native tongue, and so on. It doesn't matter where they live if all of these requirements are honoured. If we see that people have a decent life there and are treated accordingly[...] Because after World War II, we tried to impose our own development model on many Eastern European countries, and we did so by force. This has to be admitted. There is nothing good about this and we are feeling the consequences now. Incidentally, this is more or less what the Americans are doing today, as they try to impose their model on practically the entire world, and they will fail as well[...] To sum up, there are grounds to say that the current Kiev authorities are cutting Donbass from Ukraine themselves"¹⁹⁴⁹.

¹⁹⁴⁰ Ibid

¹⁹⁴¹ Ibid

¹⁹⁴² "Ukraine President Petro Poroshenko agrees to referendum on powers for restive region" *CBC*, April 6, 2015, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/ukraine-president-petro-poroshenko-agrees-to-referendum-on-powers-for-restive-region-1.3022114>

¹⁹⁴³ Ibid

¹⁹⁴⁴ Ibid

¹⁹⁴⁵ Denis Krivosheev "New Evidence of Summary Executions of Ukrainian Soldiers by Pro-Russian Rebels" *Newsweek*, April 10, 2015, <https://www.newsweek.com/new-evidence-summary-executions-ukrainian-soldiers-pro-russian-rebels-321530>

¹⁹⁴⁶ Ukraine Crisis Timeline "Ukraine, Separatists Trade Accusations of Ceasefire Violations" *CSIS*, April 10, 2015, <http://ukraine.csis.org/index.htm#62>

¹⁹⁴⁷ "Steinmeier appeals to Russia, Ukraine ahead of Berlin summit" *DW*, April 13, 2015,

<https://www.dw.com/en/steinmeier-appeals-to-russia-ukraine-ahead-of-berlin-summit/a-18377315>

¹⁹⁴⁸ "Violence escalates in east Ukraine ahead of talks" *Reuters*, April 14, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-casualties/violence-escalates-in-east-ukraine-ahead-of-talks-idUSKBN0N40XD20150414>

¹⁹⁴⁹ "Direct Line with Vladimir Putin" *President of Russia*, April 16, 2015,

<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/49261>

April 17, 2015: 300 US troops arrive in Ukraine for a training rotation of the Ukraine National Guard. Russia warned that the arrival of the troops could “destabilize the situation” with Peskov stating: “The participation of instructors or specialists from third countries on Ukrainian territory, where the domestic Ukrainian conflict is unresolved, could destabilize the situation,”¹⁹⁵⁰. He also stated that the presence of US military personnel in Ukraine: “is a long way from helping towards a settlement of the conflict”¹⁹⁵¹.

April 20, 2015: As US troops begin training Ukraine troops, Poroshenko states that it will give a new face to the Ukraine conscript army and: “This is the first Ukrainian-American programme at this level, and it shows the transition of bilateral military cooperation into a fundamentally new dimension,”¹⁹⁵².

April 22, 2015: Lavrov states that “it is in our interests to not tear Ukraine apart, but to make it neutral in military-political terms.” And that any division within Ukraine would result in attempts by NATO to “make Ukraine anti-Russian.”¹⁹⁵³.

April 24, 2015: US and Ukraine officials report that Russia is building up its troops presence at the border and in Crimea prompting fears that Russia planning a new offensive with former US ambassador to Ukraine stating: “Like most observers, I believe that there will be a new Kremlin-directed offensive; but I suspect it will be like the offensive in January”¹⁹⁵⁴.

April 26, 2015: In a documentary, Putin states that the Crimean annexation was justified and righted a historical wrong¹⁹⁵⁵.

April 27, 2015: Ukraine meets with EU officials for talks of deepening trade links and efforts to end the conflict¹⁹⁵⁶. The EU announced that it will not send armed peacekeepers to Ukraine and that they would only have talks about a civilian mission¹⁹⁵⁷. Tusk also announced that the EU would send a civilian “assessment” mission to Kiev, to explore ways to further boost security assistance for Ukraine and also that “We are concerned about reports of weapons still entering eastern Ukraine”¹⁹⁵⁸. The EU also agreed to delay the implementation of the association agreement until January 2016 as a response to Russia’s complaints¹⁹⁵⁹.

¹⁹⁵⁰ Roth, Andrew “U.S army trainers arrive in Ukraine” *The New York Times*, April 17, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/18/world/europe/us-army-trainers-arrive-in-ukraine.html?_r=0

¹⁹⁵¹ “US paratroopers to train Ukraine army as Russia complains” *BBC News*, April 17, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-32349308>

¹⁹⁵² Alec Luhn “US paratroopers begin training Ukraine national guard units” *The Guardian*, April 20, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/20/us-paratroopers-begin-training-national-guard-units-in-ukraine>

¹⁹⁵³ Ukraine Crisis Timeline “Gazprom: Ukraine Owes for Gas Sent to Southeastern Ukraine” *CSIS*, April 22, 2015, <http://ukraine.csis.org/index.htm#71>

¹⁹⁵⁴ Sharkov, Damien “Fears of New Offensive as Putin 'Ramps up Pressure' on Ukraine” *Newsweek*, April 24, 2015, <https://www.newsweek.com/putin-ramping-pressure-ukraine-border-prompting-fears-new-offensive-324863>

¹⁹⁵⁵ Neuman, Scott “Putin: 'No Regrets' Over Crimea Annexation” *NPR*, April 26, 2015, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/04/26/402392678/putin-no-regrets-over-crimea-annexation>

¹⁹⁵⁶ Polityuk, Pavel “EU, Ukraine leaders meet as shelling worsens, one Ukrainian soldier killed” *Reuters*, April 27, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-eu/eu-ukraine-leaders-meet-as-shelling-worsens-one-ukrainian-soldier-killed-idUSKBN0NI1RM20150427>

¹⁹⁵⁷ “EU won't send armed force to Ukraine despite clashes” *BBC News*, April 27, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-32478933>

¹⁹⁵⁸ Ibid

¹⁹⁵⁹ Ibid

April 28, 2015: Poroshenko warns that a war with the separatists could still break out again¹⁹⁶⁰. Ukrainian military spokesman Oleksander Motuzyanyk also stated: “In the past 24 hours the resistance (from separatists) has significantly increased. The geographical area of ceasefire violations by the separatists has widened[...]The increase in the quantity of armed attacks[...]demonstrate the unwillingness of the separatists to settle the conflict by peaceful means,”¹⁹⁶¹.

April 30, 2015: Germany, France, Russia and Ukraine speak on the phone where Russia, according to Ukraine, stated that: “In the context of the discussion of ways towards a peaceful resolution (of the conflict), President Putin has accepted the possibility of deploying a peacekeeping contingent to the Donbass region,”¹⁹⁶². Russia did not mention this in its own statement¹⁹⁶³.

May 1, 2015: Russia denies that Putin has agreed to deploy peacekeepers in Ukraine¹⁹⁶⁴. Peskov stated that it was "absolutely wrong" to raise the issue of peacekeepers until all provisions of the cease-fire had been fulfilled¹⁹⁶⁵. Peskov however also state that Russia had never disputed the notion of deploying peacekeepers¹⁹⁶⁶.

May 4, 2015: Fighting increases in Eastern Ukraine with the worst clashes since the Minsk Agreements came into force¹⁹⁶⁷. There were violations from both sides. Linked to the previous discussion on deploying a peacekeeping mission to Ukraine, the Kremlin Spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov stated: "Before the text of the Minsk agreement and its concrete points are implemented we believe that it would be absolutely wrong to raise any other issues including that about peacekeepers,"¹⁹⁶⁸. He also noted that Russia was not in a place to decide on a peacekeeping deployment as it is not a party to the conflict¹⁹⁶⁹. Representatives from OSCE, Russia and Ukraine are to meet in Minsk as preparation for a meeting between the separatists and Ukraine¹⁹⁷⁰.

May 5, 2015: The EU announces that it will implement a free trade agreement with Ukraine despite pressures from Russia¹⁹⁷¹. Despite the EU being willing to discuss Russia’s concerns, it stated that the implementation of the agreement: "will be a top priority of the EU and the partners concerned for the coming years"¹⁹⁷². Meanwhile, Lavrov stated at a news conference in Moscow: "Judging by certain signs, someone in the European Union wants the EU to allow the Ukrainian government not to implement the

¹⁹⁶⁰ “Ukraine says separatists step up attacks, Poroshenko warns of 'threat of war'” *Reuters*, April 28, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-casualties/ukraine-says-separatists-step-up-attacks-poroshenko-warns-of-threat-of-war-idUSKBN0NJ11120150428>

¹⁹⁶¹ Ibid

¹⁹⁶² “Kiev says Putin open to peacekeeping mission in east Ukraine” *Yahoo News*, April 30, 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/kyiv-says-putin-open-peacekeeping-mission-east-ukraine-185536140.html>

¹⁹⁶³ Ibid

¹⁹⁶⁴ “Kremlin Puts Off Issue Of Peacekeepers In Ukraine” *RadioFreeEurope*, May 1, 2015, <https://www.rferl.org/a/kremlin-puts-off-issue-of-peacekeepers-in-ukraine/26989147.html>

¹⁹⁶⁵ Ibid

¹⁹⁶⁶ Ibid

¹⁹⁶⁷ “Fighting intensifies in eastern Ukraine despite ceasefire” *DW*, May 3, 2015, <https://www.dw.com/en/fighting-intensifies-in-eastern-ukraine-despite-ceasefire/a-18425805>

¹⁹⁶⁸ Ibid

¹⁹⁶⁹ Ibid

¹⁹⁷⁰ “Ukraine: Mediators set new peace talks as fighting reignites in east” *Los Angeles Times*, May 4, 2015, <https://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-ukraine-russia-fighting-intensifies-20150504-story.html>

¹⁹⁷¹ “EU Remains Committed to Free Trade Deal With Ukraine, Draft Shows” *The Moscow Times*, May 5, 2015, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/05/05/eu-remains-committed-to-free-trade-deal-with-ukraine-draft-shows-a46306>

¹⁹⁷² Ibid

Minsk agreements,"¹⁹⁷³. Lavrov also accused Ukraine of increasing its military activities ¹⁹⁷⁴. Ukraine on the other hand accused the separatists of preparing themselves for more attacks¹⁹⁷⁵.

May 6, 2015: Ukraine erects fences at its borders, including digging trenches, in order to deter a Russian invasion¹⁹⁷⁶. The project is called "Project Wall" and will cost \$520 million and take approx. 4 years to complete¹⁹⁷⁷. Quote from news article: "In earlier times, lines separating the republics of the Soviet Union were viewed as little more than a formality, so families and communities straddled inconspicuously across borders. On paper, that changed with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. But scant security along the 2,300-kilometer (1,400-mile) demarcation between Russia and Ukraine has for two decades ensured a smuggler's dream. Farmers and their livestock blithely crisscrossed in areas where it has never quite been entirely clear which country one was in. Separatist fighters in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions have exploited the porous borders, moving about with ease."¹⁹⁷⁸. Other measures have been taken in order to protect the border such as tightening entry for Russian citizens (who previously could travel to Ukraine with merely their national ID) and trenches, shelters and parking space for armored vehicles has been created along highways ¹⁹⁷⁹. Poroshenko noted that during a security and defense council meeting: "The threat of large-scale military action from Russian terrorist groups not only remains but is growing,"¹⁹⁸⁰. He also stated that there were more than 40,000 separatist fighters in the rebel-controlled territories and a further 50,000 Russian troops across the border¹⁹⁸¹.

May 7, 2015: NATO stages air, land and sea exercises across Russia's northern borders as a response to Russia's actions in Ukraine¹⁹⁸².

May 8, 2015: Ukraine joins most of Europe in marking of WW2 a day ahead of Russia and Poroshenko also ditched the "great patriotic war" (used in Russia) in favor of the WW2 and as he stated: "For practically the first time[...]we're at last looking at our own Ukrainian history, looking with our own eyes and not through Moscow's glasses,"¹⁹⁸³. The legacy of WW2 is contentious in Ukraine as a minority of men joined a militia that was prepared to ally itself with the Nazi invaders to fight Soviet Communist rule, leaving Ukrainian nationalism forever vulnerable to accusations of fascist sympathies¹⁹⁸⁴.

¹⁹⁷³ "Russia: EU Does Not Want Ukraine Truce To Hold" *RadioFreEurope*, May 5, 2015,

<https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-ukraine-osce-minsk-accords-cease-fire-violations/26996059.html>

¹⁹⁷⁴ Ibid

¹⁹⁷⁵ Ibid

¹⁹⁷⁶ "As Ukraine Erects Defenses, Critics Fear Expensive Failure" *The Moscow Times*, May 6, 2015,

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/05/06/as-ukraine-erects-defenses-critics-fear-expensive-failure-a46358>

¹⁹⁷⁷ Ibid

¹⁹⁷⁸ Ibid

¹⁹⁷⁹ Ibid

¹⁹⁸⁰ Makhovsky, Andrei and Natalia Zinets "Ukraine leader warns of worsening conflict, peace envoys more hopeful" *Reuters*, May 6, 2015, <https://in.reuters.com/article/ukraine-crisis-casualties/ukraine-leader-warns-of-worsening-conflict-peace-envoys-more-hopeful-idINKBN0NR1AL20150506>

¹⁹⁸¹ Ibid

¹⁹⁸² "NATO military exercises aim to send message of resolve to Russia" *Los Angeles Times*, May 7, 2015,

<https://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-russia-nato-nuclear-threat-20150507-story.html#page=1>

¹⁹⁸³ Natalia Zinets "Ukraine remembers WW2 with Europe rather than Russia" *Reuters*, May 8, 2015,

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-ww2-anniversary-ukraine-poroshenko/ukraine-remembers-ww2-with-europe-rather-than-russia-idUKKBNONT14S20150508>

¹⁹⁸⁴ Ibid

May 9, 2015: Russia celebrates victory day with the annual military parade on the Red Square¹⁹⁸⁵. Several western leaders stayed away although 30 other leaders, including China and UNSG was present¹⁹⁸⁶. In a speech, Putin warned about the rise of fascism and stated: "The basic principles of international cooperation have been ignored more often in the last decades. The principles which were hard won by humankind following the global hardships of the war[...]We've seen attempts to create a unipolar world"¹⁹⁸⁷. Poroshenko rebuked Russia for accusing Ukraine of fascists method and stated: "It is the utmost cynicism to depict our country as a supposedly fascist state. It is done with the aim of justifying to the Russian people its own criminal action — Russia's aggression against Ukraine,"¹⁹⁸⁸. Two US aid workers were released in Eastern Ukraine after having been captured and accused of spying by the separatists¹⁹⁸⁹. The aid workers were part of a group from the IRC whose offices were raided by the separatists¹⁹⁹⁰. The IRC stopped its operations in the area following the raid¹⁹⁹¹.

May 14, 2015: NATO and the EU agree on collaboration on countering hybrid warfare (blend of unidentified troops, propaganda and economic pressure) which NATO has accused Russia of using against Ukraine¹⁹⁹². NATO stated that NATO and EU would work together to "ensure that the strategies we are developing are complementary so that we can work together quickly and effectively in case of a hybrid threat against any of our members,"¹⁹⁹³

May 16, 2015: Ukraine passes law which bans the use of communist and Soviet symbols, including the tearing down of thousands of monuments¹⁹⁹⁴. The bill was declared as a "giant step forward for Ukraine"¹⁹⁹⁵.

May 18, 2015: Ukraine announces that it will prosecute captured Russian soldiers for terrorist acts¹⁹⁹⁶. Peskov reiterated that there were no servicemen although the Russian defense ministry did acknowledge that the two captured had served under the Russian army but that they were no longer part of the army when they were captured¹⁹⁹⁷.

May 21, 2015: Ukraine parliament voted to suspend 5 military cooperation agreements with Russia with one of the agreements scrapped being giving the Russian military transit rights to reach Moldova and its

¹⁹⁸⁵ "Russian Victory Day Celebrations Draw Rebuke from Ukraine" *The Moscow Times*, May 9, 2015,

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/05/09/russian-victory-day-celebrations-draw-rebuke-from-ukraine-a46437>

¹⁹⁸⁶ Ibid

¹⁹⁸⁷ Ibid

¹⁹⁸⁸ Ibid

¹⁹⁸⁹ Dragana Jovanovic "Ukraine Separatists Release US Aid Workers Accused of Spying" *ABC News*, May 9, 2015,

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/ukraine-separatists-release-us-aid-workers-accused-spying/story?id=30925850>

¹⁹⁹⁰ Ibid

¹⁹⁹¹ Ibid

¹⁹⁹² Adrian Croft and Sabine Siebold "NATO and EU to work together to counter Crimea-style "hybrid" warfare"

Yahoo News, May 14, 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/nato-eu-together-counter-crimea-style-hybrid-warfare-154832836.html>

¹⁹⁹³ Ibid

¹⁹⁹⁴ Ukraine Crisis Timeline "Ukraine Passes Law Banning Soviet Symbols" *CSIS*, May 16, 2015,

<http://ukraine.csis.org/index.htm#89>

¹⁹⁹⁵ Ibid

¹⁹⁹⁶ Richard Balmforth and Pavel Polityuk "Ukraine says it will prosecute captured Russian soldiers for terrorist

acts" *Reuters*, May 18, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-military/ukraine-says-it-will-prosecute-captured-russian-soldiers-for-terrorist-acts-idUSKBN0O30TE20150518>

¹⁹⁹⁷ Ibid

separatist area of Transnistria¹⁹⁹⁸. Another agreement included to protect each other's state secrets¹⁹⁹⁹. Alexander Hug from the OSCE stated that the geographical scope of the conflict seemed to be spreading²⁰⁰⁰. Aleksandr Zakharchenko, the self-declared leader of the Donetsk People's Republic, state that the separatists intended to all of Donbass stating: "I consider and will consider the territory of the Donetsk region, which is currently under Kyiv authorities, illegally occupied and a subject to liberation[...]By what means it will happen – time will tell."²⁰⁰¹.

May 25, 2015: Separatist leader of Luhansk, Alexei Mozgovoi, is killed in an attack by a pro-Ukrainian guerilla group called “Shadow”²⁰⁰². Also, the project of Novorossiia is put on hold by the separatists²⁰⁰³. Leader of the parliament which united the separatist entities, Oleg Tsarev, stated that the reason was because the project was not compatible with the Minsk Agreements²⁰⁰⁴. Alexander Kofman, foreign minister of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic also stated that: "The Novorossia project is frozen until a new political elite emerges in all these regions that will be able to head the movement. We don't have the right to impose our opinion on [the Ukrainian cities of] Kharkiv, Zaporizhia and Odess²⁰⁰⁵. Lavrov also stated that the separatist areas should remain a part of Ukraine: "At all levels, including the presidential one and in other formats, we say that we want [these republics] to become part of Ukraine[...]They have unveiled their own constitution project in which they talk about their status as envisaged by the Minsk agreements: The republics will become part of Ukraine, followed by constitutional reform that will solidify this status into a permanent one,"²⁰⁰⁶

May 26, 2015: According to a Bloomberg report, the Russian military uses mobile crematories in order to get rid of the bodies of Russian servicemen killed in Ukraine²⁰⁰⁷.

May 27, 2015: According to a Reuter reporter, Russia is massing troops and weaponry at a makeshift base near the Ukraine border²⁰⁰⁸. Many of the vehicles have their number plates and other insignia removed and

¹⁹⁹⁸ “Ukraine Lawmakers Suspend Military Cooperation With Russia” *The Moscow Times*, May 21, 2015, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/05/21/ukraine-lawmakers-suspend-military-cooperation-with-russia-a46747>

¹⁹⁹⁹ Dmitry Zaks “Ukraine rips up key cooperation deals with Russia” *Yahoo News*, May 21, 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/ukraine-rips-key-cooperation-deals-russia-100539437.html>

²⁰⁰⁰ Alessandra Prentice “Ukraine reports fresh casualties in east, OSCE sees violence spreading” *Reuters*, May 21, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukrainec-crisis-casualties/ukraine-reports-fresh-casualties-in-east-osce-sees-violence-spreading-idUSKBN00613N20150521>

²⁰⁰¹ Daniel Schearf “Ukraine Fears Summer Offensive Despite Diplomatic Initiatives” *VOA News*, May 21, 2015, <https://www.voanews.com/europe/ukraine-fears-summer-offensive-despite-diplomatic-initiatives>

²⁰⁰² Radina Gigova “High-ranking separatist commander killed in eastern Ukraine” *CNN*, May 25, 2015, <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/05/24/europe/ukraine-separatist-commander-killed/>

²⁰⁰³ “What people in Southeast Ukraine really think of Novorossiia” *The Washington Post*, May 25, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/05/25/what-people-in-southeast-ukraine-really-think-of-novorossiia/>

²⁰⁰⁴ Ibid

²⁰⁰⁵ Ivan Nechepurenko “Death of Novorossia: Why Kremlin Abandoned Ukraine Separatist Project” *The Moscow Times*, May 25, 2015, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/05/25/death-of-novorossia-why-kremlin-abandoned-ukraine-separatist-project-a46849>

²⁰⁰⁶ Ibid

²⁰⁰⁷ Ukraine Crisis Timeline “Report: Russian Military Deploying Mobile Crematoriums in Ukraine” *CSIS*, May 26, 2015, <http://ukraine.csis.org/index.htm#99>

²⁰⁰⁸ Maria Tsvetkova “Exclusive: Russia masses heavy firepower on border with Ukraine – witness” *Reuters*, May 27, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-russia-military/exclusive-russia-masses-heavy-firepower-on-border-with-ukraine-witness-idUSKBN00C2K820150527>

the same goes for the servicemen²⁰⁰⁹. Russia did not comment on this and several of the servicemen said they had been sent there for an exercise²⁰¹⁰.

May 28, 2015: Putin signs a decree that classifies the death of special operations soldiers during peacetime a state secret²⁰¹¹. Peskov states that the decree is merely an upgrade of state privacy laws that “has nothing to do with Ukraine”²⁰¹². Amnesty international denounced the move as an infringement on the freedom of speech and stated: “Not only is this decree a blatant attack on freedom of expression, it also has sinister undertones that will intensify speculation President Putin has something to hide – specifically losses incurred by Russia's military in Ukraine,”²⁰¹³ Despite this Putin continues to enjoy a 86% approval rating at home²⁰¹⁴. Meanwhile Ukraine’s defense minister, Stepan Poltorak, stated that Russia had moved forces into eastern Ukraine as he stated: “A large number of tanks and artillery systems have been moved into the territory, and in the territory of Luhansk and Donetsk there are units of Russian armed forces[...]That is why we see a risk fighting will restart.”²⁰¹⁵. Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia sign a memorandum of understanding on considering a joint procurement of medium-range air defense systems²⁰¹⁶.

May 31, 2015: Poroshenko announces the appointment of former Georgian president, Saakashvili, the governor of Odessa in Southern Ukraine²⁰¹⁷. Saakashvili was granted citizenship at the same time²⁰¹⁸. In response Medvedev tweeted: “Saakashvili – head of Odessa region. The Chapiteau show goes on. Sad Ukraine”²⁰¹⁹. Saakashvili stated that the governorship was important because Odessa was a “frontline” both against local corruption and against perceived Russian aggression in the region and that: “If Odessa ever falls, God forbid, then Georgia might be wiped out from the map,”²⁰²⁰.

June 1, 2015: An independent report finds that the Russian defense ministry had faked two satellite images in order to blame Ukraine for the downing of the Malaysian Airline²⁰²¹.

²⁰⁰⁹ Ibid

²⁰¹⁰ Ibid

²⁰¹¹ “Putin denies Russian troops are in Ukraine, decrees certain deaths secret” *Washington Post*, May 28, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/putin-denies-russian-troops-are-in-ukraine-decrees-certain-deaths-secret/2015/05/28/9bb15092-0543-11e5-93f4-f24d4af7f97d_story.html

²⁰¹² Ibid

²⁰¹³ “Putin declares Russian military deaths in peacetime state secrets” *Los Angeles Times*, May 28, 2015, <https://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-russia-putin-military-deaths-secret-20150528-story.html>

²⁰¹⁴ Jennifer Monaghan “Putin's Approval Rating Remains at 86% Unfazed by Economic Crisis, Ukraine Conflict” *The Moscow Times*, May 28, 2015, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/05/28/putins-approval-rating-remains-at-86-unfazed-by-economic-crisis-ukraine-conflict-a46934>

²⁰¹⁵ “Ukraine minister says east Ukraine fighting could resume soon” *Reuters*, May 28, 2015, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-ukraine-crisis-east/ukraine-minister-says-east-ukraine-fighting-could-resume-soon-idUKKBN0OD26U20150528>

²⁰¹⁶ Ibid

²⁰¹⁷ Reuters “Ukraine names ex-Georgian president Saakashvili as Odessa governor” *The Guardian*, May 31, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/31/ukraine-saakashvili-odessa-governor>

²⁰¹⁸ Ibid

²⁰¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰²⁰ “Georgia ex-leader Saakashvili gives up citizenship for Ukraine” *BBC News*, June 1, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-32969052>

²⁰²¹ Tom Parfitt “‘Clear and unequivocal’ that Russia faked MH17 evidence” *The Telegraph*, June 1, 2015, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/11643847/Clear-and-unequivocal-that-Russia-faked-MH17-evidence-report-says.html>

June 2, 2015: The firm which makes the Buk systems used in the downing of the Malaysian airline offers to recreate the event as a way of disproving that the system was used by the separatists, but rather by Ukraine²⁰²².

June 3, 2015: Fighting erupts outside of Donetsk with Ukraine accusing the separatists of violating the truce by launching a full-scale offensive²⁰²³. This is denied by the separatists²⁰²⁴.

June 4, 2015: Poroshenko warns of a Russian invasion and that 9000 Russian troops were deployed stating: "Ukraine's military should be ready for a new offensive by the enemy, as well as a full-scale invasion along the entire border with the Russian Federation[...]We must be really prepared for this." ²⁰²⁵. Poroshenko also added that Kremlin's "plan to sow separatism in south-eastern Ukraine" had failed and only persisted in areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions because of "Russian bayonets"²⁰²⁶. Russia denied the impending threat with Lavrov accusing Ukraine of jeopardizing the Minsk agreement, by placing it "under the constant threat of disruption" and by refusing to engage in direct dialogue with separatist leaders²⁰²⁷. In his speech to the parliament, Poroshenko also stated that the eastern part of the country would be cut further off by fortification of the front and ending food supplies, until Russia abides by the Minsk agreements²⁰²⁸.

June 5, 2015: The OSCE notes an increase in ceasefire violations and in another occasion Poroshenko held several interviews and meetings with foreign media and leaders and in an interview stated: "We will defend our country, our territorial integrity and our independence by ourselves[...]We have weapons for that. But unfortunately we are fighting with the weapons from the 20th century, from the time of the Soviet Union, against the Russian — most modern — weapons of the 21st century[...]Here we are defending freedom, we are defending democracy, we are defending European values, and the actual reason of this war is the right of the Ukrainian people to live under European standards, with European values, in the European Union."²⁰²⁹. Poroshenko also stated that Ukraine had informed the OSCE that it would move heavy weapons back to defend the town, reversing a previous agreed withdrawal²⁰³⁰. Alexander Hug from the OSCE stated that the fighting in Maryinka (outside Donetsk): "constitutes a new, worrying development in the conflict in eastern Ukraine."²⁰³¹. Poroshenko also noted that Ukraine cannot make any political concessions until weapons and fighters are removed from the east and the border with Russia is brought back fully under Ukrainian control²⁰³².

²⁰²² Shaun Walker "Missile firm offers to recreate MH17 crash in bid to clear Russia" *The Guardian*, June 2, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/02/russian-missile-firm-offers-recreate-mh17-crash>

²⁰²³ "Ukraine crisis: Heavy fighting rages near Donetsk, despite truce" *BBC News*, June 3, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-32988499>

²⁰²⁴ Ibid

²⁰²⁵ "Ukraine's Poroshenko warns of 'full-scale' Russia invasion" *BBC News*, June 4, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33003237>

²⁰²⁶ Ibid

²⁰²⁷ Ibid

²⁰²⁸ Andrew E. Kramer "Hardening of positions undercuts Ukraine peace accord" *The New York Times*, June 4, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/05/world/europe/hardening-of-positions-undercuts-ukraine-poroshenko-peace-accord.html>

²⁰²⁹ David Herszenhorn "Ukraine repels separatists in fierce fighting, Poroshenko says" *The New York Times*, June 5, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/06/world/europe/ukraine-poroshenko-maryinka-fighting.html>

²⁰³⁰ Ibid

²⁰³¹ Ibid

²⁰³² Ibid

June 6, 2015: In a comment to an Italian newspaper, Putin states: "I would like to say — there's no need to be afraid of Russia[...]Only a sick person — and even then only in his sleep — can imagine that Russia would suddenly attack NATO."²⁰³³.

June 11, 2015: A faction in the US congress presses Obama to send lethal aid to Ukraine²⁰³⁴. On lethal aid from the US, Poroshenko stated: "We have an effective form of cooperation, but not with lethal weapons, with the United States, Canada, U.K.[...]We are very satisfied with the current level of cooperation but we would be happy if the level of this cooperation would be increased."²⁰³⁵.

June 12, 2015: Ukraine's prime minister announces that Ukraine may halt its debt repayments in order to fund the war against the Russian-backed separatists in Ukraine²⁰³⁶.

June 14, 2015: Russia responds to the US proposal of storing heavy weaponry in Ukraine by stating that if the US is to store weapons in Ukraine then Russia would boost its forces on the Western flank²⁰³⁷. Russian General Yury Yakubov, stated that such a move would be "the most aggressive step by the Pentagon and NATO" since the Cold War and that "Russia would be left with no other option but to boost its troops and forces on the western flank,"²⁰³⁸.

June 15, 2015: Residents of two areas in eastern Ukraine which have been frequently shelled staged a protest chanting "stop the war" and "out with everybody"²⁰³⁹. The protesters were however not unified in their message as some wanted the rebels to attack the Ukrainian Army, to push the front farther from their neighborhoods, others demanded that the separatists remove artillery pieces from backyards and city streets, so as not to invite retaliatory strikes whilst others again demanded pension payments (which Ukraine has suspended as part of the economic blockade on the separatist area)²⁰⁴⁰.

June 16, 2015: Kerry and Lavrov discuss how to ensure the ceasefire with Kerry urging: "Russia to seize the opportunity of upcoming meetings of the Trilateral Contact Group and its Working Groups to accelerate progress on implementing the Minsk agreements,"²⁰⁴¹. Lavrov on the other hand stressed the importance of "establishing a direct dialogue between the [Kyiv] government and the self-proclaimed unrecognized Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics"²⁰⁴².

²⁰³³ Scott Neuman "Putin To West: Russia Is No Threat" *NPR*, June 6, 2015, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/06/06/412506802/putin-to-west-russia-is-no-threat>

²⁰³⁴ Jennifer Steinhaur and David Herszenhorn "Defying Obama, many in congress press to arm Ukraine" *The New York Times*, June 11, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/12/world/europe/defying-obama-many-in-congress-press-to-arm-ukraine.html>

²⁰³⁵ Ibid

²⁰³⁶ "Ukraine May Freeze Debt Payments To Fund War" *RadioFreeEurope*, June 12, 2015, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-debt-payments-freeze/27069518.html>

²⁰³⁷ "Russian Officials React to U.S. Plans to Store Arms in the Baltics" *The Moscow Times*, June 15, 2015, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/06/15/russian-officials-react-to-us-plans-to-store-arms-in-the-baltics-a47379>

²⁰³⁸ Ibid

²⁰³⁹ Andrew E. Kramer "Discontent in Eastern Ukraine leads to rare public protest" *The New York Times*, June 15, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/16/world/europe/discontent-in-eastern-ukraine-leads-to-rare-public-protest.html>

²⁰⁴⁰ Ibid

²⁰⁴¹ "Kerry, Lavrov Discuss Efforts To Maintain Cease-Fire In Ukraine" *RadioFreeEurope*, June 16, 2015, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-russia-kerry-lavrov-cease-fire/27074481.html>

²⁰⁴² Ibid

June 19, 2015: Putin states that Russia was "not the first" to start the crisis in Ukraine and rather he blamed the US for "igniting it."²⁰⁴³.

June 20, 2015: An OSCE report states that there are ceasefire violations on both sides with a majority of the incidents coming from the separatist side²⁰⁴⁴.

June 22, 2015: The secretary of Russia's security council said it is impossible to stop Russians from going to fight in Ukraine because they are guided by "emotions."²⁰⁴⁵.

June 24, 2015: The Normandy format meet in Paris to discuss the situation in Ukraine where they agreed to continue their engagement under this format²⁰⁴⁶. NATO warns of the risk that heavy fighting may resume in Ukraine and added that Russia continued to support the separatists with weapons, soldiers and training²⁰⁴⁷. In other related events, the Ukraine military accused the separatists of conducting long-range artillery attacks on villages in the east²⁰⁴⁸.

June 26, 2015: The Ukraine defense minister urged the west not to retreat from Ukraine as Russia build-up of forces showed that its intention was to seize control of Ukraine²⁰⁴⁹. As he stated: "One should not be naive and think that Putin has given up his plans to seize Ukraine, to destabilize the situation in Ukraine. He's just changing his tactics and strategies, but his goal remains the same: to seize Ukraine."²⁰⁵⁰.

July 1, 2015: The Russian prosecutor-general's office stated that it would review the decision by the Soviet Union's State Council to recognize the independence of the Baltic states but also added that this was a request from two members of the United Russia party adding that it would have no legal implications and that: "We are required by law to consider all requests we receive, regardless of their content. Some of them lack common sense"²⁰⁵¹. It caused outrage among the Baltic states with Estonia stating: "It serves as yet another example of the resurgent imperialistic mood that unfortunately exists in Russia."²⁰⁵².

July 2, 2015: A dossier provided by the Ukraine security service, sent to the US, states that five Russian generals are playing a key role in organizing and commanding the separatists²⁰⁵³. The US stated that the

²⁰⁴³ "Only the West can solve Ukraine crisis,' says Putin" *DW*, June 19, 2015, <https://www.dw.com/en/only-the-west-can-solve-ukraine-crisis-says-putin/a-18527144>

²⁰⁴⁴ "Latest from OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine based on information received as of 19:30 (Kyiv time), 19 June 2015" *OSCE*, June 20, 2015, <https://www.osce.org/ukraine-smm/165476>

²⁰⁴⁵ "Moscow Powerless to Stop Russians from Fighting in Ukraine: Security Chief" *NDTV*, June 22, 2015, <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/moscow-powerless-to-stop-russians-from-fighting-in-ukraine-security-chief-774102>

²⁰⁴⁶ "Normandy' group of foreign ministers call for ceasefire in Donbass – Fabius" *Reuters*, June 24, 2015, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-ukraine-crisis-formins/normandy-group-of-foreign-ministers-call-for-ceasefire-in-donbass-fabius-idUKKBN0P32L220150624>

²⁰⁴⁷ "NATO Warns Heavy Fighting Could Resume in Ukraine" *VOA News*, June 25, 2015, <https://www.voanews.com/europe/nato-warns-heavy-fighting-could-resume-ukraine>

²⁰⁴⁸ Ibid

²⁰⁴⁹ "Putin out to seize control of Ukraine, says Kiev defense chief" *Reuters*, June 26, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-military/putin-out-to-seize-control-of-ukraine-says-kiev-defense-chief-idUSKBN0P61AR20150626>

²⁰⁵⁰ Ibid

²⁰⁵¹ Maria Tsvetkova and Andrius Sytas "Russia tries to soothe Baltic states over independence review", *Reuters*, July 1, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-baltics/russia-tries-to-soothe-baltic-states-over-independence-review-idUSKCN0PB4M520150701>

²⁰⁵² Ibid

²⁰⁵³ Eli Lake and Josh Rogin "Ukraine Says Russian Generals Lead Separatists" *Bloomberg*, July 2, 2015, <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2015-07-02/ukraine-says-russian-generals-lead-separatists>

information generally conforms with the US intelligence assessment of Russia's activity in Ukraine²⁰⁵⁴. Russia on the other hand denounces a new US military strategy which states that Russia is failing to respect the sovereignty of its neighbors, that "Russia's military actions are undermining regional security directly and through proxy forces," and that Russia is among the "revisionist-minded" states²⁰⁵⁵. Kremlin spokesman responded saying that "The use of such language in this document points, shall we say, to what is probably a confrontational attitude devoid of any objectivity towards our country"²⁰⁵⁶.

July 3, 2015: The separatists withdraw from Shyrokyne with the separatist leader Denis Pushilin warning that the "unilateral demilitarisation" by their side may not be enough to establish a lasting peace and that "We are waiting for a similar step (from Ukraine),"²⁰⁵⁷. Ukraine however stated that "This is just a pullback of one infantry unit -- no more[...]It has absolutely no effect on the situation. The threat is still there because their tank and artillery forces remain very close to Shyrokyne and could always attack again,"²⁰⁵⁸. Russia on the other hand expressed "deep concern" over Ukraine's plans to decentralize power as part of a peace deal with separatist rebels²⁰⁵⁹. Poroshenko presented a blueprint to give Ukraine's regions more powers and control over their budgets and said that the moves would amount to a "vaccination" against federalization²⁰⁶⁰. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov however stated: "The preparation of such laws without taking into consideration the opinions of the representatives of the Donbass can hardly be seen as the fulfillment of the Minsk agreements."²⁰⁶¹. Alexander Zakharchenko, self-appointed head of the Donetsk region, however stated that "Neither I, nor my colleague Plotnitsky, gave agreement to Poroshenko's proposed conception of constitutional reform"²⁰⁶². Donetsk has also called for local election on October 18, a week before the rest of Ukraine, which Poroshenko stated would be "destructive"²⁰⁶³.

July 4, 2015: 1,000 Ukrainian pro-government fighters and far-right supporters marched through Kiev calling on the government to end the Minsk ceasefire accord and declare war on pro-Russian rebels in the east²⁰⁶⁴. The march was called by the ultra-nationalist Right Sector group²⁰⁶⁵.

²⁰⁵⁴ Ibid

²⁰⁵⁵ "Russia calls new U.S. military strategy confrontational" *Reuters*, July 2, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-russia-military/russia-calls-new-u-s-military-strategy-confrontational-idUSKCN0PC0T320150702>

²⁰⁵⁶ Ibid

²⁰⁵⁷ Sergey Volskiy "Ukraine rebels withdraw from key frontline village" *Yahoo News*, July 3, 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/rebels-withdraw-key-frontline-village-172504571.html?guccounter=1>

²⁰⁵⁸ Ibid

²⁰⁵⁹ "Russia Expresses 'Deep Concern' Over Ukraine's Decentralization Plan" *The Moscow Times*, July 3, 2015, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/07/03/russia-expresses-deep-concern-over-ukraines-decentralization-plan-a47876>

²⁰⁶⁰ Ibid

²⁰⁶¹ Ibid

²⁰⁶² Ibid

²⁰⁶³ Ibid

²⁰⁶⁴ "Ukraine crisis: Rally in Kiev urges war on eastern rebels" *BBC News*, July 4, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33392991>

²⁰⁶⁵ Ibid

July 7, 2015: According to the New York Times, Chechens assist Ukrainians in the fight against “the Russians”²⁰⁶⁶. Meanwhile, Russia has cut off the power to the separatist areas²⁰⁶⁷.

July 10, 2015: According to Poroshenko, the threat of criminal violence in Ukraine has “significantly risen” stating: “The level of guerrilla and terrorist threats in the regions outside the zone (of conflict) has significantly risen,”²⁰⁶⁸. This, Poroshenko argues, is the result of the trafficking of weapons from Eastern Ukraine²⁰⁶⁹. Meanwhile, 2000 recruits of a newly formed police force in Ukraine entered duty with Poroshenko stating that their job was not just to uphold the law but “also to make people believe that reforms are inevitable”²⁰⁷⁰.

July 11, 2015: Clash between Right Sector and Ukrainian police force leaves two Right Sector members dead²⁰⁷¹. According to a lawyer representing Russian soldiers, dozens of Russian soldiers have fled their unit in fear of being deployed to Ukraine and they now face trial²⁰⁷². The soldiers allegedly were offered money and benefits from people in uniforms without insignia to join the war in Ukraine²⁰⁷³. The Russian defense ministry denied that a dozen soldiers were involved and stated that it only involved four soldiers who had committed disciplinary offenses²⁰⁷⁴.

July 12, 2015: A standoff between Right Sector members and Ukrainian police continue, with fighting breaking out in the town of Mukachevo, near the borders with Poland and Slovakia²⁰⁷⁵. A disagreement over cigarette smuggling between Right Sector and another group apparently led to the confrontation²⁰⁷⁶.

July 14, 2015: A booby-trap, allegedly placed by the Right Sector injures two police officers in Western Ukraine²⁰⁷⁷. Poroshenko orders the security services and police to disarm “illegal groups” and root out corruption and smuggling²⁰⁷⁸.

²⁰⁶⁶ Andrew E. Kramer “Islamic battalions, stocked with Chechens, aid Ukraine in war with rebels” *The New York Times*, July 7, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/08/world/europe/islamic-battalions-stocked-with-chechens-aid-ukraine-in-war-with-rebels.html?_r=0

²⁰⁶⁷ Dmitry Zaks “Russia cuts off power supplies to Ukraine rebels: Kiev” *Yahoo News*, July 7, 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/russia-cuts-off-power-supplies-ukraine-rebels-kiev-155519945.html>

²⁰⁶⁸ “Criminal as well as political violence threatens Ukraine: Poroshenko” *Reuters*, July 10, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-poroshenko/criminal-as-well-as-political-violence-threatens-ukraine-poroshenko-idUSKCN0PK0LQ20150710>

²⁰⁶⁹ Ibid

²⁰⁷⁰ Margarita Chornokondrantenko and Elizabeth Piper “Ukraine launches Western-style police force to set a marker for reform” *Reuters*, July 6, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-police/ukraine-launches-western-style-police-force-to-set-a-marker-for-reform-idUSKCN0PG13E20150706>

²⁰⁷¹ “At least two dead in Ukraine sports centre attack” *The Telegraph*, July 11, 2015, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/11733898/At-least-two-dead-in-Ukraine-sports-centre-attack.html>

²⁰⁷² “Reports: Russian troops leave unit fearing Ukraine deployment” *DW*, July 11, 2015, <https://www.dw.com/en/reports-russian-troops-leave-unit-fearing-ukraine-deployment/a-18579331>

²⁰⁷³ Ibid

²⁰⁷⁴ Ibid

²⁰⁷⁵ Andrew E. Kramer “Police in western Ukraine clash with paramilitary group; 7 are hurt”, *The New York Times*, July 12, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/13/world/europe/police-in-western-ukraine-clash-with-paramilitary-group-7-are-hurt.html?_r=0

²⁰⁷⁶ Ibid

²⁰⁷⁷ Alec Luhn “Tensions rising in Ukraine as far-right militia’s boobytraps injure two police” *The Guardian*, July 14, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/14/tensions-rising-in-ukraine-as-far-right-militias-boobytraps-injure-two-police>

²⁰⁷⁸ Ibid

July 15, 2015: Violence escalates between Ukraine and the separatists with shelling leading to deaths on both sides²⁰⁷⁹. Ukraine's security council stated that the previous 24 hours saw "some of the most intense bombardments of Ukrainian territory since the signing of the Minsk (truce) agreement" and continued to state: "The latest events are proof of yet another attempt by Russia and its puppet to wreck the Minsk agreement and restart active military hostilities,"²⁰⁸⁰.

July 16, 2015: In connection to the Minsk agreements, Ukraine's parliament approves a draft law to grant greater autonomy to the separatist-held areas in the country's eastern Donetsk and Luhansk regions²⁰⁸¹.

July 20, 2015: NATO and Ukraine launch joint military drills near the Polish border with Russia condemning the war game and stating that NATO "should understand that such actions[...]may threaten to disrupt the visible progress (made) in the peace process concerning the deep internal crisis in Ukraine,"²⁰⁸².

July 21, 2015: Poroshenko announces a plan of introducing a 30 km buffer zone in Luhansk²⁰⁸³. The plan was agreed to between Ukraine's warring factions under mediation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Russia, and it requires all tanks and artillery to be withdrawn from the region and aims to bring an end to the "permanent shelling."²⁰⁸⁴.

July 22, 2015: Right Sector announces that it will start a campaign "to conduct a national referendum on whether President Petro Porshenko and his government should be impeached and an "absolute blockade" set up against territory in eastern Ukraine under the control of pro-Russian separatists."²⁰⁸⁵ The leader also said the referendum was to "ask whether Ukrainians support the legal recognition of volunteer militia units and their right to carry arms as well as the introduction of martial law -- which he said would help defeat the rebels in the east."²⁰⁸⁶.

July 25, 2015: The pentagon announces that it will train Ukrainian regular troops by the end of 2015²⁰⁸⁷.

July 26, 2015: Ukraine detains Russian officer who was driving a military truck carrying ammunition to Eastern Ukraine²⁰⁸⁸. Another man was also detained, and both carried military uniforms without insignia²⁰⁸⁹.

²⁰⁷⁹ Dmitry Zaks "Eleven killed in heaviest Ukraine clashes in weeks" *Yahoo News*, July 15, 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/eight-ukraine-soldiers-killed-past-24-hours-kiev-105451689.html>

²⁰⁸⁰ Ibid

²⁰⁸¹ "Ukraine Moves Toward More Autonomy for Separatist Regions" *VOA News*, July 16, 2015, <https://www.voanews.com/europe/ukraine-moves-toward-more-autonomy-separatist-regions>

²⁰⁸² Gorshkov, Dmytro "Eyeing Russia, US leads fresh military drills in Ukraine" *Yahoo News*, July 20, 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/eyeing-russia-us-leads-fresh-military-drills-ukraine-002306588.html>

²⁰⁸³ "Ukraine agrees to 30-kilometer buffer zone" *DW*, July 22, 2015, <https://www.dw.com/en/ukraine-agrees-to-30-kilometer-buffer-zone/a-18600438>

²⁰⁸⁴ Ibid

²⁰⁸⁵ "Ukraine's Right Sector Calls For Referendum To Impeach Government" *RadioFreeEurope*, July 22, 2015, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-right-sector-rally-government-impeachment/27142450.html>

²⁰⁸⁶ Ibid

²⁰⁸⁷ Ukraine Crisis Timeline "U.S. State Department: Pentagon to Train Ukrainian Regular Troops" *CSIS*, July 25, 2015, <http://ukraine.csis.org/index.htm#168>

²⁰⁸⁸ "Ukraine Detains Alleged Russian Officer In East" *RadioFreeEurope*, July 26, 2015, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-detains-alleged-russian-officer-truck-weapons/27153552.html>

²⁰⁸⁹ Ibid

July 27, 2015: According to the OSCE, there has been a record increase in the number of ceasefire violations²⁰⁹⁰.

July 29, 2015: Russia vetoes a UN resolution meant to create a tribunal to prosecute those responsible for the downing of the Malaysian airline²⁰⁹¹.

July 31, 2015: Ukraine court approves the constitutional changes which allows limited self-rule to the the areas under separatist control in Luhansk and Donetsk²⁰⁹².

August 1, 2015: Ukraine's foreign minister demands that Russia begins new negotiations on a cease-fire deal in eastern Ukraine and he stated that the Russian military and security services were in "full command" of the separatists²⁰⁹³.

August 3, 2015: Ukraine's former Prime Minister (under Yanukovich) announces the creation of the "Ukrainian Salvation Committee" which calls for regime change and early elections in Ukraine²⁰⁹⁴. Kremlin's spokesman stated that Russia had nothing to do with the initiative²⁰⁹⁵.

August 6, 2015: Amid speculations that the separatists have the capability to create a dirty bomb, Ukraine announces that it has prevented a suspected uranium sale²⁰⁹⁶.

August 8, 2015: Per request of the Ukraine Security Service, Ukraine's ministry of culture blacklists 14 Russian artists over their public support for the annexation of Crimea²⁰⁹⁷.

August 9, 2015: OSCE vehicles used for the monitoring are set on fire with the OSCE deputy head of the mission, Alexander Hug, stating: "It seems that this sort of intimidation is aimed at stopping the OSCE from reporting what is going on in the area,"²⁰⁹⁸. The separatist and the government blamed the other²⁰⁹⁹.

August 10, 2015: Violence escalates in Eastern Ukraine with worst shelling since February²¹⁰⁰. The government accused the separatists and the separatists denied it, with Ukrainian military spokesman Andriy

²⁰⁹⁰ Ukraine Crisis Timeline "OSCE Patrol Leader Injured Amid Rising Violence in East" *CSIS*, July 27, 2015, <http://ukraine.csis.org/index.htm#170>

²⁰⁹¹ Rick Gladstone "Russia vetoes UN resolution on tribunal for Malaysia airlines crash in Ukraine" *The New York Times*, July 29, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/30/world/europe/russia-vetoes-un-resolution-on-tribunal-for-malaysia-airlines-crash-in-ukraine.html?_r=0

²⁰⁹² "Ukraine court backs self-rule plan for conflict zone" *BBC News*, July 31, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33736069>

²⁰⁹³ Ukraine Crisis Timeline "Ukraine's Foreign Minister Tells Russia to Begin "Real Negotiations"" *CSIS*, August 1, 2015, <http://ukraine.csis.org/index.htm#175>

²⁰⁹⁴ "Ex-PM Azarov, In Moscow, Proclaims 'Salvation Committee' For Ukraine" *RadioFreeEurope*, August 3, 2015, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-ex-pm-azarov-forms-salvation-committee/27167032.html>

²⁰⁹⁵ Ibid

²⁰⁹⁶ "Ukraine says it prevented a suspected uranium sale" *DW*, August 6, 2015, <https://www.dw.com/en/ukraine-says-it-prevented-a-suspected-uranium-sale/a-18631454>

²⁰⁹⁷ "Ukraine blacklists Depardieu and 13 other Russian artists" *DW*, August 9, 2015, <https://www.dw.com/en/ukraine-blacklists-depardieu-and-13-other-russian-artists/a-18636568>

²⁰⁹⁸ "Arson attacks destroy monitoring mission vehicles in eastern Ukraine" *DW*, August 9, 2015, <https://www.dw.com/en/arson-attacks-destroy-monitoring-mission-vehicles-in-eastern-ukraine/a-18637114>

²⁰⁹⁹ Ibid

²¹⁰⁰ "Ukraine reports heaviest shelling by eastern rebels since February" *Reuters*, August 10, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-conflict/ukraine-reports-heaviest-shelling-by-eastern-rebels-since-february-idUSKCN0QF1B420150810>

Lysenko stating “This brazen attack by the occupiers took place against a background of an escalating situation in east Ukraine,”²¹⁰¹

August 11, 2015: The team investigating the downing of the Malaysian airline state that they have recovered debris which may be fragments from a Russian-made missile system²¹⁰².

August 14, 2015: Separatist leader of the Donetsk Peoples Republic, Alexander Zakharchenko, claims that the troops under his command have been reinforced with 1200 troops trained in Russia²¹⁰³.

August 17, 2015: Violence continues, and Ukraine blames the separatists for shelling civilians whilst Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov blamed Kiev for the violence, giving no detail but saying he suspected Ukraine was preparing a new offensive²¹⁰⁴. Poroshenko on the other hand accused Putin of whipping up tensions in eastern Ukraine by visiting Crimea and as he stated: "This is a challenge to the civilized world and a continuation of the plan to escalate the situation which is being carried out by Russian troops and their mercenaries in the Donbass (east Ukraine),"²¹⁰⁵.

August 18, 2015: While visiting Crimea, Putin takes a dive in a research submarine which is used for researching Crimea’s ancient trade route²¹⁰⁶. Putin stated that such research was important “in order to understand the development of ancient Rus’s relations with its neighbours, as well as the development of Russian statehood,”²¹⁰⁷. Putin responded to Poroshenko’s comment about the annexation that: “I won’t comment on that because the future of Crimea was decided by people who live here. They voted for unification with Russia. Full stop”²¹⁰⁸

August 19, 2015: In a meeting with Crimean leaders, Putin expressed his concern “over continued threat that external forces” which could destabilize the region²¹⁰⁹.

August 22, 2015: In a statement by Poroshenko, he states that military pressure from Russia and the separatists is likely to last decades and that future generations will have to undergo military training: “The military threat from the east is a tangible reality for decades to come. This threat will not go away in the near future and every generation of Ukrainians must have army experience,”²¹¹⁰. Germany, France and

²¹⁰¹ Ibid

²¹⁰² Sterling, Toby “UPDATE 1-Dutch prosecutors: fragments from MH17 site may be from Russian-made missile” *Reuters*, August 11, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/ukraine-crisis-mh17/update-1-dutch-prosecutors-fragments-from-mh17-site-may-be-from-russian-made-missile-idUSL5N10M2PC20150811>

²¹⁰³ Ukraine Crisis Timeline “Rebel Leader Claims Reinforcement by 1,200 Troops” *CSIS*, August 14, 2015, <http://ukraine.csis.org/index.htm#188>

²¹⁰⁴ Richard Balmforth “Civilians, soldiers die in east Ukraine fighting as Putin visits Crimea” *Reuters*, August 17, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-fighting/civilians-soldiers-die-in-east-ukraine-fighting-as-putin-visits-crimea-idUSKCN0QM0OQ20150817>

²¹⁰⁵ Reuters, “Putin’s Crimea visit aims to stir up Ukraine conflict: Poroshenko” *Yahoo News*, August 17, 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/putins-crimea-visit-aims-stir-ukraine-conflict-poroshenko-123835573.html>

²¹⁰⁶ Ronald Oliphant “Vladimir Putin plunges into Black Sea in research submarine” *The Telegraph*, August 18, 2015, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/11810703/Vladimir-Putin-plunges-into-Black-Sea-in-research-submarine.html>

²¹⁰⁷ Ibid

²¹⁰⁸ Ibid

²¹⁰⁹ “Meeting on ensuring law and order in Crimea” *President of Russia*, August 19, 2015, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50156>

²¹¹⁰ Natalia Zinets “Military pressure on Ukraine will last decades, president says” *Reuters*, August 22, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-poroshenko/military-pressure-on-ukraine-will-last-decades-president-says-idUSKCN0QR0FL20150822>

Ukraine will meet, and no invitation is extended to Russia²¹¹¹. Poroshenko stated: "The key goal of the Ukrainian authorities is to create a powerful international community that forms a coalition and stops the aggressor,"²¹¹²

August 24, 2015: Ukraine marks its Independence Day with Poroshenko stating that bandits, mercenaries and Russian militaries keep on killing Ukrainians every day²¹¹³. Poroshenko also stated: "We must remember that we defend not only Ukraine, but also civilizational values of the entire democratic world. I am sure that the developments in Ukraine are the continuation of the creation of Europe" and he was confident that "in joint solidarity with the entire world, Ukraine can stop impudent and cynical mockery of the international law, state sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the whole international security architecture" and he also urged foreign leader "to uphold Ukraine and join its struggle for values, security, truth and peace! This is what it is all about in Donbas and Crimea today".²¹¹⁴ He also stated that "The war for Ukrainian independence is continuing," and that the threat of a "full-scale military invasion" remains, although Russia "also has an alternative strategy - to undermine the situation in the middle of our country and to put the country at loggerheads with key (foreign) partners, isolating it with the aggressor,"²¹¹⁵. Lavrov stated that Poroshenko's words were "unfounded and disgraceful", adding: "Their goal is to break the 'genetic code' ensuring the unity of our nations. I think he won't succeed in that."²¹¹⁶ Lavrov also restated that Russia wanted Germany and France to put pressure on Poroshenko to comply with its commitments under the Minsk agreement and to grant the rebel regions greater autonomy as Russia thinks the changes to the Ukrainian constitution fall short of what had been agreed.²¹¹⁷

August 26, 2015: A report leaked alleges that Russia has paid compensation to families of 2000 soldiers killed in Ukraine²¹¹⁸. Meanwhile the separatists and Ukraine agree to strive for a full ceasefire implementation by September 1 alongside a political process, including plans for local elections and establishment of a special self-management status for separatist-minded regions²¹¹⁹.

August 29, 2015: France, Germany and Russia back the new ceasefire²¹²⁰.

August 31, 2015: Clashes erupt between nationalists and riot police erupt outside the Ukraine parliament as MPs agree to give initial backing to reforms which would allow more autonomy to the separatist areas²¹²¹. Some MPs voted against the reform with Victoria Voynitska stating that "This provision was made to

²¹¹¹ Dmitry Zaks "Putin to be notable absentee at Ukraine crisis talks in Berlin" *Yahoo News*, August 22, 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/putin-notable-absentee-ukraine-crisis-talks-berlin-210125003.html>

²¹¹² Ibid

²¹¹³ Natalia Zinets "Ukraine faces risky year fighting to escape Russian orbit: Poroshenko" *Reuters*, August 24, 2015 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-poroshenko/ukraine-faces-risky-year-fighting-to-escape-russian-orbit-poroshenko-idUSKCN0QT0VS20150824>

²¹¹⁴ Ibid

²¹¹⁵ Ibid

²¹¹⁶ Ibid

²¹¹⁷ Ibid

²¹¹⁸ Paul Roderick Gregory "Russia May Have Inadvertently Posted Its Casualties In Ukraine: 2,000 Deaths, 3,200 Disabled" *Forbes*, August 25, 2015, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/paulroderickgregory/2015/08/25/kremlin-censors-rush-to-erase-inadvertent-release-of-russian-casualties-in-east-ukraine/#7e13381f9c58>

²¹¹⁹ "Ukraine, separatists to strive for full ceasefire from September 1" *Reuters*, August 26, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-ceasefire/ukraine-separatists-to-strive-for-full-ceasefire-from-september-1-idUSKCN0QV29A20150826>

²¹²⁰ "France: Hollande, Merkel, Putin Back Truce Plan For Eastern Ukraine" *RadioFreeEurope*, August 29, 2015, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-truce-russia-france-germany/27215905.html>

²¹²¹ "Ukraine crisis: Deadly anti-autonomy protest outside parliament" *BBC News*, August 31, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34105925>

ensure an aggressor could not influence our constitution[...]And although we do not have an officially declared war, if you look at what is happening in the east, at the president's rhetoric, then it is clear that we have a de facto war."²¹²². Poroshenko stated that if parliament had not passed the draft, in line with Kiev's commitments at the peace talks in Minsk, Belarus, Ukraine would have been in danger of losing the support of its Western allies: "There would have been a real possibility of us being left alone with the aggressor,"²¹²³.

September 1, 2015: The agreed to "school" ceasefire holds with both signs showing compliance²¹²⁴. As Ukraine spokesman Oleksander Motuzyanyk stated: "As of 12 p.m. there were no reports of violations by the illegal armed groups. Now the situation is calm,"²¹²⁵. The naval vessel exercise involving among other Ukraine and US begin in the black sea and is meant to strengthen security in the Black Sea region with Ukraine's Prime Minister stating: "After Crimea was annexed, the Black Sea region is no longer stable and secure,"²¹²⁶. Meanwhile Ukraine's "Radical Party" leaves the coalition government in protest over the decentralization bill with right-wing party opposing a constitutional amendment which aims to give more autonomy to areas controlled by pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine²¹²⁷.

September 2, 2015: The ceasefire ends with a deadly ambush against a Ukrainian army vehicle in Luhansk²¹²⁸.

September 3, 2015: Ukraine's National Security Council approve a new military doctrine which declares Russia to be a military opponent and states that Ukraine must strive for NATO membership in 2020, with Poroshenko stating that the doctrine: "not only officially establishes the Russian Federation as Ukraine's military opponent, but states the task of relocating military units and creating the necessary military infrastructure in the eastern and southern regions."²¹²⁹. NATO opens a command post in Lithuania and Russia responds saying it is an aggressive action²¹³⁰.

September 5, 2015: Despite the ambush on September 2, Poroshenko lauds the ceasefire stating that no Ukraine soldier has died since the implementation of the ceasefire²¹³¹.

²¹²² Shaun Walker "Ukrainian guardsman killed in protests against vote on rebel autonomy" *The Guardian*, August 31, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/31/blast-kiev-parliament-ukraine-mps-back-more-autonomy-for-rebels>

²¹²³ Richard Balmforth and Natalia Zinets "Ukraine guardsman killed in nationalist protest outside parliament" *Reuters*, August 31, 2015, <https://ca.reuters.com/article/topNews/idCAKCN0R00YV20150831>

²¹²⁴ "Ukraine and rebels show positive signs as truce holds for 24 hours" *DW*, September 1, 2015,

<https://www.dw.com/en/ukraine-and-rebels-show-positive-signs-as-truce-holds-for-24-hours/a-18688196>

²¹²⁵ Ibid

²¹²⁶ "Sea Breeze exercise meant to strengthen security in Black Sea Region – Yatseniuk" *Interfax Ukraine*, September 1, 2015, <https://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/287383.html>

²¹²⁷ "Ukraine's Radical Party Quits Government In Protest Over Decentralization Bill" *RadioFreeEurope*, September 1, 2015, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-radical-party-quits-government/27220770.html>

²¹²⁸ "Ukraine conflict: Deadly Luhansk ambush ends lull in east" *BBC News*, September 2, 2015,

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34128085>

²¹²⁹ "Ukraine Officially Declares Russia The Enemy, Vows To Join NATO" *RadioFreeEurope*, September 3, 2015,

<https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-officially-declares-russia-the-enemy-vows-join-nato/27223797.html>

²¹³⁰ Barnes, Julian E. "NATO Increases Presence in Eastern Europe With Opening of Military Post in Lithuania" *The Wall Street Journal*, September 3, 2015, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/nato-increases-presence-in-eastern-europe-with-opening-of-military-post-in-lithuania-1441281814>

²¹³¹ "Ukraine's president lauds renewed cease-fire in the east" *Business Insider*, September 5, 2015, <https://www.businessinsider.com/ap-ukraines-president-lauds-renewed-cease-fire-in-the-east-2015-9?r=US&IR=T&IR=T>

September 8, 2015: The level of violence is at its lowest since the beginning of the conflict²¹³². Kremlin also noted the drop, in violence however the spokesman also stated: "A relative stabilisation has indeed taken place from 1 September and there is practically no shelling by the Ukrainian armed forces of civilian populated areas in Donbass[...]But if you look at other conceptual points of the Minsk agreements[...]unfortunately you cannot note progress, it is impossible."²¹³³. Ukraine accepts the jurisdiction of the ICC over any war crimes committed on Ukraine territory since February 2014²¹³⁴. Poroshenko also states that despite the ceasefire, Ukraine still faces a potential military attack from Russia and stated that, as a response to Russia's ban on Ukraine food import and the failures in the gas imports, Russia's aim is to "strangle our state economically and destabilise it"²¹³⁵. A UN report finds that there is an increase in civilian casualties and widespread human rights violations with Gianni Magazzeni, chief of global operations for the U.N. Human Rights Office, stating that "ongoing hostilities in some areas of eastern Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions reportedly are being fueled by the presence and continuing influx of foreign fighters and sophisticated weapons and ammunition from Russia."²¹³⁶

September 9, 2015: According to Reuters, Russia is building a military base to house several thousand soldiers near Ukraine's border²¹³⁷.

September 11, 2015: In a speech Poroshenko states: "A full withdrawal of all occupation forces from Ukrainian territory and closing the Ukrainian-Russian border: these are the two main preconditions for peace and stability in the Donbass[...]We don't have any civil war. We don't have any internal conflict. It very simple. We have aggression against Ukraine and occupation of independent Ukraine. It's absolutely clear that the aggressor is Russia,"²¹³⁸

September 13, 2015: Germany's foreign minister says that the sides are very close to agreeing on the removal of heavy weapons from the front lines, Lavrov however stated: "90 percent ready[...]the devil is in the details."²¹³⁹.

September 15, 2015: Ukraine announces that if the Minsk agreements fail, then Ukraine will renew its call for lethal aid from western allies²¹⁴⁰. Ukraine's ambassador to NATO, Yehor Bozhok, stated: "If heavy weapons are withdrawn on our eastern border under the Minsk deal, then fine. But if the situation escalates, then we will again raise the issue of sophisticated defensive weaponry with our western partners[...]We are

²¹³² "Ukraine fighting at lowest level since conflict broke out" *BBC News*, September 8, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34184945>

²¹³³ Ibid

²¹³⁴ Ibid

²¹³⁵ Pavel Polityuk and Natalia Zinets "Ukraine still faces threat of Russian military offensive – Poroshenko" *Reuters*, September 8, 2015, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-ukraine-crisis-poroshenko/ukraine-still-faces-threat-of-russian-military-offensive-poroshenko-idUKKCN0R81LX20150908>

²¹³⁶ Schlein, Lisa "UN: Killings, Violations on Increase in Ukraine Conflict" *VOA News*, September 8, 2015, <https://www.voanews.com/europe/un-killings-violations-increase-ukraine-conflict>

²¹³⁷ Anton Zverev "Exclusive: Russia building major military base near Ukrainian border" *Reuters*, September 9, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-exclusive/exclusive-russia-building-major-military-base-near-ukrainian-border-idUSKCN0R924G20150909>

²¹³⁸ "Border control, Russian troop pullout are key aims for peace: Ukraine's Poroshenko" *Yahoo News*, September 11, 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/border-control-russian-troop-pullout-key-aims-peace-112202257.html>

²¹³⁹ Scott Neuman "Deal To Remove Heavy Weapons From Ukraine 'Very Close'" *NPR*, September 13, 2015, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/09/13/440009352/deal-to-remove-heavy-weapons-from-ukraine-very-close>

²¹⁴⁰ Robin Emmott "Ukraine wants Western weaponry if Minsk deal fails – official" *Reuters*, September 15, 2015, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-ukraine-crisis-arms/ukraine-wants-western-weaponry-if-minsk-deal-fails-official-idUKKCN0RF20P20150915>

not going to attack anybody, but we would like to protect ourselves,” he said, listing anti-artillery, anti-mortar and anti-tank weapons as those most needed and saying the request “had already been on the table for some time”.²¹⁴¹

September 16, 2015: Separatists announce that they will hold elections on a separate date to that of the rest of Ukraine²¹⁴². Ukraine stated that the holding of elections on separate dates would be perceived as a violation of the Minsk agreements²¹⁴³. Denis Pushilin, the separatist Donetsk region's envoy to the so-called Contact Group however stated that the Minsk agreement calls on Kyiv to coordinate with separatist leaders about elections in eastern Ukraine and that the separatists decided on "yet another unilateral implementation of the Complex of Measures [for Fulfilment of the Minsk agreement]" because Kyiv has never coordinated on the issue²¹⁴⁴. Poroshenko stated that "I want to stress on the great danger posed by the decision to hold fake elections on 18 October and 1 November," and also mentioned that this decision from the separatists required a “firm” response and hence sanctions for one year was imposed on 400 individuals and 90 companies²¹⁴⁵. The sanction list includes Russian government officials and separatist leaders but also journalists from the BBC²¹⁴⁶.

September 22, 2015: Ukraine presses NATO for the delivery of weapons to defend themselves against Russia²¹⁴⁷. Stoltenberg however stated that NATO did not provide weapons²¹⁴⁸. Other agreements were signed between Ukraine and NATO²¹⁴⁹. Poroshenko also noted about Ukraine-NATO relations that “De jure we are not allies, but de facto we are much more than partners. Ukraine is the most eastern outpost of the Euro-Atlantic area,”²¹⁵⁰. Poroshenko also stated that "The decision on the non-alliance policy which was announced by the previous government is criminal in terms of the security and strategic interests of our state,"²¹⁵¹. Meanwhile the separatists stated that they would go ahead with their scheduled elections²¹⁵².

September 23, 2015: Protesters lay siege to the house of pro-Russian politician Mikhail Dobkin in Kharkiv, with the protests allegedly being organized by the nationalist group Azov Battalion and calling on their

²¹⁴¹ Ibid

²¹⁴² “Separatists Plan Elections On Different Dates Than Rest Of Ukraine” *RadioFreeEurope*, September 16, 2015, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-separatists-plan-different-election-dates/27252094.html>

²¹⁴³ Ibid

²¹⁴⁴ Ibid

²¹⁴⁵ “Ukraine crisis: Rebel election decision 'great danger' to peace” *BBC News*, September 16, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34275394>

²¹⁴⁶ Ibid

²¹⁴⁷ Robin Emmott “Ukraine presses NATO chief for defensive weapons” *Reuters*, September 22, 2015, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-ukraine-crisis-nato/ukraine-presses-nato-chief-for-defensive-weapons-idUKKCN0RM1HP20150922>

²¹⁴⁸ Ibid

²¹⁴⁹ Ibid

²¹⁵⁰ Ibid

²¹⁵¹ “Ukraine's Poroshenko voices desire to join NATO” *DW*, September 22, 2015, <https://www.dw.com/en/ukraines-poroshenko-voices-desire-to-join-nato/a-18729700>

²¹⁵² “Ukraine rebels say local elections still set for October, November” *Reuters*, September 22, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-election/ukraine-rebels-say-local-elections-still-set-for-october-november-idUSKCN0RM0WL20150922>

members to get rid of the accomplices to occupiers²¹⁵³. According to Reuters, Russia is planning a second military base near Ukraine borders²¹⁵⁴.

September 25, 2015: Separatists in Luhansk ban 10 humanitarian aid groups for “grave violations of local laws”²¹⁵⁵. Several international NGO’s have equally been told to leave Luhansk with the UN stating that it is a breach of international humanitarian law²¹⁵⁶.

September 28, 2015: Putin addresses the UNGA stating amongst other “Ukraine's territorial integrity cannot be secured through the use of threats or military force, but it must be secured. The people of Donbas should have their rights and interests genuinely considered, and their choice respected; they should be engaged in devising the key elements of the country's political system, in line with the provisions of the Minsk agreements. Such steps would guarantee that Ukraine will develop as a civilized state, and a vital link in creating a common space of security and economic cooperation, both in Europe and in Eurasia”²¹⁵⁷.

September 30, 2015: Ukraine and the separatists agree to withdraw their entire arsenal of smaller weapons from the buffer zone²¹⁵⁸. Both sides hailed the agreement with Ukraine stating: “We view this is as a diplomatic victory[...]We are certain that this is another step toward establishing peace in the conflict zone.”²¹⁵⁹. Donetsk separatist leader Alexander Zakharchenko state that the “People's Republic of Donetsk will unequivocally implement its part of the agreement[...]However, the length of this negotiating process gives us reason to doubt the sincerity of the Ukrainian side,”²¹⁶⁰. Separatist representative Denis Pushilin however stated that: “This could mean the end of the war,”²¹⁶¹.

October 2, 2015: A new kind of Russian weapons system has been spotted by the OSCE in eastern Ukraine²¹⁶². Alexander Hug from the OSCE stated: “Both sides agreed a year ago to withdraw heavy weaponry from the line of contact. Having them near the line of contact is of course a concern as this weapon should be in storage and not be used.”²¹⁶³.

October 3, 2015: The two sides announce the beginning of the withdrawal of small arms from the buffer zone²¹⁶⁴.

²¹⁵³ “Masked protesters lay siege to Kharkiv City Hall in Ukraine” *Euronews*, September 23, 2015,

<https://www.euronews.com/2015/09/23/masked-protesters-lay-siege-to-kharkiv-city-hall-in-ukraine>

²¹⁵⁴ “Russia Plans 'Second Big Military Base' Near Ukraine Border” *RadioFreeEurope*, September 23, 2015,

<https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-ukraine-new-military-base-border/27265244.html>

²¹⁵⁵ Agence France-Presse “Ukraine rebels oust several aid agencies” *The Guardian*, September 25, 2015,m

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/25/ukraine-rebels-oust-several-aid-agencies>

²¹⁵⁶ Ibid

²¹⁵⁷ “70th session of the UN General Assembly” *President of Russia*, September 28, 2015,

<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50385>

²¹⁵⁸ Dmitry Zaks “Ukraine, rebels agree full small weapons withdrawal” *Yahoo News*, September 30, 2015,

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/ukraine-rebels-initial-backing-small-arms-withdrawal-103512261.html>

²¹⁵⁹ Ibid

²¹⁶⁰ Ibid

²¹⁶¹ “Ukraine rebel envoy says weapons pull-back could mean 'end of war'” *Reuters*, September 30, 2015,

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-separatists/ukraine-rebel-envoy-says-weapons-pull-back-could-mean-end-of-war-idUSKCN0RU27Y20150930>

²¹⁶² Anton Zverev “Deadly Russian rocket system spotted in Ukraine for first time” *Reuters*, October 2, 2015,

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-russia/deadly-russian-rocket-system-spotted-in-ukraine-for-first-time-idUSKCN0RW0UL20151002>

²¹⁶³ Ibid

²¹⁶⁴ Savochenko, Oleksandr “Ukraine warring sides announce start of small arms withdrawal” *Yahoo News*, October 3, 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/pro-moscow-separatists-begin-tank-withdrawal-east-ukraine-084431806.html>

October 5, 2015: Poroshenko states that Ukraine must gain full control over its borders by the end of December even if the implementation of the Minsk agreements are delayed as he stated: "The border is a key component of our sovereignty and we are not going to compromise over it."²¹⁶⁵.

October 6, 2015: The separatists announce that they will postpone their elections until February²¹⁶⁶. In return the separatists stated that Ukraine should fulfil its responsibilities in accordance with the Minsk agreements, which included special status to the separatist areas, amnesty and constitutional changes²¹⁶⁷.

October 7, 2015: Ukraine reports that the separatists had violated the truce by attacking 4 Ukraine soldiers with Poroshenko stating: "It is somewhat a new reality, but you should stay on your guard, victory is still far away. We must not only return the Donbass (east Ukraine) but also defend the whole of Ukraine,"²¹⁶⁸. Separatists equally reported Ukrainian violations of the ceasefire²¹⁶⁹.

October 8, 2015: According to OSCE relative calm has prevailed as the two sides have begun to pull light weapons and tanks from the buffer zone²¹⁷⁰.

October 10, 2015: Russia announces that it wishes to see a bigger European monitoring mission in Ukraine as part of assisting with the light weapon withdrawal²¹⁷¹. A statement from the Russian ministry said: "Russia is in favor of increasing the number of observers to the maximum permitted 1000[...]This is especially current in view of the new tasks of fulfilling the agreements of Sept. 29 on withdrawing mortars, tanks and light artillery."²¹⁷².

October 11, 2015: Poroshenko stressed the need for elections in the separatist areas as "without elections in these occupied territories, a political solution will be in a deadlock"²¹⁷³. Poroshenko spoke of the importance of re-integrating the separatist areas as he noted: "If you lose the chance to regain the regions of Donetsk and Lugansk, who in the world will speak of returning Crimea to a Ukraine that abandons its territories?"²¹⁷⁴.

October 13, 2015: The dutch team investigating the downing of the Malaysian airline concludes that the airline was shut down by a Russian-made Buk missile, but does not state who fired the missile²¹⁷⁵. According to the report both the Russians and the Ukrainians possess such a missile²¹⁷⁶. In response Ukraine

²¹⁶⁵ Dmitry Zaks "Ukraine insists Russia must cede border by end of year" *Yahoo News*, October 5, 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/ukraine-says-russia-must-cede-border-end-11552073.html>

²¹⁶⁶ "Ukraine crisis: Pro-Russian rebels 'delay disputed elections'" *BBC News*, October 6, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34457317>

²¹⁶⁷ Ibid

²¹⁶⁸ "Ukraine says four soldiers wounded in rebel attack despite truce" *Reuters*, October 7, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-ceasefire/ukraine-says-four-soldiers-wounded-in-rebel-attack-despite-truce-idUSKCN0S127920151007>

²¹⁶⁹ Ibid

²¹⁷⁰ Aliaksandr Kudrytski "Tanks Leaving Ukraine Battle Zone as Tensions Ease, OSCE Says" *Bloomberg*, October 8, 2015, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-10-08/tanks-leaving-ukraine-battle-zone-as-tensions-ease-osce-says>

²¹⁷¹ "Russia backs bigger OSCE mission in Ukraine" *Reuters*, October 10, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-russia-osce/russia-backs-bigger-osce-mission-in-ukraine-idUSKCN0S40IJ20151010>

²¹⁷² Ibid

²¹⁷³ "Ukraine's Poroshenko says vote needed in pro-Russia strongholds" *Yahoo News*, October 11, 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/ukraines-poroshenko-says-vote-needed-pro-russia-strongholds-185212348.html>

²¹⁷⁴ Ibid

²¹⁷⁵ "MH17 Ukraine disaster: Dutch Safety Board blames missile" *BBC News*, October 13, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34511973>

²¹⁷⁶ Ibid

Prime minister stated that he had "no doubt" that the crash was "a planned operation of the Russian special services", whilst Russia's foreign minister stated that the investigation "biased in nature" and said Russia was "ready to present its own information"²¹⁷⁷.

October 15, 2015: Russia refuses to join a debt swap with Ukraine and Ukraine states it is "ready to fight Russia in court" over the debt repayment²¹⁷⁸. Meanwhile Ukraine is voted to, alongside Egypt, Senegal, and Uruguay, join the UNSC, with Ukraine stating that it will use the opportunity to draw greater international attention to Russia's aggression against Ukraine²¹⁷⁹.

October 20, 2015: Separatists bar pro-Kiev candidates from running in the upcoming elections²¹⁸⁰. In a response to Ukraine's demand for the elections to be held under Ukrainian law and overseen by foreign observers, Donetsk separatist leader Alexander Zakharchenko stated that this is "a sign that they have absolutely no idea how the people here really live[...]How can we allow (pro-Kiev) parties take part in the vote when they provided the political cover for the[...]effective genocide of our people,"²¹⁸¹

October 22, 2015: During a meeting at the Valdai International Discussion Club, Vladimir Putin pointed to the ousting of Yanukovich and stated: "Russia's position is not that we oppose the Ukrainian people's choice. We are ready to accept any choice. Ukraine genuinely is a brotherly country in our eyes, a brotherly people. I don't make any distinction between Russians and Ukrainians. But we oppose this method of changing the government. It is not a good method anywhere in the world, but it is completely unacceptable in the post-Soviet region, where, to be frank, many former Soviet republics do not yet have traditions of statehood and have not yet developed stable political systems."²¹⁸²

October 26, 2015: Ukraine holds elections with early polls showing the east/west divide in the country²¹⁸³. Poroshenko retained his support in western and central part of the country, whilst the Opposition Bloc gained votes in the south and the east²¹⁸⁴. "The Opposition Bloc is composed of members from the former Party of Regions, which supported President Viktor Yanukovich²¹⁸⁵." Poll stations never opened in Mariupol due to dispute over ballots²¹⁸⁶.

October 27, 2015: There is a mortar exchange between the two sides in Donetsk meanwhile Poroshenko addresses the scheduled separatist elections stating that those "fake" polls would be addressed in Minsk later Tuesday and that Moscow's failure in pressuring the separatists to call of the vote meant that "The

²¹⁷⁷ Ibid

²¹⁷⁸ "UPDATE 3-Russia is lone holdout from Ukraine debt swap deal" *Reuters*, October 15, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/ukraine-crisis-debt/update-3-russia-is-lone-holdout-from-ukraine-debt-swap-deal-idUSL8N12F11F20151015>

²¹⁷⁹ Ukraine Crisis Timeline "Ukraine Wins Security Council Seat" *CSIS*, October 15, 2015, <http://ukraine.csis.org/index.htm#253>

²¹⁸⁰ Yulia Silina "Ukraine, pro-Russia rebels begin Donetsk arms withdrawal" *Yahoo News*, October 20, 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/ukraine-pro-russia-rebels-begin-donetsk-arms-withdrawal-152455026.html>

²¹⁸¹ Ibid

²¹⁸² "Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club" *President of Russia*, October 22, 2015, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50548>

²¹⁸³ Lydia Tomkiw "Ukraine Election 2015 Update: Voting Results Show Division Between Eastern And Western Part Of The Country" *International Business Times*, October 26, 2015, <https://www.ibtimes.com/ukraine-election-2015-update-voting-results-show-division-between-eastern-western-2156438>

²¹⁸⁴ Ibid

²¹⁸⁵ Ibid

²¹⁸⁶ "Ukrainian Vote Tests Government's Strength Against Oligarchs" *RadioFreeEurope*, October 26, 2015, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-elections-poroshenko-oligarchs/27327412.html>

Russian side is basically sabotaging the implementation of the Minsk agreements[...]The illegal elections have not been cancelled but only postponed."²¹⁸⁷.

October 29, 2015: Ukraine and separatists swap prisoners as part of goodwill gesture meant to re-track the peace talks with Poroshenko announcing: "Dear friends, I have good news,"... "Nine Ukrainian heroes have been recovered. Glory to Ukraine!"²¹⁸⁸

November 4, 2015: Ukraine announces that it will suspend its withdrawal of arms if provocations from the separatists continue, as stated: "If the Russian invaders continue their provocative actions, which threaten the lives and security of the Ukrainian military [personnel] and civilians, then [Ukrainian] armaments and military hardware will be immediately brought back to their previous location, and the Ukrainian servicemen will act in line with the existing challenges of the Russian invaders,"²¹⁸⁹. Donald Tusk states that Russia does not fully abide by the terms set in the Minsk agreements and that this will be taken into consideration in terms of the EU sanctions review²¹⁹⁰.

November 5, 2015: OSCE reports an increase in ceasefire violations²¹⁹¹.

November 6, 2015: The Normandy Format meets with Lavrov stating that the deadlines on political reforms in Ukraine under the Minsk agreements need to be extended into 2016²¹⁹².

November 7, 2015: Ukraine announces that it has completed the first withdrawal of arms stating: "The fact that we are withdrawing weapons of up to 100mm is evidence that we are in compliance with the Minsk agreement,"²¹⁹³. Meanwhile the separatists accuse Ukrainian volunteer battalions of firing rockets towards Donetsk with a separatist spokesman stating: "Ukrainian volunteer battalions are bombing Donetsk in order to derail the Minsk (peace) agreement and to provoke a response from us,"²¹⁹⁴.

November 9, 2015: The two sides engage in direct combat, for the first time in months²¹⁹⁵. Poroshenko has a meeting with the EU's High Commissioner for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy where Mogherini states that the EU's position on sanctions is linked to the Minsk Agreements and the de-occupation of Donbas with Poroshenko stating: "I was very pleased to hear the firm position of Mrs. Vice President on the sanctions that are clearly linked to the implementation of the Minsk agreements and the end of the

²¹⁸⁷ Yulia Silina and Dmytro Gorshkov "Ukraine loses soldier in sudden upsurge in violence" *Yahoo News*, October 27, 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/ukrainian-soldier-killed-attack-near-donetsk-airport-east-090635766.html>

²¹⁸⁸ Yulia Silina "Ukraine and rebels swap 20 captives in goodwill gesture" *Yahoo News*, October 29, 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/ukraine-rebels-swap-20-captives-goodwill-gesture-150946723.html>

²¹⁸⁹ "Ukrainian Armed Forces to suspend armaments withdrawal if militants continue provocations – Turchynov" *Interfax Ukraine*, November 4, 2015, <https://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/301551.html>

²¹⁹⁰ "EU's Tusk says Russia does not abide by Minsk deal on Ukraine" *Reuters*, November 4, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-russia-eu-sanctions/eus-tusk-says-russia-does-not-abide-by-minsk-deal-on-ukraine-idUSKCN0ST1YR20151104#XqeFbcZ0i3QQ7yfT.97>

²¹⁹¹ Ibid

²¹⁹² "Lavrov Says Ukraine's Minsk Deadlines Should Be Extended Into 2016" *RadioFreeEurope*, November 6, 2015, <https://www.rferl.org/a/berlin-ukraine-russia-talks/27349571.html>

²¹⁹³ "Ukraine army withdraws arms from eastern front" *DW*, November 7, 2015, <https://www.dw.com/en/ukraine-army-withdraws-arms-from-eastern-front/a-18834723>

²¹⁹⁴ Ibid

²¹⁹⁵ Aliaksandr Kudrytski and Volodymyr Verbyany "Ukraine Sees First Direct Combat in Two Months Before EU Meeting" *Bloomberg*, November 9, 2015, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-11-09/ukraine-sees-first-direct-combat-in-two-months-before-eu-meeting>

occupation of Donbas. I am grateful to her for her advocating the need for the full implementation of the Minsk agreements,"²¹⁹⁶.

November 10, 2015: The failed local elections in Mariupol and Krasnoarmeysk are rescheduled till November 29.²¹⁹⁷

November 11, 2015: The level of violence increases with continued violations of the ceasefire²¹⁹⁸.

November 15, 2015: Ukraine receives two counter battery stations from the US, which is part of a US-Ukraine agreement on military and technical cooperation²¹⁹⁹.

November 16, 2015: Ukraine announces that it may return its artillery to the frontline if the fighting escalates further²²⁰⁰.

November 17, 2015: The EU announces that an EU-Ukraine free trade zone will be launched on January 1²²⁰¹.

November 18, 2015: Russia decides to impose a food embargo on Ukraine from January 1 with Russia's Economic Development Minister Alexey Ulyukayev stating: "Since Ukraine joined anti-Russia sanctions - economic, financial - we've decided to impose[...]protective measures in the form of food embargo," he said, adding that the decision is "postponed till January 1."²²⁰²

November 21, 2015: All EU members ratify the Association Agreement with Ukraine, which will come into effect on January 1²²⁰³.

November 28, 2015: Ukraine commemorates Holodomor with Poroshenko describing it as the darkest pages in the country's history and "a manifestation of a centuries-old hybrid war waged by Russia against Ukraine" as part of a bid "to destroy the Ukrainian nation."²²⁰⁴ He also stated that for "21 months Ukraine fights against Russian aggression. Russia's hate towards Ukraine and its desire to destroy Ukrainian people

²¹⁹⁶ "Mogherini confirms sanctions against Russia depend on Minsk agreements implementation, end of Donbas occupation – Poroshenko" *Interfax Ukraine*, November 9, 2015,

<https://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/302480.html>

²¹⁹⁷ Johannes Wamberg Andersen "Failed local elections to take place on Nov. 29 in Mariupol and Krasnoarmeysk" *Kyiv Post*, November 10, 2015, <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/2015-local-election-oct-25/failed-local-elections-to-take-place-on-nov-29-in-mariupol-and-krasnoarmeysk-401795.html>

²¹⁹⁸ Yulia Silina "Fears of new flareup in Ukraine as violence grows on frontline" *Yahoo News*, November 11, 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/fears-flareup-ukraine-violence-grows-frontline-080945741.html>

²¹⁹⁹ Mark Rachkevych "US delivers two counter battery stations to Ukraine" *Kyiv Post*, November 15, 2015, <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/may-25-presidential-election/us-delivers-two-counter-battery-stations-to-ukraine-402093.html>

²²⁰⁰ "Ukraine says may return artillery to frontline if situation escalates" *Reuters*, November 16, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-conflict/ukraine-says-may-return-artillery-to-frontline-if-situation-escalates-idUSKCN0T512B20151116#Pf1BAcghr7jEQTGw.97>

²²⁰¹ "EU-Ukraine free trade 'set for 2016' - President Poroshenko" *BBC News*, November 17, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34842246>

²²⁰² "Russia decides to impose food embargo against Ukraine — minister" *TASS*, November 18, 2015, <https://tass.com/economy/837503>

²²⁰³ Ukraine Crisis Timeline "Poroshenko: All European Union member states ratify EU-Ukraine Association Agreement" *CSIS*, November 21, 2015, <http://ukraine.csis.org/index.htm#286>

²²⁰⁴ "Ukraine remembers victims of Stalin-era famine" *Yahoo News*, November 28, 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/ukraine-remembers-victims-stalin-era-famine-190634846.html>

remain unchanged[...]I am convinced that the famine would not have occurred if we had not lost our independent state in the 1920s."²²⁰⁵.

November 29, 2015: Mariupol hold the delayed election with members of the ultra-nationalist movement "Pravyi Sector" (Right Sector) observing the election and stating that "We are here to make sure that elections will be held fairly[...]It is no secret that the majority here support separatists. The reason is that our people are still nostalgic for the Soviet Union and are trying to get it back by voting for pro-Russian forces."²²⁰⁶.

December 3, 2015: Putin holds his "State of the Nation" address in which there was no mention of Ukraine²²⁰⁷.

December 6, 2015: The OSCE SMM is threatened in Eastern Ukraine as they tried to approach heavy artillery located in Luhansk²²⁰⁸.

December 10, 2015: Ukraine announces that its security service has detained members of an insurgency group in Kiev who were planning terrorist attacks²²⁰⁹. They detained three Russians and four Ukrainians, with Ukraine believing that the Russians could be members of the Russian SBU, stating: "Russian intelligence agencies are increasing their activities in peaceful (Ukrainian) cities,"²²¹⁰.

December 11, 2015: Fighting erupts inside Ukraine's parliament between Ukraine's ruling coalition and Poroshenko's bloc²²¹¹.

December 17, 2015: Putin states that Russia does have personnel in eastern Ukraine who are carrying out certain military tasks, but he denies that Moscow has deployed regular troops there²²¹². As he stated: "We never said there were no people there who were carrying out certain tasks including in the military sphere[...]But that does not mean there are Russian (regular) troops there, feel the difference."²²¹³. He also stated that Russia was ready to help persuade the separatists to agree on a compromise in order to reach a political settlement²²¹⁴.

December 20, 2015: In a documentary titled "World Order", Putin states that Russia's strategy in Ukraine is based on the single premise that "we cannot just abandon the people who live in the southeast of the country to nationalists to eat them up."²²¹⁵. He also stated that Russia was not trying to restore the Soviet

²²⁰⁵ Ibid

²²⁰⁶ "Frontline Ukraine port votes in delayed local poll" *Yahoo News*, November 29, 2015,

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/frontline-ukraine-port-votes-delayed-local-poll-203042708.html>

²²⁰⁷ Brian Whitmore "Ukraine!? What Ukraine?" *RadioFreeEurope*, December 3, 2015,

<https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-what-ukraine/27405286.html>

²²⁰⁸ "International monitors threatened by gunmen in east Ukraine" *Reuters*, December 6, 2015,

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-osce-monitors-idUSKBN0TP0G220151206#OvkU2FOhIM9Y0H9v.97>

²²⁰⁹ Olga Shylenko "Ukraine arrests insurgents who 'planned terror attacks'" *Yahoo News*, December 10, 2015,

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/ukraine-arrests-insurgents-planned-terror-attacks-204854221.html>

²²¹⁰ "Ukraine says breaks up armed insurgent group in Kiev, two killed" *Reuters*, December 10, 2015,

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-insurgency-idUSKBN0TT0TB20151210#xqdp0IPFHaItGpAg.97>

²²¹¹ Ibid

²²¹² "Putin: Russia did have people in Ukraine doing 'certain military tasks'" *Reuters*, December 17, 2015,

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-putin-ukraine-idUSKBN0U019G20151217>

²²¹³ Ibid

²²¹⁴ Ibid

²²¹⁵ Ukraine Crisis Timeline "Putin: Russia Cannot Abandon Donbas to Nationalists" *CSIS*, December 20, 2015,

<http://ukraine.csis.org/index.htm#310>

Union, but that “nobody wants to believe it” and rather that “With Ukraine and other areas of the former U.S.S.R., I’m sure our Western partners aren’t working in the interests of Ukraine, they are working to prevent the recreation of the U.S.S.R.,”²²¹⁶

December 22, 2015: Putin states that Russia will continue to seek a settlement over the disputes that exist within its trade relations with Ukraine and the EU²²¹⁷. Ukraine and the separatists agree on a “holiday ceasefire” during Christmas and New Years²²¹⁸.

December 23, 2015: Ukraine and the separatists accuse each other of violating the holiday ceasefire²²¹⁹.

December 25, 2015: Ukraine announces that it will impose a tit-for-tat food embargo on Russia²²²⁰.

December 27, 2015: Deadly clashes erupts and the ceasefire falters as also OSCE comes under fire²²²¹. Meanwhile Poroshenko announces that he has signed a decree allowing joint NATO, US and Ukrainian military exercises in Ukraine the following year²²²².

December 28, 2015: Russia calls on the US to reconsider storing military hardware and troops across Eastern Europe and the Baltic States with Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova stating: “The current large-scale military preparations by the United States under a completely fabricated precursor of protecting its allies from a nonexistent ‘Russian threat’ does not only not correspond to the interests of peace and security in Europe, it simply once again confirms Washington’s goal of escalating tension and disrupting stability on the continent,”²²²³.

November 30, 2015: France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine agree that the Minsk peace agreement must be fully implemented in 2016²²²⁴.

December 31, 2015: Ukraine’s SBU blames Russia for a cyber-attack on its power grid with Russia on the other hand complaining that there has been a rise in cyber-attacks following the crisis in Ukraine²²²⁵.

2016

²²¹⁶ “Putin: Russia Doesn’t Want the U.S.S.R. Back” *RadioFreeEurope*, December 21, 2015, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-doesnt-want-ussr-back/27439685.html>

²²¹⁷ “Putin says Russia ‘to continue efforts’ to settle trade ties with Ukraine, EU” *Reuters*, December 22, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-russia-eu-idUSKBN0U51H120151222>

²²¹⁸ “Ukraine, Separatists Agree To Cease-Fire During Holidays” *RadioFreeEurope*, December 23, 2015, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-separatists-agree-cease-fire-christmas-new-years-holidays/27444120.html>

²²¹⁹ “Ukraine, rebels accuse each other of violating latest truce” *Yahoo News*, December 23, 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/ukraine-rebels-accuse-other-violating-latest-truce-155435432.html>

²²²⁰ “Ukraine to impose tit-for-tat trade embargo on Russia” *DW*, December 24, 2015, <https://www.dw.com/en/ukraine-to-impose-tit-for-tat-trade-embargo-on-russia/a-18940722>

²²²¹ “Deadly Clashes In Ukraine Despite Holiday Truce” *RadioFreeEurope*, December 27, 2015, <https://www.rferl.org/a/deadly-clashes-in-ukraine-despite-holiday-truce/27452015.html>

²²²² Ukraine Crisis Timeline “Holiday Truce Falters, OSCE Comes Under Fire” *CSIS*, December 27, 2015, <http://ukraine.csis.org/index.htm#315>

²²²³ Lydia Tomkiw “Russia Calls On US To Drop Troops And Weapons From Baltics, Eastern Europe” *International Business Times*, December 28, 2015, <https://www.ibtimes.com/russia-calls-us-drop-troops-weapons-baltics-eastern-europe-2240834>

²²²⁴ “Ukraine crisis: Leaders urge implementation of Minsk peace deal in 2016” *BBC News*, December 30, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35201239>

²²²⁵ Pavel Polityuk “Ukraine to probe suspected Russian cyber attack on grid” *Reuters*, December 31, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-malware-idUSKBN0UE0ZZ20151231>

January 1, 2016: Russia publishes new national security strategy which states NATO's expansion as a threat to the country²²²⁶.

January 5, 2015: Ukraine calls for the UN to consider sending a UN peacekeeping mission to Ukraine²²²⁷. Vladimir Yelchenko, Ukraine's permanent representative to the U.N. also presented several other proposals on how the international community may assist the peace efforts in Ukraine, including opening a UN office in Kiev²²²⁸.

January 8, 2016: Officials in Crimea state that Crimea will experience power shortage until May due to the incident in November where individuals knocked out power lines supplying the Peninsula with energy from Ukraine²²²⁹.

January 11, 2016: Putin discusses Ukraine with the Germany newspaper "Bild" in which he blames the current geopolitical crisis on NATO's expansion and justified the annexation by pointing to "undemocratic coup" in Kiev which threatened the constitutional rights of Crimea's inhabitants²²³⁰.

January 13, 2016: The Trilateral Contact Group meet in Minsk and Lavrov states that the main threat the peace process are Ukraine's attempts to revise the Minsk Agreements: "We are told that Ukrainian President Pyotr Poroshenko faced internal political difficulties, that is why he cannot implement everything in full. They propose not to interpret the 'Minsk language' too literally,"²²³¹. He also stated that the Minsk Agreements clearly state "that the constitution should include decentralization on a permanent basis[...]. This means the right to speak the Russian language on the territory of Donbass, the right for special economic ties with Russia, the right to take part in appointing prosecutors, judges, have their own law enforcement agencies, including people's militia, and many more things that were personally signed by German Chancellor Angela Merkel together with French President Francois Hollande[...]. Instead of this, the (Ukrainian) constitution states that these territories may have some special rules in the sphere of self-governing,"²²³². Russia also stated that Ukraine's proposition of deploying UN peacekeepers was "another attempt to divert attention from non-implementation of several key points of the Minsk Agreements from 12 February 2015."²²³³.

January 19, 2016: Ukraine raises the cost of gas transportation for Russian gas²²³⁴.

January 23, 2016: Poroshenko states that he will not allow the conflict in Donbass to "freeze"²²³⁵.

²²²⁶ Euan McKirdy "Putin points to NATO threat in new security strategy" *CNN*, January 1, 2016,

<https://edition.cnn.com/2016/01/01/world/putin-nato-security-strategy/>

²²²⁷ Damien Sharkov "Ukraine Calls on U.N. To Send Peacekeepers to War-Torn East" *Newsweek*, January 5, 2016,

<https://www.newsweek.com/ukraine-un-peacekeepers-411689>

²²²⁸ Ibid

²²²⁹ Nechepurenko, Ivan "Crimea to face power shortages for months, officials say" *The New York Times*, January 8, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/09/world/europe/crimea-power-ukraine-russia.html?_r=1

²²³⁰ Ukraine Crisis Timeline "Vladimir Putin discusses Ukraine Crisis with Bild" *CSIS*, January 11, 2016,

<http://ukraine.csis.org/index.htm#326>

²²³¹ "First meeting of Contact Group in 2016 to take place in Minsk" *TASS*, January 13, 2016,

<https://tass.com/world/849055>

²²³² Ibid

²²³³ Ibid

²²³⁴ "Cost of gas transportation across Ukraine up nearly 50% — energy minister" *TASS*, January 19, 2016,

<https://tass.com/economy/850615>

²²³⁵ Ukraine Crisis Timeline "Poroshenko To Prevent "Frozen" Donbass" *CSIS*, January 23, 2016,

<http://ukraine.csis.org/index.htm#334>

January 24, 2016: Poroshenko states that Ukraine will not give greater autonomy to the eastern regions before a lasting ceasefire is in place²²³⁶. He stated that he would not allow lawmakers to cancel the vote on the decentralization reform, but that a series of conditions must be met before the voting could happen²²³⁷. This included: "ceasefire and a long period of a full silence. This is what Russia has to ensure, and the world needs to see that it happens," and giving international monitors unfettered access to the border between Ukraine and Russia to monitor the flow of troops and arms into eastern Ukraine²²³⁸.

January 27, 2016: Nikolai Patrushev, executive secretary of the presidential Security Council of Russia, states that the Minsk agreements obliges Kiev to coordinate with rebel leaders to "conduct a constitutional reform, amnesty, ensure the approval of permanent legislation on a special status of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, work out the issue of local elections and take steps to improve the humanitarian situation in southeastern Ukraine[...]Instead of a direct dialogue with representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk, the Ukrainian side has introduced a total blockade of the region[...]They are forcing people, who, by the way, have Ukrainian passports, to starve"²²³⁹.

February 8, 2016: Russia's defense ministry announces the mobilization of troops on its southern borders in order to check military preparedness to rebuff a foreign attack or natural disasters²²⁴⁰.

February 12, 2016: A new ceasefire is agreed to which is to begin on February 15²²⁴¹.

February 13, 2016: Violence intensifies in Eastern Ukraine with the separatists having moved heavy artillery back to the front line and Russia accusing NATO of being hostile and closed and dragging the world back into a Cold War²²⁴².

February 16, 2016: Internal divisions within Ukraine continues now with the Parliament proposing a no confidence vote as an address to the dissatisfaction with the Prime Minister and his cabinet²²⁴³. President Petro Poroshenko also calls on the Prime Minister to resign "in order to restore trust" in the government²²⁴⁴.

February 18, 2016: The ruling coalition in Ukraine's parliament breaks up with the Prime Minister stating that he will not step down²²⁴⁵.

²²³⁶ "No special status for east Ukraine without ceasefire – president" *Reuters*, January 24, 2016, <http://news.trust.org/item/20160124193205-e2hpf/?source=gep>

²²³⁷ Ibid

²²³⁸ Ibid

²²³⁹ "AP Exclusive: Putin aide: Kiev refuses to honor Minsk deal" *Business Insider*, January 27, 2016, <https://www.businessinsider.com/ap-ap-exclusive-putin-aide-kiev-refuses-to-honor-minsk-deal-2016-1?IR=T>

²²⁴⁰ Andrew E. Kramer "Russia announces surprise military drills in south" *The New York Times*, February 8, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/09/world/europe/russia-announces-surprise-military-drills-in-south.html?_r=0

²²⁴¹ Ukraine Crisis Timeline "New Ceasefire Agreement Reached in Minsk" *CSIS*, February 12, 2016, <http://ukraine.csis.org/index.htm#348>

²²⁴² "Russia warns of new cold war as east Ukraine violence surges" *Washington Post*, February 13, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/russia-warns-of-new-cold-war-as-violence-in-eastern-ukraine-surges/2016/02/13/f8ca1626-d287-11e5-88cd-753e80cd29ad_story.html?utm_term=.906eef7fdb4b

²²⁴³ Ukraine Crisis Timeline "Rada puts Prime Minister Yatseniuk and his Cabinet to a "No Confidence" Vote" *CSIS*, February 16, 2016, <http://ukraine.csis.org/index.htm#352>

²²⁴⁴ "Ukraine Investigates Attacks Against Russian Banks Amid Maidan Commemorations" *RadioFreeEurope*, February 22, 2016, <https://www.rferl.org/a/firebomb-attacks-russian-banks-ukraine/27566308.html>

²²⁴⁵ "Ruling coalition in Ukraine's parliament breaks up as Samopomich faction exits" *TASS*, February 18, 2016, <https://tass.com/world/857650>

February 20, 2016: On the second anniversary of Maidan, protestors attack two Russian banks in Kiev and the office of Ukrainian oligarch Rinat Akhmetov²²⁴⁶. The protestors blame Akhmetov for supporting corruption and the separatists²²⁴⁷. Meanwhile, Ukraine and the separatists exchange prisoners²²⁴⁸

February 22, 2016: Attacks on Russian banks in Ukraine continue, with some of them set on fire²²⁴⁹. Meanwhile, France and Germany call on Ukraine to push on with reforms in order to battle corruption²²⁵⁰.

February 23, 2016: In order to battle corruption, the Ukraine government announces that political parties will be funded exclusively from the state budget, with the Prime Minister stating: "It is unacceptable that the political parties or deputies are funded by businessmen or the so called oligarchs. We've decided that the financing of political parties exclusively from the national budget will start this year,"²²⁵¹.

February 27, 2016: Ukraine's Interior Minister announced that the ministry is preparing new military units which will be able to take back Crimea stating that "We need a new army, a new national guard, new police. That's what the government of Ukraine is doing right now. And you have to understand that. We should rebuild them and then, when we want, Crimea will be with us. I have no doubts about that,"²²⁵². The unit includes the Crimean Tartars with the interior minister further noting: "Together with Mustafa Cemilov and Refat Chubarov [Crimean Tatar political leaders] we're preparing guys as special separate units of the national guard. The project is being prepared in order to be ready to return Crimea to us. I'm sure that it will happen when we're strong, and when we're ready."²²⁵³.

March 4, 2016: The Normandy Format meet in Paris but do not reach a consensus regarding the elections in eastern Ukraine²²⁵⁴. Lavrov stated that Russia was prepared to push the separatists to abide by the ceasefire and participate in the polls but Ukraine's refusal to set a hard deadline for elections made it impossible to reach a consensus²²⁵⁵. Germany's foreign minister stated that he was "not satisfied with the way Kyiv and Moscow are operating the negotiations here[...]I'm afraid the situation in eastern Ukraine really isn't being viewed seriously enough... It can escalate again at any time."²²⁵⁶. The actors did however agree to a "release and exchange of all prisoners and people held in illegal detention between now and April 30," and to establish by April 30 a mechanism to "prevent and settle incidents connected with cease-fire violations," as well as ensure access to the conflict zone by truce monitors."²²⁵⁷

²²⁴⁶ Lydia Tomkiw "Ukraine Political Crisis Update: Russian Banks Attacked On Anniversary Of Revolution" *International Business Times*, February 20, 2016, <https://www.ibtimes.com/ukraine-political-crisis-update-russian-banks-attacked-anniversary-revolution-2316036>

²²⁴⁷ "Ukraine Investigates Attacks Against Russian Banks Amid Maidan Commemorations" *RadioFreeEurope*

²²⁴⁸ "Ukraine and DPR exchange prisoners on '3 for 6' basis" *TASS*, February 20, 2016, <https://tass.com/world/858157>

²²⁴⁹ "Ukraine Investigates Attacks Against Russian Banks Amid Maidan Commemorations" *RadioFreeEurope*

²²⁵⁰ "France, Germany Urge Ukraine To Push Forward On Reforms" *RadioFreeEurope*, February 22, 2016, <https://www.rferl.org/a/france-germany-urge-reforms-ukraine/27566164.html>

²²⁵¹ "Political parties in Ukraine will be funded exclusively from state budget from this year – Yatseniuk" *Interfax Ukraine*, February 23, 2016, <https://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/326811.html>

²²⁵² Joshua Kucera "Poroshenko Orders Ukrainian Military Focus On Crimea, Black Sea" *Eurasianet*, February 27, 2016, <https://eurasianet.org/poroshenko-orders-ukrainian-military-focus-on-crimea-black-sea>

²²⁵³ Ibid

²²⁵⁴ "Paris Talks On Ukraine Peace Fall Flat" *RadioFreeEurope*, March 4, 2016, <https://www.rferl.org/a/france-germany-ukraine-russian-diplomats-aim-election-eastern-ukraine-midyear-minsk-accord/27588523.html>

²²⁵⁵ Ibid

²²⁵⁶ Ibid

²²⁵⁷ Ibid

March 12, 2016: Violence continues with Ukraine stating that there has been an increase in attacks and provocations²²⁵⁸. Meanwhile, the Donetsk Peoples Republic claim that the Ukraine military has used heavy artillery against the separatists²²⁵⁹.

April 10, 2016: Ukraine's Prime Minister resigns²²⁶⁰.

April 14, 2016: Volodymyr Groysman is approved as new Prime Minister²²⁶¹.

April 18, 2016: Ukraine convicts two Russian men, alleged special forces captured in Donbas, of waging an "aggressive war" against Ukraine, committing terrorism, and using weapons to provoke conflict²²⁶². The men deny the charges and Russia states that it will do what it can to bring them home²²⁶³. The lawyer of one of the men was the one found dead outside Kiev²²⁶⁴. Poroshenko has proposed swapping the two prisoners in exchange for the Ukraine pilot, Nadiya Savchenko²²⁶⁵.

April 20, 2016: The Russia-NATO summit ends in disagreement with Stoltenberg stating that there are profound disagreements over Ukraine stating: "In the meeting, it was reconfirmed that we disagree on the facts, on the narrative, and the responsibilities in and around Ukraine[...]Many allies disagree when Russia tries to portray this as a civil war[...]This is Russia destabilizing eastern Ukraine, providing support for the separatists, munitions, funding, equipment, and also command-and-control."²²⁶⁶.

April 22, 2016: NATO considers bigger presence in the Black Sea as part of a strategy to deter Russia and counter its military build-up in Crimea²²⁶⁷. NATO already patrols the black sea but as stated: "We need to consider a more persistent NATO military presence in the region, with a particular focus on our maritime capabilities,"²²⁶⁸. Russia however responded that NATO's plans are a threat to Russia's security and Russia warned there will be no improvement in the worst East-West tensions since the Cold War until NATO withdraws its forces²²⁶⁹.

April 29, 2016: In an address to the UNSC, Ukraine states that the ceasefire must be strengthened before a political solution can be reached. Ukrainian Deputy Foreign Minister Vadym Prystaiko suggested that the Easter holiday may be an opening for this and stated: "If we can start with that, we can then proceed to withdrawal of forces and resolving of all the problems -- demining, humanitarian problems -- all the way

²²⁵⁸ "Two Ukrainian Soldiers Killed In Eastern Ukraine" *RadioFreeEurope*, March 12, 2016, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-soldiers-killed-avdiyivka-donetsk/27606520.html>

²²⁵⁹ "Ukrainian military use heavy artillery against Donetsk republic" *TASS*, March 12, 2016, <https://tass.com/world/861853>

²²⁶⁰ Andrew E. Kramer "Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Ukraine's Premier, quits amid splits in post-revolution alliance" *The New York Times*, April 10, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/11/world/europe/ukraines-prime-minister-to-resign-amid-fractures-in-post-revolution-alliance.html?_r=0

²²⁶¹ Andrew E. Kramer "Volodymyr Groysman approved as new prime minister by Ukraine parliament" *The New York Times*, April 14, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/15/world/europe/ukraine-prime-minister-volodymyr-groysman.html?_r=1

²²⁶² "Ukraine finds Russian 'soldiers' guilty of waging war" *BBC News*, April 18, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36070383>

²²⁶³ Ibid

²²⁶⁴ Ibid

²²⁶⁵ Ibid

²²⁶⁶ "NATO Chief Says 'Profound Differences' Remain Between Alliance, Russia" *RadioFreeEurope*, April 20, 2016, <https://www.rferl.org/a/nato-russia-council-meeting-high-level-talks/27685995.html>

²²⁶⁷ Tsvetelia Tsoleva "NATO's new deterrent may include bigger Black Sea presence" *Reuters*, April 22, 2016, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-ukraine-crisis-nato-idUKKCN0XJ1S3>

²²⁶⁸ Ibid

²²⁶⁹ Ibid

down to a political resolution,"²²⁷⁰. He also stated: "Russia has organized and deployed in Donbas a 34,000-strong hybrid military force consisting of regular Russian troops as well as of foreign and local militants[...]Russian generals and military officers provide direct command-and-control of this illegal military entity [which is] impressively heavily armed,"²²⁷¹. He also denied the accusations that the separatists had bought their firearms in local hardware stores stating: "Last time I checked, you will hardly be able to buy a decent knife in Ukrainian hardware stores, not to mention the multiple-launch rocket systems and jet flamethrowers"²²⁷². Russia on the other hand, represented by UN Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, stated that the Ukrainian crisis was provoked by a "coup d'etat with external support," and rejected claims that the source of conflict was "Crimea's union with Russia."²²⁷³. He also stated that Ukraine's case before the council was "very disappointing," as "Over the entire crisis, the UN has been used as a propaganda platform[...]There is a lot of rhetoric but no specific plan about how to implement the Minsk agreement"²²⁷⁴. He however also noted that he hoped the ceasefire would hold for the Easter holiday as "Easter is one thing that continues to unite us, Russia and Ukraine,"²²⁷⁵.

April 29, 2016: The Minsk Contact Group reaches an agreement on a ceasefire in Donbas as soon as the Easter holiday begins, presenting a statement saying: "The Trilateral Contact Group and the representatives of certain areas in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine are welcoming the determination of all the participants in the Minsk process aiming to secure a full observation of the ceasefire regime with the start of the Easter and May Holidays, as effective from Saturday, April 30, 2016, at 12:00 midnight,"²²⁷⁶.

May 1, 2016: Ukraine accuses the separatists of breaking the ceasefire as one Ukraine soldier is killed and several troops are wounded²²⁷⁷. The separatists equally accused Ukraine of violating the ceasefire²²⁷⁸.

May 11, 2016: Russia and Ukraine agree to the creation of demilitarize zones, greater information-sharing and a halt to military exercises along the dividing line between the separatist territories and Ukraine proper²²⁷⁹. They however continued to disagree over the local elections in the separatist areas²²⁸⁰.

May 30, 2016: Violence continues in eastern Ukraine with 5 servicemen and 2 separatists killed near Donetsk²²⁸¹.

²²⁷⁰ "Ukraine Says Stronger Cease-Fire Needed To Make Political Progress" *RadioFreeEurope*, April 29, 2016, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-says-stronger-cease-fire-needed-make-political-progress-conflict-in-east/27705566.html>

²²⁷¹ Ibid

²²⁷² Ibid

²²⁷³ Ibid

²²⁷⁴ Ibid

²²⁷⁵ Ibid

²²⁷⁶ "Minsk Contact Group reaches agreement on complete ceasefire in Donbas, starting from Easter" *Interfax Ukraine*, April 29, 2016, <https://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/340994.html>

²²⁷⁷ "Ukraine Accuses Russia-Backed Separatists Of Breaking Easter Cease-Fire" *RadioFreeEurope*, May 1, 2016, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-accuces-separatists-breaking-easter-cease-fire/27709695.html>

²²⁷⁸ Ibid

²²⁷⁹ "Ukraine, Russia agree some security measures: Germany" *Reuters*, May 11, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-germany-idUSKCN0Y22EX>

²²⁸⁰ Ibid

²²⁸¹ "Five Ukrainian troops killed by rebels near Donetsk" *BBC News*, May 30, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36411447>

June 1, 2016: The separatists accuse Ukraine of fresh offensives with heavy weaponry which according to the ceasefire agreement is to be withdrawn from the frontline²²⁸².

June 2, 2016: Denis Pushilin, the chairman of the People's Soviet of the self-proclaimed People's Republic of Donetsk states that if Ukraine launches a full-blow attack on the DNR, then the separatists are able and ready to advance further into Ukraine territory²²⁸³. Igor Plotnitsky, leader of the self-proclaimed People's Republic of Luhansk (LNR) also accused Ukraine of sabotaging the Minsk Agreement and stated "we are not going to wait. We are initiating the offensive. At first – on the diplomatic front."²²⁸⁴.

June 9, 2016: Nadja Savchenko calls for direct dialogue with the separatists stating: "We should establish direct internal communication without third or fourth parties," and added that she was ready to negotiate with Alexander Zakharchenko, the leader of the Donetsk People's Republic, directly²²⁸⁵. Her idea was rejected by Andriy Parubiy, speaker of the Ukrainian parliament who stated that "These are terrorist organisations who are acting on our territory under full control of the Russian aggressor[...]I don't think we can carry out any negotiations with these people."²²⁸⁶.

June 16, 2016: Ukraine is outraged over comments by UN General Secretary Ban Ki-moon who stated that as a permanent member of the UNSC, Russia has a critical role to play in resolving global issues such as Ukraine and Syria. Ukraine responded stating that Ban Ki-Moon's statement makes him unfit to further comment on the conflict and that he has lost all moral authority on the issue²²⁸⁷.

June 19, 2016: Germany's foreign minister accuses NATO of warmongering and calls for the phasing out of the Russian sanctions, stating: "What we should avoid today is inflaming the situation by warmongering and stomping boots," and that it is a mistake to think "you can increase security in the alliance with symbolic parades of tanks near the eastern borders."²²⁸⁸. On June 17, Putin had reiterated the argument that the United States and its allies have used the Ukrainian crisis to "justify the existence of the North Atlantic bloc." And that "They need an external adversary, an external enemy, otherwise what's the purpose of this organization? [...]There is no Warsaw Pact, no Soviet Union, so whom is it directed against?"²²⁸⁹.

June 28, 2016: Poroshenko proposes constitutional declaration of Crimean Tartars right to self-determination within Ukraine stating: "We should start the process of modification and additions to Section 10 of the Ukrainian Constitution titled 'Autonomous Republic of Crimea' [...]These adjustments fully derive from the inalienable right of the Crimean Tatar people to self-determination within the sovereign and

²²⁸² Yuilia Silina "Pro-Russian rebels accuse Ukraine of fresh offensive" *Yahoo News*, June 1, 2016, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/pro-russian-rebels-accuse-ukraine-fresh-offensive-172225747.html>

²²⁸³ Ukraine Crisis Timeline "Pushilin Promises Rout of Ukrainian Armed Forces in Case of Offensive" *CSIS*, June 2, 2016, <http://ukraine.csis.org/index.htm#430>

²²⁸⁴ Ibid

²²⁸⁵ Shaun Walker "Freed Ukrainian pilot calls for talks with separatist rebels" *The Guardian*, June 9, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/09/freed-ukrainian-pilot-nadiya-savchenko-calls-for-talks-with-separatist-rebels>

²²⁸⁶ Ibid

²²⁸⁷ Ukraine Crisis Timeline "Ukraine Outraged by UN Chief's Comments on Russia" *CSIS*, June 16, 2016, <http://ukraine.csis.org/index.htm#443>

²²⁸⁸ "Germany's Foreign Minister Accuses NATO Of 'Warmongering'" *RadioFreeEurope*, June 19, 2016, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-nato-germant-steinmeier-exercises-warmongering/27806479.html>

²²⁸⁹ Ibid

independent Ukrainian state,²²⁹⁰. He also stated that the rights of ethnic Ukrainians and Russians and other ethnic groups should be guaranteed in Crimea²²⁹¹.

June 24, 2016: Ukraine arrests former riot police for their use of violent force in dispersing protestors during Maidan²²⁹².

July 14, 2016: The UN accuses both sides of indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas and summary executions²²⁹³.

July 20, 2016: Pavel G. Sheremet, a journalist critical of the Russian government is killed by a car bomb in Kiev. Poroshenko hints that Russia was behind the assassination stating: "It seems this was an act done with the intention of destabilizing the situation in the country[...]In the conditions of war and aggression, I am not excluding the possibility of some foreign interest here."²²⁹⁴. Russia denied the allegation but rather stated: The incumbent Ukrainian government, supported by its Euro-Atlantic patrons for its purportedly successful democratic reforms, did not manage to protect him,²²⁹⁵.

August 4, 2016: The Speaker of the Parliament of the self-proclaimed DNR Denis Pushilin stated that the Minsk agreements must be complied with or the conflict could resume: "No progress was made after the last negotiations on the political settlement. The situation remains tense, and it can flare up at any moment and escalate into a full-fledged military clash. Ukraine is not fulfilling its obligations in military and political spheres. Not only we see that, but also our citizens who signed the petition to the UN SC about Kyiv's failure to fulfill the agreement. There are more than 320 thousand such signers in the DNR. In the last 5-6 days the situation has completely deteriorated. If Ukraine will not comply with at least the first three points of the Minsk-2 Agreements, open firefights will soon resume in Donbass."²²⁹⁶

August 12, 2016: Ukraine troops are put on high alert around the de facto border of Crimea because of "the escalation at the administrative border with Crimea" and in the eastern regions of Luhansk and Donetsk²²⁹⁷. Meanwhile Russia accuses Ukraine of carrying armed incursions into Crimea whilst Crimean leader states that the US is behind the alleged armed incursions, saying "Ukrainian officials wouldn't have had the courage for such actions" ²²⁹⁸. Russian President Vladimir Putin accused the Ukrainian government in Kiev of "practising terror" and vowed to "not let such things slide by" whilst Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko described the accusations as "preposterous", calling them a "pretext" from more threats²²⁹⁹.

August 24, 2016: Ukraine celebrates its independence day with Poroshenko stating: "Independence has given us democracy and freedom, the feeling of civic dignity and national unity[...]Our main guarantor is

²²⁹⁰ "Poroshenko proposes constitutional declaration of Crimean Tatars' right to self-determination within Ukraine" *Interfax Ukraine*, June 28, 2016, <https://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/353063.html>

²²⁹¹ Ibid

²²⁹² "Ukraine Arrests Former Riot Police For Alleged Role In Maidan Killings" *RadioFreeEurope*, June 24, 2016, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-former-berkut-arrested-maidan-killings-2014/27817717.html>

²²⁹³ "Ukraine conflict: UN accuses both sides of abuses" *Aljazeera*, July 14, 2016, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/07/ukraine-conflict-accuses-sides-abuses-160714172857464.html>

²²⁹⁴ Andrew E. Kramer "Pavel Sheremet, journalist in Ukraine, is killed in car bombing" *The New York Times*, July 20, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/21/world/europe/pavel-sheremet-kyiv-car-bomb.html>

²²⁹⁵ Ibid

²²⁹⁶ Ukraine Crisis Timeline "Denis Pushilin Calls on Kyiv to Comply with Minsk-2. Otherwise, War may Resume in Donbass" *CSIS*, August 4, 2016, <http://ukraine.csis.org/index.htm#460>

²²⁹⁷ "Ukraine troops on high alert as tension with Russia grows" *BBC News*, August 12, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37049313>

²²⁹⁸ Ibid

²²⁹⁹ Ibid

the Ukrainian armed forces[...]This parade will signal to our international partners that Ukraine is capable of defending itself but requires further support.”²³⁰⁰. He also spoke about Vladimir Putin’s “imperial appetite” and warned that Ukraine would need “years and tens of billions of hryvnias” until it can “sleep soundly.”²³⁰¹

August 25, 2016: Russia orders wide-ranging snap military exercises in Russia with the exercises being designed “to defend the interests of the Russian Federation amid increasing threats to its security,”²³⁰².

September 1, 2016: The two sides agree on a new ceasefire marking the beginning of the new school year with no violence being reported the first 24 hours of the ceasefire²³⁰³.

September 13, 2016: Alexander Zakharchenko, rebel leader in Donetsk, announces a unilateral ceasefire and orders his troops to cease fire, urging Ukraine to do the same²³⁰⁴. He also stated that the separatists are “fully committed to the Minsk agreements” and see them as “the only solution.”²³⁰⁵.

September 28, 2016: The investigations into the downing of the Malaysian airline concludes that the missile system was trucked in from Russia, by request from the separatists, and returned to Russia the same night²³⁰⁶.

October 3, 2016: Internal power struggles between the separatists leads to purging of internal opposition figures²³⁰⁷.

October 5, 2016: Ukraine warns its citizens against travelling to Russia stating that there is an increase in harassment and detention of Ukraine citizens, with the foreign ministry stating: “On the territory of the aggressor-state, the number of unjustified detentions of our citizens has increased[...]Russian law enforcement bodies treat Ukrainians roughly, using unacceptable methods of physical and psychological pressure, torture and other acts,”²³⁰⁸. Former separatist minister Alexander Khodakovsky states that Russia directly finances pensions and public sector salaries in eastern Ukraine stating: “Without outside help, it’s impossible to sustain the territory even if you have the most effective tax-raising system. The level of help from Russia exceeds the amounts that we collect within the territory,”²³⁰⁹.

²³⁰⁰ “A bristly Ukraine celebrates 25 years of independence from Moscow” *Washington Post*, August 24, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/a-bristly-ukraine-celebrates-25-years-of-independence-from-moscow/2016/08/24/4c67e3de-697e-11e6-91cb-ecb5418830e9_story.html?utm_term=.a86ec1834a62

²³⁰¹ Ibid

²³⁰² Ukraine Crisis Timeline “Putin Orders Military Drills Amid Increased Tension with Ukraine, Baltics” *CSIS*, August 25, 2016, <http://ukraine.csis.org/index.htm#466>

²³⁰³ “Ukraine crisis: New ceasefire 'holding with eastern rebels” *BBC News*, September 1, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37243434>

²³⁰⁴ “Ukrainian rebel leader announces ceasefire in statement on Russian TV” *Independent*, September 13, 2016, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/ukrainian-rebel-leader-announces-ceasefire-in-statement-on-russian-tv-a7244681.html>

²³⁰⁵ Ibid

²³⁰⁶ Kramer, Andrew E. “Dutch inquiry links Russia to 298 deaths in explosion of jetliner over Ukraine” *The New York Times*, September 28, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/29/world/asia/malaysia-air-flight-mh17-russia-ukraine-missile.html>

²³⁰⁷ Ukraine Crisis Timeline “Ukrainian Rebel Leaders Divided by Bitter Purge” *CSIS*, October 3, 2016, <http://ukraine.csis.org/index.htm#484>

²³⁰⁸ “Ukraine warns citizens against traveling to Russia” *Reuters*, October 5, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-russia-travel-idUSKCN1251F9>

²³⁰⁹ “Moscow is bankrolling Ukraine rebels: ex-separatist official” *Reuters*, October 5, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-separatists-idUSKCN1251UQ>

October 20, 2016: The Normandy Format meet leading to a road map based on the Minsk Agreements, which will be further discussed in the upcoming weeks²³¹⁰.

October 26, 2016: Ukrainian hackers claimed to have hacked two email accounts belonging to the Kremlin official, Vladislav Surkov, which shows Russia's involvement with the separatists in 2014²³¹¹.

November 15, 2016: The lead prosecutor for the International Criminal Court states that the conflict in Ukraine should be considered an international armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine²³¹². In a report released by the court, it was stated: "According to information received, the situation in the Crimea and Sevastopol is equivalent to the international armed conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation[...] This international armed conflict started not later than February 26, when the Russian Federation employed members of its armed forces to gain control over parts of the territory of Ukraine without the consent of the government of Ukraine."²³¹³.

December 1, 2016: Russia puts its troops on high alert following Ukraine's testing of missiles near Crimea²³¹⁴.

2017

January 12, 2017: The Russian TV channel Dozhd is suspended in Ukraine as it was announced that the channel's broadcast broke Ukraine law²³¹⁵.

January 18, 2017: Nadiya Savchenko suggests that Ukraine should give up its territorial claim on Crimea in exchange for Russia leaving Donbass²³¹⁶. Savchenko compared Crimea to Transnistria²³¹⁷.

January 31, 2017: Violence surges again in Eastern Ukraine with the UN calling for a full implementation of the ceasefire²³¹⁸.

February 1, 2017: Poroshenko announces the plan of a referendum on NATO membership²³¹⁹.

²³¹⁰ "Wall Street Journal: Negotiations on Ukraine crisis produce 'road map' but no breakthrough" *Kyiv Post*, October 20, 2016, <https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/wall-street-journal-negotiations-ukraine-crisis-produce-road-map-no-breakthrough.html>

²³¹¹ "The Surkov Leaks' Reveal the Expected: Kremlin's Guiding Hand in Eastern Ukraine" *The Moscow Times*, October 26, 2016, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2016/10/26/the-surkov-leaks-reveal-the-expected-kremlins-guiding-hand-in-eastern-ukraine-a55879>

²³¹² "Hague Prosecutor's Finding On Ukraine Conflict Gives Kyiv Legal Heft, But Little Else" *RadioFreeEurope*, November 15, 2016, <https://www.rferl.org/a/the-hague-ukraine-conflict-russia-international-armed-conflict/28119274.html>

²³¹³ Ibid

²³¹⁴ "Russian forces on 'high alert' as Ukraine tests missiles near Crimea" *Business Insider*, December 1, 2016, <https://www.businessinsider.com/russian-forces-on-high-alert-as-ukraine-tests-missiles-near-crimea-2016-12?r=US&IR=T>

²³¹⁵ Katie Davies "Russian TV Channel Dozhd Suspended in Ukraine" *The Moscow Times*, January 12, 2017, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/01/12/russian-tv-channel-dozhd-suspended-in-ukraine-a56796>

²³¹⁶ "Nadiya Savchenko Proposes Trading Crimea for Donbass" *The Moscow Times*, January 18, 2016, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/01/18/savchenko-proposes-trading-crimea-for-donbass-a56849>

²³¹⁷ Ibid

²³¹⁸ "UN Security Council calls for return to Ukraine ceasefire" *DW*, February 2, 2017, <https://www.dw.com/en/un-security-council-calls-for-return-to-ukraine-ceasefire/a-37361416>

²³¹⁹ "Ukraine's Poroshenko plans referendum on NATO membership: German media" *Reuters*, February 2, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-nato-idUSKBN15H05K>

February 2, 2017: NATO calls off a meeting with Ukraine amid fears of escalating tensions with Russia²³²⁰

February 18, 2017: Putin orders Russia to temporarily recognize civil registration documents issued in separatist-held areas of eastern Ukraine²³²¹. The recognition allows people from eastern Ukraine to travel, work or study in Russia and will be in place until a political settlement has been reached²³²². Ukraine stated that the recognition destroyed the Minsk agreements and that "By signing this decree, Putin legally recognized quasi-terrorist groups that have this as a fig leaf covering the Russian occupation of Donbas,"²³²³

February 20, 2017: The two sides agree on another ceasefire²³²⁴.

February 21, 2017: It is reported that Russian officials have started to hand out Russian passports in Donbas²³²⁵. In connection to Russia now accepting documents from "Donetsk Peoples Republic" and the "Luhansk Peoples Republic," this means that people from these areas may apply for Russian citizenship on the basis of documents provided from the areas and not from Ukraine²³²⁶.

February 27, 2017: The Luhansk Republic announces that it will adopt the Russian ruble as its official currency from March 1²³²⁷.

March 3, 2017: The former Ukraine Prime Minister states that Russia should get out of Ukraine: "We are on the different side of the aisle, we cannot have any kind of compromise over the territorial integrity and sovereignty of my country. "The only solution which is on the table is that Russia is to get out of Ukraine. "It was Russia who started the war, who waged the war against an independent country, who tries to redraw the lines after the Second World War and who posed the threat to Ukraine, to you, to Nato and to everyone who stands by the values of democracy and freedom,"²³²⁸

March 7, 2017: The International Court of Justice begin hearings for Ukraine's lawsuit against Russia²³²⁹. Ukraine is requesting the court to demand that Russia exerts greater control over the border to prevent

²³²⁰ "NATO Scraps Ukraine Meeting Fearing Escalation With Russia" *The Moscow Times*, February 2, 2017, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/02/02/nato-scraps-ukraine-meeting-over-fears-of-escalating-russia-tensions-a57016>

²³²¹ "Putin orders Russia to recognize documents issued in rebel-held east Ukraine" *Reuters*, February 18, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-russia-documents/putin-orders-russia-to-recognize-documents-issued-in-rebel-held-east-ukraine-idUSKBN15X0KR>

²³²² Ibid

²³²³ Euan McKirdy and Emma Burrows "Eastern Ukraine ceasefire begins -- but will it hold?" *CNN*, February 20, 2017, <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/02/20/europe/ukraine-ceasefire/index.html>

²³²⁴ Ibid

²³²⁵ Paul A. Goble "Moscow to start distributing Russian passports in the occupied Donbas", *Euromaidanpress*, February 21, 2017, <http://euromaidanpress.com/2017/02/21/now-moscow-distributing-russian-passports-in-the-occupied-donbas-euromaidan-press/>

²³²⁶ Ibid

²³²⁷ "Ukraine's Breakaway Luhansk Republic Declares Ruble Official Currency" *The Moscow Times*, February 27, 2017, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/02/27/ukraines-breakaway-luhansk-republic-adopts-russian-ruble-a57280>

²³²⁸ "Arseniy Yatsenyuk: Russia should 'get out' of Ukraine" *BBC News*, March 3, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-europe-39155406/arseniy-yatsenyuk-russia-should-get-out-of-ukraine>

²³²⁹ Nikolai Epple "The Hague Effect: Russia to Face Charges of Terrorism in Ukraine" *The Moscow Times*, March 7, 2017, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/03/07/the-hague-effect-will-russia-lose-its-ukraine-case-a57350>

“money, weapons, vehicles, instructors or armed groups” from entering Ukrainian territory and that Russia stops the discrimination against Crimean Tatars and ethnic Ukrainians in Crimea²³³⁰.

March 15, 2017: Ukraine halts the movement of all goods into separatist areas stating that the decision was made due to "sharp escalation of Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the seizure of Ukrainian businesses" by the separatists in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions²³³¹. Ukraine stated that the halt would be in place until the separatists hand back the businesses and comply with the Minsk agreements²³³². “War veterans, activists and some lawmakers had for weeks demanded that all transport links with the rebels be cut, describing any business activity with the east as "trade in blood"²³³³. Meanwhile separatists announce that they have started shipping coal to Russia²³³⁴.

April 6, 2017: The EU approves visa waiver for Ukraine citizens²³³⁵.

April 24, 2017: A US ceasefire monitor for the OSCE dies in Luhansk following an explosion with Russia’s foreign ministry calling it a “provocation” designed to derail the peace process²³³⁶

April 25, 2017: The death of the OSCE monitor makes Ukraine assume its call for UN peacekeeping troops in Ukraine with Russia continuing to oppose this²³³⁷.

May 16, 2017: Ukraine orders new sanctions against Russia including the blocking of several Russian websites and social networks²³³⁸.

July 18, 2017: DPR announces the creation of a new state called “Malorossiia”²³³⁹. As stated by the head of the Donetsk People’s Republic Aleksandr Zakharchenko: “The situation has reached a dead end. We propose the plan of the reintegration of the country in order to stop civil war, we discussed the situation and came to the conclusion that Ukraine has shown itself to be failed state”²³⁴⁰. Donetsk has amongst other created a constitution in which it states: “We, the representatives of former Ukraine, declare the establishment of a new state, Malorossiia, which is a successor state to Ukraine. We agree that the new state’s name will be Malorossiia because the very name of Ukraine has discredited itself,”²³⁴¹.

²³³⁰ Ibid

²³³¹ “Ukraine halts all goods traffic with rebel-held east” *BBC News*, March 15, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-39279205>

²³³² Ibid

²³³³ Ibid

²³³⁴ Ibid

²³³⁵ “MEPs approve visa waiver for Ukraine” *BBC News*, April 6, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/live/uk-politics-parliaments-39510251>

²³³⁶ “Russia Claims Death of U.S. Ceasefire Monitor in Ukraine Is 'Provocation'” *The Moscow Times*, April 24, 2017, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/04/24/russia-condemns-death-of-us-ceasefire-monitor-in-ukraine-as-provocation-a57792>

²³³⁷ Damien Sharkov “War in Ukraine: After American Dies in Rebel Territory, Russia and Kiev Argue Over More Peacekeepers” *Newsweek*, April 25, 2017, <https://www.newsweek.com/russia-opposes-peacekeepers-ukraine-despite-americans-death-589667>

²³³⁸ “Ukraine to Block Russian Social Media in Sweeping Sanctions” *The Moscow Times*, May 16, 2017, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/05/16/ukraine-to-block-russian-social-media-in-newest-sanctions-a58000>

²³³⁹ Paul Chuprina “Donetsk People’s Republic Announces the Creation of a New Country: Malorossiia” *Global Research*, July 19, 2017, <https://www.globalresearch.ca/donetsk-peoples-republic-announces-the-creation-of-a-new-country-malorossiia/5600110>

²³⁴⁰ Ibid

²³⁴¹ Ibid

July 19, 2017: Alexander Zakharchenko announced the creation of Malorossiia as a new "state" in Donetsk, saying it will replace Ukraine²³⁴². Russia states that the decision for the creation of Malorossiia by DPR was a personal initiative made by the leaders in Donetsk and that Russia remains "committed to the Minsk accords"²³⁴³. The separatists in Luhansk also dismissed the initiative²³⁴⁴.

August 23, 2017: The two sides declare a new ceasefire amid the beginning of the new school year²³⁴⁵.

September 5, 2017: Russia proposes a draft resolution to the UNSC regarding the creation of a UN peacekeeping mission which is meant to provide security for the OSCE SMM with Putin stating: "I consider the presence of peacekeepers, or rather people who would provide security for the OSCE mission, absolutely appropriate, and see nothing wrong with it,"²³⁴⁶. The draft resolution states that the mission is only meant to provide security for the SMM and that it should operate on the contact line²³⁴⁷. Ukraine on the other hand states that the mission should be deployed across the entire territory of the separatists and up until the Russian border²³⁴⁸. And Ukraine is asking for personnel from NATO countries, while Russia asks for a multinational constellation of personnel²³⁴⁹. Russia furthermore stated that a decision on peacekeepers could not be made without direct consultation with the separatists, with Ukraine rejecting this is: "Putin's statement concerning the necessity of coordinating the issue of UN peacekeepers' deployment to Donbas with the [self-proclaimed People's Republics of Donetsk and Lugansk] would de facto mean legalization of their network" in eastern Ukraine²³⁵⁰

September 7, 2017: Poroshenko states that he fears Russia would use the joint Russia-Belarus Zapad military exercise as "a smokescreen to create new Russian army assault groups to invade Ukrainian territory"²³⁵¹. He also stated: "There are no signs that Moscow is ready to pull out of Donbas or Crimea[...]But unfortunately there is more and more proof of its preparations for an offensive war on a continental scale."²³⁵².

September 26, 2017: Ukraine announces that it will also submit a draft resolution to the UNSC regarding UN peacekeeping mission to Ukraine with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin stating: "As for the Russian resolution, nothing has started, except for very formal consultations, one round, so that there would be a response. We will not take the bait. First comes an agreed upon position with the so-called G7, the EU, China[...]Only then will we move forward with a resolution[...]Ours will be an agreed-upon position, not just our resolution[...]We will introduce it when we have an agreed-upon position with our friends and all

²³⁴² "Ukraine conflict: Russia rejects new Donetsk rebel 'state'" *BBC News*, July 19, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-40653913>

²³⁴³ Ibid

²³⁴⁴ Ibid

²³⁴⁵ "Ukraine forces declare truce for new school year" *BBC News*, August 23, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-41027663>

²³⁴⁶ "Russia drafts UN Security Council resolution to send peacekeepers to Ukraine" *RT*, September 5, 2017, <https://www.rt.com/news/402094-russia-resolution-peacekeepers-ukraine/>

²³⁴⁷ Ibid

²³⁴⁸ Alex Gorka "Russia Proposes UN Peacekeeping Mission in Ukraine" *Strategic Culture*, September 21, 2017, <https://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2017/09/21/russia-proposes-un-peacekeeping-mission-ukraine/>

²³⁴⁹ Ibid

²³⁵⁰ "Russia drafts UN Security Council resolution to send peacekeepers to Ukraine" *RT*

²³⁵¹ "Ukraine fears Russia will use exercises next week to invade" *BBC News*, September 7, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-41190967>

²³⁵² Ibid

the main players. Russia will not be able to start playing its game, like it always does, to create conditions to weaken the mandate of the mission,"²³⁵³.

October 1, 2017: The first deputy head of the Verkhovna Rada states that Russia's proposal of the UN peacekeeping mission to Donbass was made for delaying time, as she states: "In fact, the Russian Federation, the Russian president dropped such a hybrid, surrogate proposal for peacekeepers that supposedly should be located only on the line of contact and guard the OSCE mission - it is absolute nonsense. There is not a single peacekeeping mission which mandate would be to guard another mission,"²³⁵⁴.

October 3, 2017: Ukraine condemns Russia's intention of conducting military draft in Crimea, stating: "We decisively protest against Russia's plan to hold the draft in the temporarily occupied Crimea and Sevastopol. We once again reiterate that the UN General Assembly on the human rights in Crimea and Sevastopol confirmed that the peninsula was illegally occupied by Russia"²³⁵⁵.

October 4, 2017: Poroshenko suggests in two draft bills - "On re-integration of Donbas" and "On extension of special order of local government in the occupied areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions"²³⁵⁶ - that the Parliament recognize the territories of Donbass as occupied by Russia. The bill states that the occupation is unlawful and that it does not give Russia territorial rights: "The actions of the armed forces and other military groups of Russian Federation and occupational administration of Russian Federation contradict the norms of international humanitarian law, is unlawful, and any act issued by such activity is invalid, and doesn't cause legal consequences,"²³⁵⁷. The draft bill also stated that Ukraine was not responsible for the Russian aggression or the actions of the separatists in Donbass, with the bill stating: "The state of Ukraine is not responsible for the unlawful actions of the Russian Federation as an aggressor state, its armed forces, other military formations and the occupation administration in the temporarily occupied territories in Donetsk and Luhansk regions,"²³⁵⁸.

October 5, 2017: Russia states that the draft laws proposed by Ukraine may be seen as a defiant act against Europe and an act which contradicts the Minsk Agreements²³⁵⁹. The Vice Speaker of the Russian Parliament stated: "Abiding by Minsk agreements is Poroshenko's obligation before Europe. But the president of Ukraine is not going to fulfill these commitments. He is about to commit crimes, impudently grinning to Europe,"²³⁶⁰. She also stated that by approving the bill, Ukraine will "legalize military operations against

²³⁵³ "Ukraine to submit draft resolution on UN peacekeepers in Donbas agreed upon with foreign partners" *Interfax Ukraine*, September 26, 2017, <https://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/451063.html>

²³⁵⁴ "Russian proposal on peacekeeping mission made for delaying time, - Gerashchenko" *I12 UA*, October 1, 2017, <https://112.international/politics/russian-proposal-on-peacekeeping-mission-madw-for-delaying-time-herashchenko-21229.html>

²³⁵⁵ "Ukraine demands Russia to cease military draft in Crimea" *I12 UA*, October 3, 2017, <https://112.international/politics/ukraine-demands-russia-to-cess-military-draft-in-crimea-21301.html>

²³⁵⁶ "Russia calls Donbas reintegration law 'mockery over Europe'" *I12 UA*, October 5, 2017, <https://112.international/russia/russia-calls-donbas-reintegration-law-mockery-over-europe-21365.html>

²³⁵⁷ "Poroshenko suggests that Parliament recognize occupied territories as occupied by Russia" *I12 UA*, October 4, 2017, <https://112.international/ukraine-top-news/poroshenko-suggests-parliament-to-recognize-occupied-territories-as-occupied-by-russia-draft-21331.html>

²³⁵⁸ "Ukraine to be relieved of responsibility for Russia's actions in Donbas" *I12 UA*, October 4, 2017, <https://112.international/ukraine-top-news/ukraine-to-be-relieved-of-responsibility-for-russias-actions-in-donbas-21330.html>

²³⁵⁹ "Russia calls Donbas reintegration law 'mockery over Europe'" *I12 UA*

²³⁶⁰ *Ibid*

peaceful civilians of Donbas.’²³⁶¹. The Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, Olexandr Turchynov, however stated that the draft bill on has strategic importance for Ukraine: ‘The provided draft law has the strategic importance for our country; it creates the rightful principles for the restoration of territorial integrity of Ukraine, complete de-occupation of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, provides strong and firm legal position of Ukraine at the international judicial instances, blocks any attempts of Russia to continue aggression disguising under the peacekeepers. The most important is that the project clearly and unambiguously defines Russia as the state-aggressor and Donbas as occupied territory’,²³⁶².

October 6, 2017: The Verkhovna Rada approves the so-called Donbas Reintegration draft bill and excludes any mentioning of the Minsk Agreements in the bill²³⁶³. Meanwhile Russia opens four criminal proceedings against the Ukraine military for “artillery attacks of the civilians in Donbas”²³⁶⁴.

October 8, 2017: Ukraine and NATO announce that the NATO Parliamentary Assembly will be held for the first time in Ukraine in 2020²³⁶⁵. NATO also agreed to assist Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova with strategic communication, which implies the development of special units meant to monitor fake news and propaganda²³⁶⁶.

October 11, 2017: Special Envoy of Russia to the Trilateral Contact Group on Donbas Boris Gryzlov states that Ukraine’s approach to the deployment of UN peacekeepers is unacceptable, stating: ‘Some politicians in Ukraine consider the contingent of UN mission as the advanced detachment that will lead the Ukrainian armed forces, so-called paramilitary troops and police force to Donbas. Naturally, such approach is unacceptable for Donbas. I think that it is unacceptable for the UN and for all those who really want peace at this territory’²³⁶⁷

October 17, 2017: A statue commemorating the Russian volunteer fighters in Ukraine has been erected close to the Ukraine border²³⁶⁸. Mayor Vitaly Kushnaryov thanked a delegation of retired and active “volunteers” at the ceremony for “doing everything to save the Russian world.”²³⁶⁹. The unveiling was attended by DNR leader Alexander Zakharchenko and Russian presidential aide Vladislav Surkov²³⁷⁰.

²³⁶¹ Ibid

²³⁶² “Draft law on reintegration of Donbas has strategic importance for Ukraine, - Turchynov” *112 UA*, October 5, 2017, <https://112.international/ukraine-top-news/draft-law-on-reintegration-of-donbas-has-strategic-importance-for-ukraine-turchynov-21372.html>

²³⁶³ “Donbas reintegration: Parliament to name Russia aggressor without mentioning Minsk agreement” *112 UA*, October 6, 2017, <https://112.international/politics/donbas-reintegration-parliament-to-name-russia-aggressor-without-mentioning-minsk-agreement-21390.html>

²³⁶⁴ “Russia opens another criminal investigations due to attacks in Donbas” *112 UA*, October 6, 2017, <https://112.international/russia/russia-opens-another-criminal-investigations-due-to-attacks-in-donbas-21392.html>

²³⁶⁵ “NATO PA to be held in Ukraine for first time in 2020” *112 UA*, October 8, 2017, <https://112.international/politics/nato-pa-to-be-held-in-ukraine-for-first-time-in-2020-21460.html>

²³⁶⁶ “NATO to assist Ukraine in strategic communications area” *112 UA*, October 9, 2017, <https://112.international/politics/nato-to-assist-ukraine-strategic-communications-area-21465.html>

²³⁶⁷ “Russia excludes Ukrainian approach to UN peacekeeping mission in Donbas” *112 UA*, October 11, 2017, <https://112.international/conflict-in-eastern-ukraine/russia-excludes-ukrainian-approach-on-un-peacekeeping-mission-in-donbas-21539.html>

²³⁶⁸ “Statue Unveiled Commemorating Russian ‘Volunteer’ Fighters in Ukraine” *The Moscow Times*, October 17, 2017, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/10/17/statue-to-russian-volunteer-fighters-ukraine-unveiled-a59288>

²³⁶⁹ Ibid

²³⁷⁰ Ibid

November 1, 2017: Russia shuts down three checkpoints into Crimea following sabotage which left the Peninsula without power and gas²³⁷¹.

November 13, 2017: US and Russia envoys are set to meet for a discussion regarding the deployment of UN peacekeepers to Ukraine²³⁷².

November 16, 2017: Putin talks with separatist leaders over the phone urging them to exchange prisoners with Ukraine²³⁷³.

November 24, 2017: The leader of rebel-held Luhansk, Igor Plotnitsky's resigns with a statement saying: "due to health issues, emanating from his injuries sustained during the war and concussion consequences"²³⁷⁴.

December 14, 2017: Ukraine plans to broadcast news to the Crimean Tartars in Crimea stating: "These people, who are facing persecution for their nationality, religion, and political views, will be able to listen to broadcasts in their own language"²³⁷⁵. Dmitry Poklonsky, the local official in charge of communications in Crimea responded saying "only Russian TV and radio will be broadcast to Crimea - all states have to take certain measures to defend their territory and information space"²³⁷⁶.

December 18, 2017: Russia withdraws its military officers from a joint Russia-Ukraine center monitoring the ceasefire stating that Ukraine prevented the monitors from doing their job²³⁷⁷. Ukraine called the move a provocation stating: "We consider this unprecedented step by Russia as a new provocation which considerably undermines the Minsk agreements"²³⁷⁸. The Ukraine military also warned that the decision could escalate the conflict²³⁷⁹.

December 23, 2017: The US states that it will provide Ukraine with "enhanced defensive capabilities," stating that "U.S. assistance is entirely defensive in nature, and as we have always said, Ukraine is a sovereign country and has a right to defend itself,"²³⁸⁰

December 28, 2017: Ukraine swaps prisoners with the separatists with 74 entering Ukraine and 230 entering separatist territory²³⁸¹.

²³⁷¹ "Russia Seals Crimean Border Crossings With Ukraine" *The Moscow Times*, November 1, 2017, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/11/01/russia-closes-crimean-border-with-ukraine-a59438>

²³⁷² "U.S., Russia Envoys To Discuss Peacekeeping Force For Ukraine" *RadioFreeEurope*, November 13, 2017, <https://www.rferl.org/a/volker-surkov-ukraine-russia-un-peacekeeping-force/28850546.html>

²³⁷³ "Putin Urges Prisoner Swap in Talks With Ukraine Separatists" *The Moscow Times*, November 16, 2017, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/11/16/putin-signals-support-for-prisoner-swap-in-talks-with-ukraine-separatists-a59589>

²³⁷⁴ "Five Ukraine troops die in heavy fighting with Luhansk rebels" *BBC News*, November 24, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-42108007>

²³⁷⁵ "Ukraine to broadcast to Crimean Tatars" *BBC News*, December 14, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-news-from-elsewhere-42350616>

²³⁷⁶ Ibid

²³⁷⁷ "Ukraine crisis: Russian truce monitors to leave" *BBC News*, December 18, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-42402390>

²³⁷⁸ Ibid

²³⁷⁹ Ibid

²³⁸⁰ "U.S. says it will provide Ukraine with 'defensive' aid" *Reuters*, December 23, 2017, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-usa-ukraine-arms/u-s-says-it-will-provide-ukraine-with-defensive-aid-idUKKBN1EH00V>

²³⁸¹ "Ukraine swaps soldiers with rebels" *BBC News*, December 28, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-europe-42506346/ukraine-swaps-soldiers-with-rebels>

2018

January 19, 2018: In a new law, Ukraine defines the areas seized by the separatists as temporarily occupied by Russia and referred to Russia as an aggressor state, stating: “The Russian Federation is committing a crime of aggression against Ukraine and is temporarily occupying parts of its territory,”²³⁸². Russia condemned the act stating that it would be considered as preparation for a new war²³⁸³.

March 2, 2018: Ukraine closes schools and universities in an effort to save gas as Russia’s energy company Gazprom refused to supply more gas²³⁸⁴.

March 12, 2018: In a documentary, Putin states that he will never give Crimea back to Ukraine²³⁸⁵. Responding to a question regarding this he stated: "What, have you gone mad?[...]There are no such circumstances and never will be.”²³⁸⁶

March 16, 2018: Ukraine plans to prevent Russians in Ukraine from voting in the Russian presidential elections since Russia decided that votes should be cast in Crimea²³⁸⁷. Russia responded saying: “This is a blatant violation of international obligations, international law and particularly a violation of the rights of our citizens,”²³⁸⁸

March 18, 2018: Presidential elections are held in Russia on the date of the fourth anniversary of the annexation of Crimea²³⁸⁹.

March 19, 2018: Putin secures his seat as President with 76.7% share of the votes²³⁹⁰.

April 25, 2018: Russia rejects Ukraine’s attempt to conduct military inspections in Crimea stating: "The modern status of the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol as territorial entities of the Russian Federation cannot be reviewed. Respectively, Russia is free to deploy troops and military equipment on its territory, and all attempts to inspect the territory of Crimea as part of inspections in Ukraine are provocative and futile. Naturally, Russia is ready to accept inspectors, observers and the evaluation group in Crimea if it receives relevant requests under the Vienna document,"²³⁹¹.

²³⁸² “Ukraine crisis: Kiev defines Russia as 'aggressor' state” *BBC News*, January 19, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-42741778>

²³⁸³ Ibid

²³⁸⁴ “Ukraine closes schools to save gas as Russia keeps pipelines closed” *BBC News*, March 2, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-43260668>

²³⁸⁵ Evans, Sakura “Russian election: Vladimir Putin promises he will 'NEVER' give Crimea back to Ukraine” *Express*, March 12, 2018, <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/930376/russian-election-vladimir-putin-never-give-crimea-back-to-ukraine>

²³⁸⁶ Ibid

²³⁸⁷ “Kiev plans to prevent Russians in Ukraine from voting in Russian election” *Reuters*, March 16, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-election-ukraine/kyiv-plans-to-prevent-russians-in-ukraine-from-voting-in-russian-election-idUSKCN1GS29T>

²³⁸⁸ Ibid

²³⁸⁹ Joseph Hincks “Your Complete Guide to Russia's 2018 Presidential Election” *TIME*, March 13, 2018, <https://time.com/5196905/russia-presidential-election-2018-candidates/>

²³⁹⁰ Andrew Roth “Vladimir Putin secures record win in Russian presidential election” *The Guardian*, March 19, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/19/vladimir-putin-secures-record-win-in-russian-presidential-election>

²³⁹¹ “Russia rejects attempts of military inspections in Crimea during Ukraine checks” *TASS*, April 25, 2018, <https://tass.com/defense/1001624>

April 30, 2018: Ukraine receives U.S. Javelin missiles and launch units, which the US and Ukraine believe will assist Ukraine in building its long-term defense²³⁹². Ukraine's "antiterrorist operation" officially ends and in its place Poroshenko launches "joint forces operation", which is based on the law on the reintegration of Donbas proposed earlier²³⁹³. Whereas the antiterrorist operation had a short-term outlook, meant to deal with unrest in Donbas, the new operation has a long-term trajectory of reintegrating Donbas and Crimea into Ukraine²³⁹⁴. The operations also switched hands from the security services to the armed forces²³⁹⁵.

May 1, 2018: Russia's envoy to the Contact Group for Ukraine Boris Gryzlov states that Ukraine has put its stakes on solving the conflict militarily, as he stated: "The issue is not about the declared formats of using the armed forces or other groupings by Ukraine's authorities, but about their announced stake on a military solution to the conflict in the country's southeast. The major problem is the lack of any steps by Ukraine towards a political settlement,"²³⁹⁶. He also stated: "It is vital to launch the process of providing Donbass with a special status under the Steinmeier formula and amnesty to the participants of the conflict on both sides[...]Russia, as a mediator in settling this conflict, also views this rhetoric as destructive and not encouraging peace[...]We hope that in fact this rhetoric won't lead to the deterioration of the armed standoff and won't affect the security of citizens in the conflict zone areas,"²³⁹⁷.

May 4, 2018: Russia blocks the expansion of the OSCE mission on the border with Ukraine with Ukraine stating: "Discussions during the 1184th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council on May 3, 2018, at which the said decision was endorsed, showed Russia's isolation in its reluctance to ensure effective international control at the border. These actions by the Russian Federation indicate its intention to continue the supply of weapons, ammunition and military equipment, regular troops, mercenaries in order to support terrorist activity on Ukrainian territory. In this regard, joining the consensus on the decision, Ukraine's delegation to the OSCE issued a respective interpretation statement,"²³⁹⁸

May 7, 2018: Putin is sworn in as president for another six years, following his election win in March²³⁹⁹.

May 8, 2018: According to Poroshenko there are still 50,000 Russians mobilized in Russia and sent to Ukraine²⁴⁰⁰. He also stated that Putin is trying to: "reconquer Ukraine[...]Yes, [Russia wants] to reconquer Ukraine and rebuild the Soviet Union or the Russian Empire, whatever you want,"²⁴⁰¹.

²³⁹² "Ukraine receives U.S. Javelin systems: Poroshenko" *Reuters*, April 30, 2018,

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-javelin/ukraine-receives-us-javelin-systems-poroshenko-idUSKBN111ZY>

²³⁹³ Gwendolyn Sasse "Ukraine's New Military Engagement in the Donbas" *Carnegie Europe*, May 3, 2018,

<https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/76246>

²³⁹⁴ Ibid

²³⁹⁵ Ibid

²³⁹⁶ "Kiev places stake on military solution to Donbass conflict, says Russian envoy" *TASS*, May 1, 2018,

<https://tass.com/politics/1002592>

²³⁹⁷ Ibid

²³⁹⁸ "Russia blocks expansion of OSCE mission on border with Ukraine" *Ukrinform*, May 5, 2018,

<https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-politics/2453718-russia-blocks-expansion-of-osce-mission-on-border-with-ukraine.html>

²³⁹⁹ Hilary Clarke "Russia's Putin sworn in for another six years" *CNN*, May 7, 2018,

<https://edition.cnn.com/2018/05/07/europe/putin-inauguration-intl/index.html>

²⁴⁰⁰ "Putin wants to reconquer Ukraine, rebuild Soviet Union – Poroshenko" *Ukrinform*, May 8, 2018,

<https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-politics/2456290-putin-wants-to-reconquer-ukraine-rebuild-soviet-union-poroshenko.html>

²⁴⁰¹ Ibid

May 9, 2018: In a speech Poroshenko states that Russia intended to split Ukraine in half in 2014, stating: "In the spring of 2014, Russia planned to split Ukraine into several pieces. We disrupted this insidious plan with the heroic will of the Ukrainian people and Ukrainian warriors. We caught hold of the ground, cemented into the map of Europe and the world. We took such strong roots that no force is able to unearth us from our legal and natural place. From the place we've been living in for thousands of years already,"²⁴⁰². He also stated confidence that Ukraine would win: "We will definitely win this time as well. With different price, in a different way, by other means. Not only by military, not only by defensive ones, but also politically and diplomatically,"²⁴⁰³

May 10, 2018: Separatists in Donetsk hold a Victory Day where they parade heavy weapons banned by the Minsk Agreements. Many of the weapons were painted with the red soviet star and "a black-and-orange-striped St. George's ribbon, a hallmark of World War II victory celebrations that Ukraine banned after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 as a symbol of what Kyiv sees as Russian aggression and expansionism"²⁴⁰⁴. In a speech Poroshenko stated: "Stalin's Soviet Union in the first two years of World War II was an ally of Hitler's Germany[...]and he also stated that Russia is ready to bring the world "to the brink of World War III[...]They are here, not far from us -- and this requires our special vigilance and responsibility,"²⁴⁰⁵. France, Germany and Ukraine sit down to discuss the conflict under the Normandy Format, without Russia²⁴⁰⁶.

May 11, 2018: Russian Foreign Ministry's spokeswoman Maria Zakharova states that a recent attack in Ukraine against a Russian cultural center is but another attempt to destroy the common culture between Ukraine and Russia: "That is a part of the tendency. There are permanent attempts to set us against each other. Culture is also used to achieve that. In order to force Russia out of Ukraine, it is necessary to close all Russian language centers, all centers of Rossotrudnichestvo, simply ban teaching the Russian history and everything linked to our country — to destroy the common cultural space. Is it a need of the Ukrainian people? Of course, no. That is a political environment, ideology of current Kiev authorities,"²⁴⁰⁷. Meanwhile in Donetsk celebrations were held marking the fourth anniversary of the city's proclaimed independence from Ukraine²⁴⁰⁸.

²⁴⁰² "Poroshenko: Russia wanted to split Ukraine into several parts in 2014" *Unian*, May 9, 2018, <https://www.unian.info/politics/10110581-poroshenko-russia-wanted-to-split-ukraine-into-several-parts-in-2014.html>

²⁴⁰³ Ibid

²⁴⁰⁴ "Ukrainian Separatists Parade Banned Heavy Weapons In Donetsk" *RadioFreeEurope*, May 10, 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukrainian-separatists-parade-banned-heavy-weapons-banned-v-day-parade-donetsk/29218420.html>

²⁴⁰⁵ Ibid

²⁴⁰⁶ Tatiana Urbanskaya "Normandy format without Russia: Agenda of Poroshenko's talks with Merkel and Macron" *Unian*, May 10, 2018, <https://www.unian.info/politics/10112183-normandy-format-without-russia-agenda-of-poroshenko-s-talks-with-merkel-and-macron.html>

²⁴⁰⁷ "Russian FM: Increase in Neo-Fascism Sentiment in Ukraine Alarming" *Sputniknews*, May 11, 2018, <https://sputniknews.com/europe/201805111064344908-russia-ukraine-culture-sentiment-fascism/>

²⁴⁰⁸ "Separatists in Donetsk Celebrate Anniversary" *VOA News*, May 11, 2018, <https://www.voanews.com/europe/separatists-donetsk-celebrate-anniversary>

May 15, 2018: Russia opens the Kerch Strait bridge, which links Russia's Krasnodar region with the Crimean Peninsula²⁴⁰⁹. Poroshenko proposes that EU countries prepare “a targeted program of patronage over certain cities of the Ukrainian Donbas to help them revive and restore infrastructure”²⁴¹⁰.

May 16, 2018: Poroshenko withdraws a bill meant to strip Ukrainians of their citizenship if they voted in Crimea²⁴¹¹.

May 18, 2018: According to the U.S. Special Envoy to Ukraine Kurt Volker, ethnic Russians participate in the conflict on both sides²⁴¹². This could, according to Volker, be an area where Putin could “present himself in the best light” by working towards a settlement of the conflict by stopping the clashes between the ethnic Russians on both sides of the conflict²⁴¹³.

May 19, 2018: Poroshenko signs a decree which recalls Ukraine’s envoys to the CIS, stating: "We have nothing more to do there[...]We are moving together to Europe."²⁴¹⁴

May 22, 2018: The OSCE reports that fighting has escalated in eastern Ukraine with Alexander Hug stating: "Last week was in many ways the worst we have seen so far this year[...]In total, we recorded 7,700 cease-fire violations."²⁴¹⁵.

May 26, 2018: The Normandy Format has yet to be resumed, with Russia announcing that there are so far no talks scheduled for the future²⁴¹⁶.

May 28, 2018: According to the Russian Border Service there is still a threat that Ukraine radical groups will enter Crimea and the Rostov region of Russia with weapons and ammunition²⁴¹⁷. Meanwhile, Ukraine claims that Russia has relocated approx. 1 million people from Russia to Crimea²⁴¹⁸. According to the leader of the Crimean Tatars: "Russia is now roughly repeating the same strategy that was used during the first occupation [of Crimea] under [Empress] Catherine [the Great][...]At that time it wasn't possible to deport people since there were no railroads. So they simply created impossible living conditions for people in order to force them to migrate. As a result, Crimean Tatars very quickly became a minority people."²⁴¹⁹.

²⁴⁰⁹ Nathan Hodge “Russia's bridge to Crimea: A metaphor for the Putin era” *CNN*, May 15, 2018, <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/05/15/europe/russia-crimea-bridge-intl/index.html>

²⁴¹⁰ “Poroshenko proposes that EU countries take patronage over cities of Donbas” *Ukrinform*, May 15, 2018, <https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-politics/2460467-poroshenko-proposes-that-eu-countries-take-patronage-over-cities-of-donbas.html>

²⁴¹¹ “Poroshenko withdraws bill on stripping of Ukrainian citizenship for voting in Russian-occupied Crimea” *Unian*, May 16, 2018, <https://www.unian.info/politics/10119431-poroshenko-withdraws-bill-on-stripping-of-ukrainian-citizenship-for-voting-in-russian-occupied-crimea.html>

²⁴¹² “Ethnic Russians fight against each other in Donbas, - Volker” *I12 UA*, May 18, 2018, <https://i12.international/conflict-in-eastern-ukraine/ethnic-russians-fight-against-each-other-in-donbas-volker-28603.html>

²⁴¹³ Ibid

²⁴¹⁴ “Poroshenko Recalls Ukraine's Envoys From CIS Bodies” *RadioFreeEurope*, May 19, 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/poroshenko-recalls-ukraine-s-envoys-from-cis-bodies/29237389.html>

²⁴¹⁵ “Deadly Spike In Fighting Reported In Eastern Ukraine” *RadioFreeEurope*, May 22, 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/29241384.html>

²⁴¹⁶ “No plans for Normandy Four summit – Kremlin” *TASS*, May 26, 2018, <https://tass.com/politics/1006712>

²⁴¹⁷ “Russian Border Service warns of risks of attacks in Crimea” *Eadaily*, May 28, 2018, <https://eadaily.com/en/news/2018/05/28/russian-border-service-warns-of-risks-of-attacks-in-crimea>

²⁴¹⁸ “Ukraine Claims Moscow Brought 1 Million Russians Into Crimea” *RadioFreeEurope*, May 28, 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-claims-moscow-brought-1-million-russians-into-crimea/29255041.html>

²⁴¹⁹ Ibid

May 29, 2018: Ukraine and Russia clash at the UN during a meeting on the conflict in Ukraine²⁴²⁰. Ukraine’s Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin stated the conflict “was invented by the Kremlin to punish Ukrainians for their aspiration towards freedom, democracy and European future[...]The conflict itself is not, as Russia pictures it, an ethnic conflict, a conflict between Ukrainian- and Russian-speaking population, or a civil war inside Ukraine[...]It is an external aggression designed to destroy Ukraine’s statehood only because we did not want to be a part of the so-called Russian world.”²⁴²¹. Russia responded by saying that some Ukrainians did not want to solve the conflict because it would mean that millions of separatists would be able to vote at the presidential elections in 2019²⁴²². Russia also stated: “what you do want is a hotbed of instability on the borders of Russia, and drawing satisfaction that there is tension in the relations between two brotherly peoples and countries.”²⁴²³. Russia also stated that the people of Crimea did not want to be a part of Ukraine stating: “I’m very touched about the concern for Crimea and the suffering of the people there[...]Let me give you a piece of advice: Don’t worry about them. They’re quite happy[...]What we’re discussing today is Ukraine, and Crimea is part of Russia and it’s about time this was accepted”²⁴²⁴.

²⁴²⁰ Edith M. Lederer “Russia criticized at UN over Ukraine conflict, Crimea, crash” *Seattle Times*, May 29, 2018, <https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/russia-criticized-at-un-over-ukraine-conflict-crimea-crash/>

²⁴²¹ Ibid

²⁴²² Ibid

²⁴²³ Ibid

²⁴²⁴ Ibid

Appendix 2: Georgia Conflict Timeline

1989

May 26, 1989: Clashes erupt between Georgian civilians and civilians from Ossetia on the anniversary of the declaration of Georgia's independence in 1918²⁴²⁵.

August 1989: The Supreme Soviet of Georgia creates a new language program in which the Georgian language is to be used in all public spheres²⁴²⁶.

September 1989: Adamon Nykhas (South Ossetian movement) and a group of Ossetian workers appeal to the USSR Council of Ministers and other Soviet organs in a protest against the Georgian language program which they regard as “anti-democratic and unconstitutional”²⁴²⁷. They ask that the prospect of South Ossetia's unification with North Ossetia to be discussed²⁴²⁸. Later in September the Supreme Soviet of South Ossetia furthermore announces that Ossetian will be the official language of the area²⁴²⁹.

October 1-15, 1989: Police units are reinforced in South Ossetia as the result of protests from Ossetians who demand an end to the official use of the Russian and Georgian language and the revision of Ossetia's status from an Autonomous Region to an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic²⁴³⁰.

November 10, 1989: The Supreme Soviet of South Ossetia demands a change of status for South Ossetia²⁴³¹. They demand it to be changed from autonomous oblast to autonomous republic²⁴³². The Supreme Soviet of Georgia call the demands illegal and proposes a law on sovereignty, which states that the Supreme Soviet of Georgia has the right to veto any Soviet law which goes against Georgian interests²⁴³³. In addition, the First Party Secretary of the Oblast is fired²⁴³⁴.

November 20, 1989: The Georgian Supreme Soviet states that its inclusion under the Soviet Union in 1921 was the result of military force and hence it was involuntary and illegitimate²⁴³⁵. The Georgian Supreme Soviet also states that it has the right to secede from the USSR and to nullify laws and decrees emanating from the central government in Moscow²⁴³⁶.

²⁴²⁵ Dennis Sammut and Nikola Cvetkovski “CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MATTERS. The Georgia—South Ossetia Conflict” Vertic (1996),

http://www.vertic.org/media/Archived_Publications/Matters/Confidence_Building_Matters_No6.pdf, 25

²⁴²⁶ Ibid

²⁴²⁷ Ibid

²⁴²⁸ Ibid

²⁴²⁹ Ibid

²⁴³⁰ Minorities at risk project “Chronology for Ossetians (South) in Georgia” *Refworld*. Retrieved on December 3, 2019: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/469f388dc.html>

²⁴³¹ Sammut and Cvetkovski “CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MATTERS. The Georgia—South Ossetia Conflict” Vertic, 25

²⁴³² Ibid

²⁴³³ Ibid

²⁴³⁴ Ibid

²⁴³⁵ Minorities at risk project “Chronology for Ossetians (South) in Georgia” *Refworld*

²⁴³⁶ Ibid

November 23-26, 1989: Zviad Gamsakhurdia (later the first president of Georgia) organizes a so-called “peaceful meeting of reconciliation” in which he takes thousands of people to Tskhinvali²⁴³⁷. Ossetians however block the road and clashes erupt with several wounded²⁴³⁸.

November 27, 1989: 1,000 USSR Interior Ministry troops are positioned around Tskhinvali to prevent further clashes²⁴³⁹.

1990

August 1990: Jaba Ioselani goes to South Ossetia in order to calm fears and assure the Ossetians that Georgia has no hostile intentions²⁴⁴⁰. Later in August the Supreme Soviet of Georgia passes an election law which bans the participation in upcoming parliamentary elections for any party whose activities are confined to specific areas of Georgia²⁴⁴¹.

September 20, 1990: South Ossetia declares independence from Georgia, and reinstates itself as South Ossetian Democratic Soviet Republic, which Georgia declares as an illegal act²⁴⁴².

October 28, 1990: The Supreme Soviet of Georgia holds elections which are boycotted by South Ossetia²⁴⁴³. The election results in victory for the coalition headed by Zviad Gamsakhurdia²⁴⁴⁴.

December 8, 1990: The Georgian Communist Party states that it is separating from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and delegates from South Ossetia and Abkhazia denounce the secession move²⁴⁴⁵.

December 9, 1990: Parliamentary elections are held in South Ossetia, with the results rejected by Georgia²⁴⁴⁶.

December 11, 1990: The Supreme Council of the Republic of Georgia abolish the Autonomous Oblast of South Ossetia and the South Ossetian election results are cancelled²⁴⁴⁷.

²⁴³⁷ Sammut and Cvetkovski “CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MATTERS. The Georgia—South Ossetia Conflict” Vertic, 25

²⁴³⁸ Ibid

²⁴³⁹ Minorities at risk project “Chronology for Ossetians (South) in Georgia” *Refworld*

²⁴⁴⁰ Sammut and Cvetkovski “CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MATTERS. The Georgia—South Ossetia Conflict” Vertic, 26

²⁴⁴¹ Ibid

²⁴⁴² University of Central Arkansas “38. Georgia/South Ossetia (1990-present), *University of Central Arkansas*. Retrieved on December 3, 2019: <https://uca.edu/politicalscience/dadm-project/europerussiacentral-asia-region/georgiasouth-ossetia-1990-present/>

²⁴⁴³ Sammut and Cvetkovski “CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MATTERS. The Georgia—South Ossetia Conflict” Vertic, 26

²⁴⁴⁴ Ibid

²⁴⁴⁵ Minorities at risk project “Chronology for Ossetians (South) in Georgia” *Refworld*

²⁴⁴⁶ University of Central Arkansas “38. Georgia/South Ossetia (1990-present)

²⁴⁴⁷ Parliament of Georgia “LAW OF THE REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA on Abolition of the Autonomous Oblast of the South Ossetia” *Parliament of Georgia*, Retrieved on December 3, 2019: http://www.parliament.ge/files/426_5649_580559_10.pdf

December 12, 1990: Clashes erupt between Georgians and South Ossetians in the South Ossetian capital and a state of emergency is declared in the area²⁴⁴⁸. Russian and Georgian troops are dispatched, and Georgian militia begin to disarm South Ossetian militia²⁴⁴⁹.

December 16, 1990: The South Ossetian Supreme Soviet confirms South Ossetia's decision of seeking independence²⁴⁵⁰. Later in December, talks between Georgia, South Ossetia and Moscow lead to the creation of a conciliation commission, but no result is reached²⁴⁵¹.

1991

January 1991: The Supreme Soviet of Georgia forms the National Guard²⁴⁵². Several Georgian militiamen are killed in South Ossetia²⁴⁵³.

January 5-6, 1991: Thousand Georgian troops enter South Ossetia and clashes erupt²⁴⁵⁴.

January 7, 1991: President Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union condemns the South Ossetian declaration of independence and the Georgian abolition of South Ossetian autonomy²⁴⁵⁵. He also calls for the withdrawal of the Georgian troops²⁴⁵⁶. Georgian parliament votes to refuse to comply²⁴⁵⁷.

January 25, 1991: The two sides agree on a ceasefire, but new fighting breaks out within a couple of days²⁴⁵⁸. In the end of January, the Ossetians succeed in pushing the Georgian troops out of Tskhinvali to the hills surrounding the city²⁴⁵⁹. According to South Ossetia, Georgia starts shelling the city and according to Georgia Ossetia starts burning down the houses belonging to Georgians who live in Tskhinvali²⁴⁶⁰. The Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of South Ossetia is invited for talks in Tbilisi but is arrested once he arrives to the city²⁴⁶¹.

February 1991: Georgia cuts the electricity supplies to Tskhinvali and block roads from which the area receives food and other supplies²⁴⁶². South Ossetia blocks the Georgian populated villages inside South Ossetia from the rest of Georgia²⁴⁶³. A ceasefire is reached, and Soviet troops start patrolling Tskhinvali²⁴⁶⁴. The ceasefire is however short lived²⁴⁶⁵.

²⁴⁴⁸ University of Central Arkansas "38. Georgia/South Ossetia (1990-present)

²⁴⁴⁹ Sammut and Cvetkovski "CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MATTERS. The Georgia—South Ossetia Conflict" Vertic, 26

²⁴⁵⁰ Ibid

²⁴⁵¹ Ibid

²⁴⁵² Ibid

²⁴⁵³ Ibid, 27

²⁴⁵⁴ Ibid

²⁴⁵⁵ University of Central Arkansas "38. Georgia/South Ossetia (1990-present)

²⁴⁵⁶ Sammut and Cvetkovski "CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MATTERS. The Georgia—South Ossetia Conflict" Vertic, 27

²⁴⁵⁷ Ibid

²⁴⁵⁸ Ibid

²⁴⁵⁹ Ibid

²⁴⁶⁰ Ibid

²⁴⁶¹ Ibid

²⁴⁶² Ibid

²⁴⁶³ Ibid

²⁴⁶⁴ Ibid

²⁴⁶⁵ Ibid

February 27, 1991: Gamsakhurdia states to the Georgian Supreme Soviet that “Gorbachev is planning to detach South Ossetia and Abkhazia from the Republic and is using such measures as a tool for pressuring Georgia into signing the newly proposed Union Treaty”²⁴⁶⁶.

March 1991: Russia and Georgia sign a protocol in which they agree to establish a joint commission between Russian and Georgian Ministries of Internal Affairs²⁴⁶⁷. The protocol agrees to joint assessment of the situation, disarmament of all illegal armed groups and the settling of the refugees²⁴⁶⁸.

April 9, 1991: Georgia declares independence from the Soviet Union and clashes erupt between the central government and the separatists in South Ossetia who seek independence from Georgia²⁴⁶⁹. Georgian president Zviad Gamsakhurdia demands that Mr. Gorbachev withdraw Soviet troops dispatched to the region, in northern Georgia²⁴⁷⁰.

May 1991: The Soviet of South Ossetia votes to abolish the South Ossetian Democratic Soviet Republic and restore its Oblast status under the Russian Federation and Georgia rejects this²⁴⁷¹. On May 26, Georgia also holds its first presidential elections in which Gamsakhurdia wins 87 percent of the vote²⁴⁷². Polling stations were closed in South Ossetia and Abkhazia due to the continued unrest²⁴⁷³.

August 19, 1991: The government of Georgia neither supports nor denounces the takeover in Moscow however, South Ossetia and Abkhazia announce their support for the coup leaders²⁴⁷⁴.

November 1991: South Ossetia declares the area a republic within the Russian Federation – a decision which is annulled by the Georgia Parliament²⁴⁷⁵.

December 1991: Russian troops leave Tskhinvali and according to Georgia they give their arms to Ossetians²⁴⁷⁶.

1992

January 19, 1992: South Ossetia approves in a referendum, secessionism from Georgia and integration with Russia North Ossetian region²⁴⁷⁷.

²⁴⁶⁶ Minorities at risk project “Chronology for Ossetians (South) in Georgia” *Refworld*

²⁴⁶⁷ Sammut and Cvetkovski “CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MATTERS. The Georgia—South Ossetia Conflict” Vertic, 27

²⁴⁶⁸ Ibid

²⁴⁶⁹ Francis X. Clines “Session Decreed by Soviet Georgia” *New York Times*, April 10, 1991, <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/04/10/world/secession-decreed-by-soviet-georgia.html>

²⁴⁷⁰ Ibid

²⁴⁷¹ Sammut and Cvetkovski “CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MATTERS. The Georgia—South Ossetia Conflict” Vertic, 27

²⁴⁷² Minorities at risk project “Chronology for Ossetians (South) in Georgia” *Refworld*

²⁴⁷³ Ibid

²⁴⁷⁴ Ibid

²⁴⁷⁵ Sammut and Cvetkovski “CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MATTERS. The Georgia—South Ossetia Conflict” Vertic, 28

²⁴⁷⁶ Ibid

²⁴⁷⁷ University of Central Arkansas “38. Georgia/South Ossetia (1990-present)

June 15, 1992: The Chairman of the Russian Supreme Soviet, Ruslan Khasbulatov, described Georgia's actions in South Ossetia as a genocide which he states could be a cause for Russia to consider the Ossetian request to join the Russian Federation²⁴⁷⁸.

June 18, 1992: Three combat helicopters with Russian Air Force identification marks launch an attack on Georgian military units and villages²⁴⁷⁹. Attacks from Tskhinvali also occur²⁴⁸⁰.

June 20, 1992: Shevardnadze condemns Russia's participation in the conflict and their support of South Ossetia²⁴⁸¹.

June 21, 1992: Russia's Vice-President Alexander Rutskoi accuses Georgia of practicing "genocide" against its Russian minority²⁴⁸².

June 24, 1992: A ceasefire agreement is signed between Russia and Georgia called the Sochi Agreement²⁴⁸³. The agreement establishes joint peacekeeping (Joint Control Commission) forces composed of Russia, Georgian and Ossetian units²⁴⁸⁴.

July 15, 1992: A Russian-Georgian peacekeeping force wearing United Nations blue began operations today to stop the fighting in the South Ossetia region of Georgia²⁴⁸⁵. Russia reported the deployment of 500 troops whilst Georgia reported deployment of 300²⁴⁸⁶. The troops will be joined by several hundred troops from South Ossetia²⁴⁸⁷.

July 25-30, 1992: The OSCE sends a fact-finding mission to Georgia²⁴⁸⁸.

July 31, 1992: Georgia is internationally recognized and becomes a member of the UN and South Ossetia is considered to be a part of Georgia²⁴⁸⁹.

November 6, 1992: The OSCE establishes the OSCE mission to Georgia in order to facilitate negotiations²⁴⁹⁰. The mandate of the mission is later expanded to monitor the JPKF and compliance with the ceasefire agreement²⁴⁹¹.

November 19, 1992: Georgian and Abkhaz forces reach a temporary ceasefire to allow Russian troops to depart from Sukhumi and the South Ossetian parliament votes to separate from Georgia and join Russia²⁴⁹².

²⁴⁷⁸ Sammut and Cvetkovski "CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MATTERS. The Georgia—South Ossetia Conflict" Vertic, 28

²⁴⁷⁹ Ibid

²⁴⁸⁰ Ibid

²⁴⁸¹ Ibid

²⁴⁸² Minorities at risk project "Chronology for Ossetians (South) in Georgia" *Refworld*

²⁴⁸³ Angelika Nußberger "South Ossetia" *Oxford Public International Law*, January 2013, <https://opil.ouplaw.com/view/10.1093/law/epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-c2068>

²⁴⁸⁴ Ibid

²⁴⁸⁵ "Peacekeepers Occupy Former Soviet Region" *New York Times*, July 15, 1992, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/07/15/world/peacekeepers-occupy-former-soviet-region.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FSouth%20Ossetia>

²⁴⁸⁶ Ibid

²⁴⁸⁷ Ibid

²⁴⁸⁸ University of Central Arkansas "38. Georgia/South Ossetia (1990-present)

²⁴⁸⁹ Nußberger "South Ossetia" *Oxford Public International Law*

²⁴⁹⁰ University of Central Arkansas "38. Georgia/South Ossetia (1990-present)

²⁴⁹¹ Ibid

²⁴⁹² Minorities at risk project "Chronology for Ossetians (South) in Georgia" *Refworld*

1993

February 18, 1993: Georgia and Russia meet for talks and agree that the conflicts in the Caucasus cannot be separated from one another and must be settled in a comprehensive manner²⁴⁹³. Russia states that it will assist with the settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia if Georgia assists in bringing a close to ethnic strife in South Ossetia²⁴⁹⁴.

May 1, 1993: Russia states that ethnic Russians are being discriminated against in Georgia, an allegation which Georgia rejects²⁴⁹⁵. Georgia however offers to host UN and OSCE experts to investigate such claims²⁴⁹⁶.

November 2, 1993: South Ossetia adopts its first constitution as part of its state building efforts with Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of South Ossetia, Ludwig Chibirov, acting as Head of State²⁴⁹⁷.

1994

February 2, 1994: Chairman of the South Ossetian Parliament, Lyudvig Chibirov, accuses Russia of inconsistency for signing a military cooperation treaty with Georgia before the settlement of conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia²⁴⁹⁸. The treaty allows Russia to keep three military bases on Georgian soil past 1995, whilst committing the Russian military to train and supply the Georgian Army²⁴⁹⁹. The treaty caused widespread protests inside Georgia with the detonation of a bomb which killed Georgia's Deputy Defense Minister in his apartment²⁵⁰⁰. There was also opposing views inside Russia who expressed concern that the Georgian Government could use Moscow's military backing to reassert control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia²⁵⁰¹. Yeltsin stated that the treaty would not be submitted for ratification until the legal and political status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia is settled under a new Georgian constitution²⁵⁰². As he stated: "Russia is proceeding from the need to respect Georgia's territorial integrity while fully honoring the interests of Abkhazia and South Ossetia,"²⁵⁰³.

May 1994: A ceasefire is signed between Abkhazia and Georgia and Russian peacekeepers are deployed to Abkhazia²⁵⁰⁴.

²⁴⁹³ Ibid

²⁴⁹⁴ Ibid

²⁴⁹⁵ Ibid

²⁴⁹⁶ Ibid

²⁴⁹⁷ Nußberger "South Ossetia" *Oxford Public International Law*

²⁴⁹⁸ Minorities at risk project "Chronology for Ossetians (South) in Georgia" *Refworld*

²⁴⁹⁹ Celestine Bohlen "Russia and Georgia Sign Military Cooperation Treaty" *New York Times*, February 4, 1994, <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/02/04/world/russia-and-georgia-sign-military-cooperation-treaty.html>

²⁵⁰⁰ Ibid

²⁵⁰¹ Ibid

²⁵⁰² Ibid

²⁵⁰³ Ibid

²⁵⁰⁴ "2008 Georgia Russia Conflict Facts" *BBC*, Updated on April 1, 2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/03/13/world/europe/2008-georgia-russia-conflict/index.html>

October 31, 1994: Russia, Georgia, North Ossetia, and South Ossetia meet to negotiate a political settlement of the conflict in South Ossetia²⁵⁰⁵. Here they agreed to transfer the status question to the JCC^{2506, 2507}.

1995

February 17, 1995: Georgia allocates one million dollars in relief aid to refugees (Ossetians and Georgians) returning to South Ossetia²⁵⁰⁸.

February 24, 1995: South Ossetia and Georgia announces the initiation of a joint restoration operation which will seek to improve infrastructure and economic conditions²⁵⁰⁹.

March 1, 1995: Georgia, South and North Ossetia meet for talks arranged by the OSCE²⁵¹⁰. The parties discussed a proposal on the status of South Ossetia, drawn up by OSCE on the initiative of Georgia's president²⁵¹¹. The proposal was written by experts in international law who had also drawn up a proposal for the settlement of Transnistria²⁵¹². The proposal envisioned that South Ossetia should be granted the greatest possible degree of (political) autonomy within the Georgian state, i.e. a sort of "internal" self-determination²⁵¹³. The proposal envisaged the division of responsibilities in detail²⁵¹⁴. According to this plan, South Ossetia, while not becoming an independent state, would gain a significantly stronger legal and political position than it had ever enjoyed in the Soviet Union or previously²⁵¹⁵. In addition, a special border regime was to make the borders between South and North Ossetia as porous as possible, thus facilitating the ability of Ossetians on both sides of the Russian-Georgian border to share a common existence²⁵¹⁶. The proposal was overall welcomed by Georgia but was rejected by South Ossetia. South Ossetia however expressed the wish for further talks²⁵¹⁷.

March 29, 1995: The South Ossetian parliament invites the OSCE to the area to discuss the issue with the parliamentarians. The meeting took place with Russian civilian and military observers²⁵¹⁸.

²⁵⁰⁵ Minorities at risk project "Chronology for Ossetians (South) in Georgia" *Refworld*

²⁵⁰⁶ Hansjörg Eiff "The OSCE Mission to Georgia and the Status of South Ossetia" in *OSCE Yearbook 2008* (OSCE, 2009), <https://ifsh.de/file-CORE/documents/yearbook/english/08/Eiff-en.pdf> 39

²⁵⁰⁷ "Agreement on Further Development of Georgian-Ossetian Peaceful Settlement Process and on Joint Control Commission" *United Nations Peacekeepers*, October 31, 1994, https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/GE_941031_AgreementFurtherDevelopment.pdf

²⁵⁰⁸ Minorities at risk project "Chronology for Ossetians (South) in Georgia" *Refworld*

²⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid*

²⁵¹⁰ Eiff "The OSCE Mission to Georgia and the Status of South Ossetia", 38

²⁵¹¹ *Ibid*, 37

²⁵¹² *Ibid*

²⁵¹³ *Ibid*

²⁵¹⁴ *Ibid*

²⁵¹⁵ *Ibid*

²⁵¹⁶ *Ibid*, 38

²⁵¹⁷ *Ibid*

²⁵¹⁸ *Ibid*, 38-39

November 1, 1995: Georgia's Central Electoral Commission suspends polling in Abkhazia and part of South Ossetia for the upcoming presidential election, and Shevardnadze states on Russian television that Russia should assist Georgia in restoring control over its breakaway regions²⁵¹⁹.

November 5, 1995: Presidential elections are held in Georgia, where Shevardnadze wins 74 percent of the vote²⁵²⁰.

1996

May 16, 1996: A “Memorandum on Measures to Provide Security and Strengthen Mutual Trust” (mediated by Russia) between Georgia and South Ossetia is signed by Georgia, Russia, South and North Ossetia and OSCE²⁵²¹. The memorandum stipulates that the use of force is to be excluded as a means for conflict resolution, amnesty should be granted, and further dialogue and peacebuilding measures should be established²⁵²².

November 10, 1996: South Ossetia holds its first presidential elections in which Lyudvig Chibirov claimed the victory²⁵²³. The elections were not recognized outside of South Ossetia however Shevardnadze stated that the elections should not undermine the thaw in the relations between Georgia and South Ossetia²⁵²⁴.

1997

April 25, 1997: The OSCE opens an office in Tskhinvali²⁵²⁵. The office is linked to the OSCE mission in Georgia, established in 1992, which seeks to promote negotiations between Georgia and South Ossetia and reach a political settlement²⁵²⁶.

1998

May 19, 1998: Talks between Shevardnadze and North Ossetian President Aleksandr Dzasokhov led to Dzasokhov rejecting the aspirations of some South Ossetian politicians to succeed South Ossetia from Georgia and join North Ossetia²⁵²⁷. Rather he endorses the concept of asymmetric federation proposed by Shevardnadze, which is to provide the separatist regions with maximum self-determination²⁵²⁸.

June 23, 1998: CIS Executive Secretary Boris Berezovskii states that all conflicts within the former Soviet Union are interconnected and that all CIS presidents should “say no to separatism,”²⁵²⁹. Shevardnadze has allegedly proposed “that Georgia should be an “asymmetric federation” in which the Abkhazia, Adjara and South Ossetia would enjoy varying degrees of autonomy”²⁵³⁰.

²⁵¹⁹ Minorities at risk project “Chronology for Ossetians (South) in Georgia” *Refworld*

²⁵²⁰ *Ibid*

²⁵²¹ Nußberger “South Ossetia” *Oxford Public International Law*

²⁵²² *Ibid*

²⁵²³ Minorities at risk project “Chronology for Ossetians (South) in Georgia” *Refworld*

²⁵²⁴ *Ibid*

²⁵²⁵ “OSCE Establishes Mission to Georgia” *OSCE*, December 13, 1992, <https://www.osce.org/georgia-closed/58719>

²⁵²⁶ *Ibid*

²⁵²⁷ “Caucasus Report: May 19, 1998” *RadioFreeEurope*, May 19, 1998, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1342036.html>

²⁵²⁸ *Ibid*

²⁵²⁹ “Caucasus Report: June 23, 1998”. *RadioFreeEurope*, June 23, 1998, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1342041.html>

²⁵³⁰ *Ibid*

1999

February 4, 1999: The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe votes that Georgia becomes the Council's 41st member and the first state from the South Caucasus to become so²⁵³¹. However, in order to fulfil this, Georgia must for the next two years meet various criteria including guaranteeing autonomy to South Ossetia and Abkhazia²⁵³².

April 13, 1999: Russia and Georgia are to sign an agreement on joint measures to rehabilitate the economy of South Ossetia²⁵³³. Meanwhile, the leadership in South Ossetia is planning parliamentary elections in May in which the Georgian minority in South Ossetia is being encouraged to vote in. Georgia however insists that the election is illegal since South Ossetia's political status in connection to the central government in Georgia has not been determined²⁵³⁴. Both South Ossetia, Georgia and Russia have drafted proposals regarding the future relations between Georgia and South Ossetia²⁵³⁵. In this South Ossetia holds for recognition as an independent state, whilst Georgia is only willing to offer broad autonomy within a federal Georgian state²⁵³⁶.

May 20, 1999: Parliamentary votes in South Ossetia result in a victory for the local communist party, whilst the Georgian minority of South Ossetia boycotted the election²⁵³⁷.

November 18-19, 1999: The OSCE holds its sixth summit for Heads of State or Government in Istanbul²⁵³⁸. During the summit Russia committed to the withdrawal of its troops and military hardware from Moldova and Georgia by December 31, 2002^{2539, 2540}. At the summit Russia's president Yeltsin amongst other stated: "Russia, where hundreds of peoples are united by a common destiny, has always valued peace and harmony. We know from our own experience how hard it is to untie the "knots" of conflict²⁵⁴¹.

2000

March 9, 2000: Russia plans on creating an east-west transportation network across the Russian Federation as an alternative to the EU's TRACECA project²⁵⁴². This includes creation of an extraterritorial international free economic zone on the territory of North Ossetia and South Ossetia²⁵⁴³. The latter however requires a resolution of the conflict between South Ossetia and Georgia²⁵⁴⁴. Reports in *Izvestiya* state that secret talks are under way in which Georgia and South Ossetia will discuss the "terms whereby the unrecognized

²⁵³¹ "Watch List: February 4, 1999" *RadioFreeEurope*, February 4, 1999, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1347384.html>

²⁵³² Ibid

²⁵³³ "Caucasus Report: April 13, 1999", *RadioFreeEurope*, April 13, 1999, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1341988.html>

²⁵³⁴ Ibid

²⁵³⁵ Ibid

²⁵³⁶ Ibid

²⁵³⁷ Minorities at risk project "Chronology for Ossetians (South) in Georgia" *Refworld*

²⁵³⁸ Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars "Occasional Paper #284 The 1999 OSCE Istanbul Summit Decisions on Moldova and Georgia: Prospects for Implementation" Kennan Institute Occasional Papers (2002) Retrieved on December 3, 2019,

https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/op284_1999_osce_istanbul_summit_conference_2002.pdf 6

²⁵³⁹ Ibid

²⁵⁴⁰ "Istanbul Document" *OSCE*, January 2000, <https://www.osce.org/mc/39569?download=true>

²⁵⁴¹ Government of Russia "OSCE Istanbul Summit 1999: Statement by President Yeltsin" *ReliefWeb*, November 18, 1999, <https://reliefweb.int/report/russian-federation/osce-istanbul-summit-1999-statement-president-yeltsin>

²⁵⁴² "Caucasus Report: March 9, 2000", *RadioFreeEurope*, March 9, 2000, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1341932.html>

²⁵⁴³ Ibid

²⁵⁴⁴ Ibid

republic will abandon its struggle for recognition as an independent state and accept some unspecified status within Georgia”²⁵⁴⁵.

April 7, 2000: Lyudvig Chibirov, president of South Ossetia states that he hopes Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze will be reelected on April 9, where Georgian presidential elections are held. Chibirov stated that Shevardnadze is: "a man who keeps his word, [and who is] sincerely interested in settling the Georgian-Ossetian conflict by political means without military interference."²⁵⁴⁶. Chibirov also stated that he hoped negotiations would resume after the elections and that he would meet with “Russian President-elect Vladimir Putin, whom he will ask to intensify Russia's input in seeking a solution to the conflict”²⁵⁴⁷.

April 18, 2000: The Georgian parliament approves a draft bill on the political status of the Republic of Adjara which “envisages amending the Georgian Constitution to stipulate that Adjara is a constituent part of Georgia and establishing a special parliamentary committee to draft a further bill on the division of power between the Adjara Autonomous Republic and the central Georgian government in Tbilisi”²⁵⁴⁸. In the Georgian constitution from 1995, it was decided to omit any references to the status of autonomous republics until the case of South Ossetia and Abkhazia was resolved²⁵⁴⁹.

September 9, 2000: Russia announces that it intends to withdraw from the Bishkek Treaty which ensures visa-free travel for most CIS residents²⁵⁵⁰. The measure was explained as a way to control illegal immigration, drug trafficking and crime²⁵⁵¹.

2002

March 6, 2002: The Russian Duma adopt a non-binding resolution on US’ military presence in Georgia, stating that the presence of U.S. troops "may complicate the already difficult situation in the region," and that it hoped U.S. military aid to Tbilisi "does not lead the Georgian leadership into seeking a military solution to armed conflicts In Abkhazia and South Ossetia."²⁵⁵²

March 8, 2002: Russia denounces claims that it is willing to allow the accession of Abkhazia and South Ossetia into the Russia federation with Igor Ivanov (FSB Director) stating: "Moscow respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, and is making no deals behind its back,"²⁵⁵³.

March 25, 2002: Russia accuses Georgia of preparing military actions against South Ossetia and Abkhazia and members of the Russian state Duma demand the dispatching of 400 additional Russian peacekeepers as well as aid to the separatist entities²⁵⁵⁴.

²⁵⁴⁵ Ibid

²⁵⁴⁶ “Caucasus Report: April 7, 2000”, *RadioFreeEurope*, April 7, 2000, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1341937.html>

²⁵⁴⁷ Ibid

²⁵⁴⁸ “Caucasus Report: April 21, 2000”, *RadioFreeEurope*, April 21, 2000, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1341939.html>

²⁵⁴⁹ Ibid

²⁵⁵⁰ Sophie Lambroschini “Russia: Withdrawal From CIS Accord Has Political Motives” *RadioFreeEurope*, September 9, 2000, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1094679.html>

²⁵⁵¹ Ibid

²⁵⁵² “Security Watch: March 8, 2002” *RadioFreeEurope*, March 8, 2002, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1344656.html>

²⁵⁵³ Ibid

²⁵⁵⁴ “Georgia, Russia Still Lack Mutual Understanding” *Old Civil*, March 25, 2002, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=1637>

March 26, 2002: Russia's Defense Ministry denies that army units in North Ossetia are preparing for military operations as a response to a possible attack from Georgia on South Ossetia²⁵⁵⁵.

March 27, 2002: Georgia states that a large-scale provocation, which starts with the reporting of Georgia's intention of attacking South Ossetia, is aimed at involving Georgia in a conflict in South Ossetia²⁵⁵⁶.

April 3, 2002: Russia holds military exercises in North Ossetia²⁵⁵⁷. The exercise allegedly addresses the possibility of an enemy infiltrating Russia through Georgia²⁵⁵⁸.

May 31, 2002: Kokoity states in a meeting in Moscow that the separatist entity fears Georgia will use force to solve the conflict²⁵⁵⁹. He also stated that the entity feared that Georgia would use US trained Georgian troops to do so²⁵⁶⁰.

June 10, 2002: Georgia denounces the recent adopted citizenship law of Russia which states that persons living on the territory of the former Soviet Union and having no citizenship can apply and receive citizenship of the Russian Federation²⁵⁶¹. Shevardnadze stated that the law was "a hidden annexation" and further stating: "This is not a friendly step from the Russian side. Each country has a right to consider its own migration policy, but this policy must not jeopardy other countries' sovereignty,"²⁵⁶².

November 22, 2002: Shevardnadze states that Georgia will officially bid for NATO accession stating that: "Membership of NATO means the final guarantee for security for Georgia"²⁵⁶³. He also stated that the conflict with South Ossetia and Abkhazia make relations between Georgia and Russia tense and stressed that Russia should remove its military bases from Georgia, as was stipulated in the 1999 OSCE Istanbul summit agreement²⁵⁶⁴.

2003

January 31, 2003: South Ossetia is allegedly mobilizing its armed forces and police in Tskhinvali²⁵⁶⁵. Georgia's envoy to the president will allegedly visit South Ossetia to convince South Ossetia that Georgia supports peaceful resolution of the conflict²⁵⁶⁶.

February 4, 2003: Georgia accuses Russia of sending weapons to South Ossetia stating:

²⁵⁵⁵ "Russia Denies Military Alert on Its Border with Georgia" *Old Civil*, March 26, 2002, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=1643>

²⁵⁵⁶ "Large Scale Provocation is Prepared Against Georgia - Defense Minister Says" *Old Civil*, March 27, 2002, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=1657>

²⁵⁵⁷ "Russian Large-Scale Military Exercises at the Georgian Border" *Old Civil*, April 3, 2002, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=1709>

²⁵⁵⁸ Ibid

²⁵⁵⁹ "Leader of Breakaway Region Fears Georgia's Increasing Military Capability" *Old Civil*, May 31, 2002, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=1970>

²⁵⁶⁰ Ibid

²⁵⁶¹ "Shevardnadze Slams Russian Citizenship Law" *Old Civil*, June 10, 2002, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=2059>

²⁵⁶² Ibid

²⁵⁶³ "Georgia Aspires NATO Accession" *Old Civil*, November 22, 2002, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=2767>

²⁵⁶⁴ Ibid

²⁵⁶⁵ "Breakaway South Ossetian Forces on High Alert" *Old Civil*, January 31, 2003, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=3102>

²⁵⁶⁶ Ibid

“Georgian side has requested Russia for several times to stop deployment of the weaponry in the conflict zone”²⁵⁶⁷.

February 5, 2003: Georgia and the US delegation to the OSCE express concern regarding the appearance of military hardware in South Ossetia²⁵⁶⁸. Georgia alleges that Russia is moving military hardware to South Ossetia²⁵⁶⁹. Russia denies that military hardware is entering South Ossetia via Russia²⁵⁷⁰.

February 7, 2003: Georgia’s Foreign Ministry states that 13 Russian T-62 battle tanks were deployed in Tskhinvali last December, a claim which is denied by Russia²⁵⁷¹. The US delegation at the OSCE Permanent Council also stated the presence of: “the heavy weapons, including artillery, in a military depot in the Tskhinvali region that apparently belongs to the Ossetian battalion of the Joint Peacekeeping Force.”²⁵⁷².

April 4, 2003: Georgia’s Foreign Minister Irakli Menagharishvili stated that Georgia would give “an adequate response” in case the Russian Parliament’s lower chamber adopts a statement condemning US-Georgian military agreement²⁵⁷³. A group of Russian MPs have proposed a draft decree which condemns the US-Georgia military agreement, which was ratified by Georgia in March²⁵⁷⁴. According to the agreement the US is allowed free access to mutually agreed military facilities in Georgia²⁵⁷⁵. The Russian MPs proposes that Russia revises its policies towards Abkhazia and South Ossetia as a response to the US-Georgia military agreement²⁵⁷⁶. On the same day and in response to the group of Russian MPs, Georgia’s Deputy Foreign Minister stated that "It seems that the new wave of the anti-Georgian hysteria starts in Russia," and that "In case the draft of decree is adopted we will send a statement of protest to Moscow"²⁵⁷⁷.

April 7, 2003: Georgia’s president Shevardnadze states that the US-Georgia military agreement poses no threat to Russia. He also stated that before Russia starts debating the agreement: “they’d better think over legality of the presence of the Russian military bases in Georgia, which were to be disbanded according to the OSCE 1999 treaty.”²⁵⁷⁸

November 2, 2003: Georgia holds parliamentary elections²⁵⁷⁹.

²⁵⁶⁷ “Georgia Accuses Russia of Deploying Weapons in South Ossetia” *Old Civil*, February 4, 2003, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=3124>

²⁵⁶⁸ “Concerns Raised Over Possible Flare-up of Violence in Tskhinvali” *Old Civil*, February 5, 2003, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=3131>

²⁵⁶⁹ Ibid

²⁵⁷⁰ Ibid

²⁵⁷¹ “Russia Refuses Deploying Weapons in Georgia’s Breakaway Region” *Old Civil*, February 7, 2003, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=3148>

²⁵⁷² Ibid

²⁵⁷³ “Georgia not to Change its Stance Towards US Despite Russia’s Pressure” *Old Civil*, April 4, 2003, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=3457>

²⁵⁷⁴ Ibid

²⁵⁷⁵ Ibid

²⁵⁷⁶ Ibid

²⁵⁷⁷ “Georgia Says Anti-Georgian Stance Increases in Russia” *Old Civil*, April 4, 2003, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=3461>

²⁵⁷⁸ “Shevardnadze Says US-Georgian Military Agreement Poses No Threat for Russia” *Old Civil*, April 7, 2003, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=4007>

²⁵⁷⁹ Nick Paton Walsh “Georgia takes peek past Shevardnadze” *The Guardian*, November 3, 2003, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/nov/03/nickpatonwalsh>

November 23, 2003: A state of emergency is declared in Georgia following protests against Shevardnadze²⁵⁸⁰. Shevardnadze announced the state of emergency on TV stating that he would use the Defense ministry and Interior Ministry to restore order²⁵⁸¹. Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov arrives in Georgia in an attempt to resolve the situation²⁵⁸². He stated Russia had no intention of interfering in the internal affairs of Georgia but also stated: "At the same we cannot remain indifferent to the fate of Georgia[...]It is critically important for us that everything proceeds according to the constitution and the law[...]There are no issues that cannot be resolved through dialogue and compromise on the basis of existing legislation and the constitution"²⁵⁸³.

November 24, 2003: Georgian President Eduard A. Shevardnadze resigns following weeks of protests²⁵⁸⁴. Opposition leader Saakashvili states that new presidential and parliamentary elections were scheduled in and that there would be no retribution against Shevardnadze²⁵⁸⁵. Parliamentary speaker, Nino Burdzhanadze, steps in as acting president²⁵⁸⁶.

2004

January 2004: Mikhail Saakashvili is elected president of Georgia²⁵⁸⁷.

May 14, 2004: South Ossetia hosts Russian-mediated talks with Georgia²⁵⁸⁸. The talks were meant to diffuse South Ossetian concerns following Saakashvili's news conference where he stated that once Georgia has taken control over Ajaria, the other breakaway entities would follow²⁵⁸⁹. Georgia assured that it would only resolve to a negotiated settlement of the conflict²⁵⁹⁰. South Ossetia nevertheless started implementing additional security measures with Eduard Kokoiti, president of South Ossetia, meeting with Teimuraz Mansurov, chairman of Russia's Parliament of North Ossetia, to discuss joint steps to counter Tbilisi's plans²⁵⁹¹. Following the meeting, the North Ossetia chairman stated: "The current situation obliges North Ossetia to protect South Ossetia"²⁵⁹². South Ossetian officials also claim to possess intelligence about Georgia's intentions to provoke political disorder in South Ossetia up to the scheduled parliamentary elections in South Ossetia on May 23²⁵⁹³. Stanislav Kochiev, chair of the South Ossetian de facto parliament stated that any forceful actions from Tbilisi would lead to bloodshed and secretary of South Ossetia's de facto security council, Jemal Karkusov, stated that it would not be possible for Georgia to replicate the Ajarian scenario in South Ossetia, because unlike Ajarians, the Ossetians are not ethnic Georgians, with him stating: "Tbilisi must take this into account"²⁵⁹⁴. The de facto leaders of South Ossetia also noted that

²⁵⁸⁰ "State of emergency in Georgia" *CNN*, November 23, 2003,

<https://edition.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/europe/11/22/georgia.protests/>

²⁵⁸¹ Ibid

²⁵⁸² Ibid

²⁵⁸³ Ibid

²⁵⁸⁴ Seth Mydans "Georgian Leader Agrees to Resign, Ending Standoff" *New York Times*, November 24, 2003,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/24/world/georgian-leader-agrees-to-resign-ending-standoff.html>

²⁵⁸⁵ Ibid

²⁵⁸⁶ Ibid

²⁵⁸⁷ Alexis Crow "A timeline of the Georgia-Russia Conflict" *RUSI*, August 11, 2008,

<https://rusi.org/commentary/georgia-russia-conflict-timeline-includes-south-ossetia-and-abkhazia>

²⁵⁸⁸ Zaal Anjaparidze "The Scent Of Revolution Drifts To South Ossetia" *James Town*, May 18, 2004,

<https://jamestown.org/program/the-scent-of-revolution-drifts-to-south-ossetia/>

²⁵⁸⁹ Ibid

²⁵⁹⁰ Ibid

²⁵⁹¹ Ibid

²⁵⁹² Ibid

²⁵⁹³ Ibid

²⁵⁹⁴ Ibid

most of the South Ossetian inhabitants had Russian citizenship and an aspiration to join North Ossetia²⁵⁹⁵. A conflict with South Ossetia would involve a conflict with North Ossetia, a scenario in which Russia would not stay neutral²⁵⁹⁶.

May 17, 2004: Secretary of the Russian Security Council Igor Ivanov travels to Georgia to negotiate with Saakashvili and other officials, the status of South Ossetia²⁵⁹⁷.

May 22, 2004: The pro-Saakashvili youth movement Kmara (Enough), which played a key role in the protests in Tbilisi and Ajaria announces that it has started to work in South Ossetia with the aim of recruiting support²⁵⁹⁸.

May 23, 2004: South Ossetia holds parliamentary elections with 40,000 registered electors expected to cast their votes²⁵⁹⁹. No polling stations were opened outside South Ossetia²⁶⁰⁰. Four seats were allotted to ethnic Georgians living in South Ossetia, however these seats remained empty as there is yet to be any record of ethnic Georgians living in the area having voted in these elections²⁶⁰¹. This is however disputed by South Ossetia who claims the opposite²⁶⁰². According to early polls, the pro-governmental Edinstvo (Unity) movement of South Ossetia President Eduard Kokoiti — which is an ally of the Russian political party of the same name – will most likely win the majority²⁶⁰³. The motto of the party is “Our Path is to Russia.”²⁶⁰⁴. The remaining seats will most likely be divided between the Communist Party led by Stanislav Kochiev, chair of the South Ossetian Parliament, and the nationalist People’s Party²⁶⁰⁵. In an interview with Georgian and Russia media, Kokoiti compared Saakashvili with Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Georgia’s first president, who abolished the South Ossetian autonomous region²⁶⁰⁶. In earlier statements, he also pledged not to negotiate with Georgia until Georgia admitted the, as he stated: “genocide of the South Ossetian population in 1989-1990 and legally and politically assesses these events[...]Our integration with Russia is now closer than ever and no one will force either me or my nation to deviate from this path”²⁶⁰⁷.

May 26, 2004: Saakashvili states that he is ready to begin peace talks with South Ossetia and Abkhazia over any federal state model²⁶⁰⁸. Speaking in Ossetian and Abkhazian language, Saakashvili stated: "For the first time, I would like to address the issue of a special status, and to guarantee all rights for security to our brothers. We have to build new relations based on understanding and friendship."²⁶⁰⁹. He also stated: “We propose to our Abkhaz and South Ossetian brothers to start immediate talks on the restoration of a united state. We are prepared to consider any state model that takes into account their interests and ensures their future development[...]Neither Georgia nor its president will ever accept a fragmented Georgia.”²⁶¹⁰.

²⁵⁹⁵ Ibid

²⁵⁹⁶ Ibid

²⁵⁹⁷ Ibid

²⁵⁹⁸ Zaal Anjaparidze “South Ossetian Elections Follow Moscow’s Script” *James Town*, May 26, 2004,

<https://jamestown.org/program/south-ossetian-elections-follow-moscows-script/>

²⁵⁹⁹ Ibid

²⁶⁰⁰ Ibid

²⁶⁰¹ Ibid

²⁶⁰² Ibid

²⁶⁰³ Ibid

²⁶⁰⁴ Ibid

²⁶⁰⁵ Ibid

²⁶⁰⁶ Ibid

²⁶⁰⁷ Ibid

²⁶⁰⁸ “Georgia offers peace to regions” *BBC*, May 26, 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3748837.stm>

²⁶⁰⁹ Ibid

²⁶¹⁰ Vladimir Socor “Georgia Offers Political Settlements” *James Town*, May 27, 2004,

<https://jamestown.org/program/georgia-offers-political-settlements/>

Saakashvili also pointed to Georgian-Russia relations which were “completely different type of relations”²⁶¹¹. He also described his relations with Putin as “warm and normal,” and welcomed the prospect of Russian capital investment in Georgia stating: “It makes no difference where the capital comes from.”²⁶¹². In response to Saakashvili’s speech, South Ossetia’s de factor Foreign Affairs Minister Murad Jioev stated that South Ossetia was a: “sovereign state, prepared to build good relations with Georgia.”²⁶¹³. He also stated that negotiations could only take the form of conflict-settlement²⁶¹⁴.

May 31, 2004: Georgia sends extra troops into South Ossetia following reports that Russian peacekeepers intended to dismantle Georgian checkpoints set up around villages inhabiting ethnic Georgians²⁶¹⁵. The checkpoints were officially established to prevent smuggling²⁶¹⁶. The leader of South Ossetia, Eduard Kokoity stated that he intended to order his troops to respond with force if the Georgian troops tried to invade South Ossetia²⁶¹⁷. South Ossetia’s de facto government spokeswomen furthermore stated that the extra troops were “pure provocation” designed to involve Russian troops in a military conflict²⁶¹⁸. Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania on the other hand warned the Russian peacekeepers not to get involved in an internal dispute²⁶¹⁹. Russia’s Foreign Affairs Ministry criticized Georgia’s “strong-arm actions (that) do nothing to help the development of Russia-Georgia relations” and urged Tbilisi to engage in “restoring trust” with Abkhazia and South Ossetia²⁶²⁰. The statement also referred to the “large number of Russian citizens residing in those areas”²⁶²¹. Meanwhile, Georgian officials accuse the Russian military and South Ossetian leaders of sharing the profit from smuggling and that they both have an interest in its continuation²⁶²².

June 1, 2004: Saakashvili’s wife visits South Ossetia’s capital and several Georgian villages inside South Ossetia²⁶²³. She was interrupted by the South Ossetian KGB who escorted her to their building after which she was escorted out of South Ossetia²⁶²⁴. Meanwhile, a Georgian public radio inaugurated an Ossetian-language news broadcast²⁶²⁵. Georgian Security Council Secretary Vano Merabishvili states that Georgia intends to increase the number of troops and arms in the joint South Ossetian peacekeeping contingent and that artillery and other equipment have already been moved into Georgian-controlled areas of the conflict zone: "According to the [peacekeeping] agreement, the Russian side has 500 peacekeepers, as well as the Ossetian side[...]Georgia should also have 500 peacekeepers, but because of the incapability of the previous authorities of Georgia [in the Shevardnadze administration], we have there only 100 soldiers."²⁶²⁶. In response, Eduard Kokoiti, issued an order to his armed troops "to use weapons if the state border of the

²⁶¹¹ Ibid

²⁶¹² Ibid

²⁶¹³ Ibid

²⁶¹⁴ Ibid

²⁶¹⁵ “Georgia Withdraws Troops From South Ossetia” *RadioFreeEurope*, May 31, 2004,

<https://www.rferl.org/a/1053065.html>

²⁶¹⁶ Ibid

²⁶¹⁷ Ibid

²⁶¹⁸ Ibid

²⁶¹⁹ Ibid

²⁶²⁰ Vladimir Socor “Russian Military Blinks Before Georgia In South Ossetia” *James Town*, June 1, 2004,

<https://jamestown.org/program/russian-military-blinks-before-georgia-in-south-ossetia/>

²⁶²¹ Ibid

²⁶²² Ibid

²⁶²³ Vladimir Socor “Moscow Warns Tbilisi” *James Town*, June 2, 2004, <https://jamestown.org/program/moscow-warns-tbilisi/>

²⁶²⁴ Ibid

²⁶²⁵ Ibid

²⁶²⁶ Daan van der Schriek “Georgia uses carrot-and-stick approach with South Ossetia” *Refworld*, June 1, 2004,

<https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a484f71e&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

republic of South Ossetia is violated" and stated that he "found no peaceful intentions" in Georgia's action to deploy "military hardware" near the South Ossetian administrative border²⁶²⁷. On June 1, Saakashvili also announced that "all Ossetians living in South Ossetia" would receive state "pensions" and he also stated that Georgia would extend agricultural aid to Ossetians and restore Tbilisi-Tskhinvali rail service as well as Georgian state television programming would be translated into Ossetian²⁶²⁸. In connection to this he stated: "I appeal to our fellow citizens of Ossetian origin for help[...]We must together force all sides to engage in dialogue" on Ossetia's status. He however also noted that this dialogue would only concern the reintegration of South Ossetia into Georgia as: "The disintegration of Georgia will not take place[...]This is the end of a fragmented Georgia."²⁶²⁹

June 2, 2004: Saakashvili announces social programs for the inhabitants of South Ossetia including "disbursement of Georgian pensions to retirees in South Ossetia, including those who are already entitled to pensions from Russia (which many of them are); distribution of free mineral fertilizer; reopening the railway link to Tskhinvali, which had been dismantled during the 1992 fighting; and, deployment of medical personnel to provide free ambulatory treatment to local residents"²⁶³⁰. South Ossetia however declined the measures²⁶³¹.

June 4, 2004: Georgian police are replaced by Georgian army troops in the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict zone²⁶³². The redeployment follows Georgia's decision to make full use of its quota of 500 peacekeeping troops and an undisclosed number of armored vehicles in the zone²⁶³³. Meanwhile, a Georgian convoy starts distributing nitrate fertilizer in South Ossetia²⁶³⁴. The convoy is however forced to leave with South Ossetian "authorities evidently recalled that fertilizer distribution in Ajaria in April — also with Shervashidze leading the first convoy — helped set in motion events that led to the toppling of Aslan Abashidze."²⁶³⁵. On the same day, the Georgian parliament also launched an appeal to the South Ossetian population calling for political dialogue and personal contact²⁶³⁶. In an interview Saakashvili offered Eduard Kokoiti a choice between accepting Georgian sovereignty — in which case he could "play an important role in Georgia" and "give his people a chance to improve their lot."²⁶³⁷ or, he could remain in his current "situation as a besieged chieftain in a small enclave."²⁶³⁸. Saakashvili also offered to go to Tskhinvali for negotiations²⁶³⁹.

June 9, 2004: South Ossetia leader Eduard Kokoity is in Moscow for consultations with senior government officials²⁶⁴⁰. While in Moscow, "Kokoity announced complete cessation of South Ossetia's contacts with the rest of Georgia, citing three conditions for resuming those contacts: a Georgian admission of culpability for the 1990-91 "aggression" against South Ossetia, official apology for "genocide," and compensation

²⁶²⁷ Ibid

²⁶²⁸ Ibid

²⁶²⁹ Ibid

²⁶³⁰ Vladimir Socor "Georgia Intensifies Pressure On South Ossetia" *James Town*, June 8, 2004,

<https://jamestown.org/program/georgia-intensifies-pressure-on-south-ossetia/>

²⁶³¹ Ibid

²⁶³² Ibid

²⁶³³ Ibid

²⁶³⁴ Ibid

²⁶³⁵ Ibid

²⁶³⁶ Ibid

²⁶³⁷ Ibid

²⁶³⁸ Ibid

²⁶³⁹ Ibid

²⁶⁴⁰ Vladimir Socor "Russian Move In South Ossetia Raises New Questions On Putin's Policy" *James Town*, June 15, 2004, <https://jamestown.org/program/russian-move-in-south-ossetia-raises-new-questions-on-putins-policy/>

which would be fixed by South Ossetia”²⁶⁴¹. Kokoity brought a resolution by South Ossetia’s legislative assembly, requesting Russia’s bicameral Parliament and its president to recognize South Ossetia’s secession from Georgia and right of accession to the Russian Federation via North Ossetia²⁶⁴². To this, Russia’s Federation Council’s International Affairs Committee Chairman Mikhail Margelov stated that Russia would rather have a “federative Georgian state on its border”²⁶⁴³.

June 11-12, 2004: A convoy of Russian army trucks carrying tarpaulin-covered cargoes, reportedly entered Georgia’s territory in South Ossetia via the Roki tunnel from Russian territory²⁶⁴⁴. The Russia military did not notify Georgia nor the OSCE as is otherwise stipulated in armistice agreement²⁶⁴⁵. The OSCE confirmed the entry of at least 60 Russian trucks and Georgia sent a protest note to the Russian foreign ministry, stating that it would report the incident to international organizations²⁶⁴⁶. Following this there were inconsistent statements from Russia with spokesmen for Russia’s North Caucasus Military District and the 58th Army Command (in North Ossetia) stating that the convoy only carried non-lethal supplies as well as some troops as part of a planned rotation of Russian “peacekeeping” troops²⁶⁴⁷. Leadership of the military command and a Defense Ministry spokesman in Moscow however stated that there had been “no movement.” And Dmitry Rogozin, the Rodina bloc’s leader in the Duma, stated that the move was a justified “response to Georgia’s provocations.”²⁶⁴⁸ Security Council Secretary Igor Ivanov eventually denied any knowledge of the Russian military move²⁶⁴⁹. In a telephone conversation between Saakashvili and Putin, Putin allegedly stated that it was not done on his initiative²⁶⁵⁰.

June 14, 2004: Following a meeting in Moscow, trans-dniester’s leaders offer military assistance to South Ossetia²⁶⁵¹. Trans-Dniester leader Igor Smirnov amongst other cited a 1994 agreement, signed between Trans-Dniester, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which agreed to mutual assistance in the event of “aggression” against any of the signatories²⁶⁵². Smirnov also stated: “Trans-Dniester is watching with concern the events unfolding in the friendly states Abkhazia and South Ossetia. We have constantly provided material assistance to South Ossetia, including foodstuffs, grain, and training. If necessary — and as the events show such a necessity becoming increasingly evident — we will also provide comprehensive military assistance.”²⁶⁵³ He also described the situation in South Ossetia as: “nothing but preparations for aggression by Tbilisi.”²⁶⁵⁴.

June 15, 2004: Georgian Conflict Resolutions Minister Giorgi Khaindrova demands that Russian peacekeepers leave South Ossetia since: “they do not wish to perform their functions.”²⁶⁵⁵ Russia rejected the demand and stated that the 1994 cease-fire agreement specifies Russia as a guarantor of security in

²⁶⁴¹ Ibid

²⁶⁴² Ibid

²⁶⁴³ Ibid

²⁶⁴⁴ Ibid

²⁶⁴⁵ Ibid

²⁶⁴⁶ Ibid

²⁶⁴⁷ Ibid

²⁶⁴⁸ Ibid

²⁶⁴⁹ Ibid

²⁶⁵⁰ Ibid

²⁶⁵¹ Vladimir Socor “Trans-dniester Offers Military Assistance To South Ossetia, Abkhazia” *James Town*, June 14, 2004, <https://jamestown.org/program/trans-dniester-offers-military-assistance-to-south-ossetia-abkhazia/>

²⁶⁵² Ibid

²⁶⁵³ Ibid

²⁶⁵⁴ Ibid

²⁶⁵⁵ Daan van der Schriek “South Ossetia gets ultimatum, rejects Georgian aid” *Refworld*, June 23, 2004, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a48506c&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

South Ossetia²⁶⁵⁶. Russia further stated: "The Georgian authorities are intentionally vilifying the Russian peace-keepers deployed in the Georgia-South Ossetian conflict zone,"²⁶⁵⁷. Khaindrava stated that the peacekeepers should only be stationed in areas where Georgians and South Ossetian populations come into contact and should not be deployed in the neighboring Gori district, which is regarded as part of Georgia²⁶⁵⁸. He also stated that Georgia wants peacekeepers to monitor the Roki Pass, a route to Russia that Tbilisi states is used to shuttle contraband and weapons into South Ossetia²⁶⁵⁹.

June 16, 2004: Attempts by Georgia to distribute humanitarian aid in South Ossetia meets resistance with Georgian Agriculture Minister Davit Shervashidze stating: "The majority of local residents are avoiding contact with our mission[...]They seem to have been brainwashed to such an extent that they are rejecting any assistance. In fact, they are being terrorized".²⁶⁶⁰

June 18, 2004: Bilateral negotiations on Russia's military bases in Georgia were cancelled by Russia²⁶⁶¹. In the negotiations Russia is aiming at a draft treaty which would "determine the duration of the presence and conditions of the functioning of Russian military bases in Georgia."²⁶⁶² Russian officials, including Foreign Affairs Minister Sergey Lavrov and Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov also sometimes add the term "procedures for continued functioning of Russian bases," and suggest more explicitly that the bases should receive legal "status" in Georgia prior to any decision on withdrawal²⁶⁶³.

June 21, 2004: South Ossetia announces that it intends to withdraw from the JCC²⁶⁶⁴. This comes after a meeting with the JCC was scheduled to take place in Tbilisi which South Ossetia demanded be changed to a more neutral site²⁶⁶⁵.

June 22, 2004: 2000 South Ossetian police forces take part in a training exercise aimed at combating terrorism, however the training also kept Georgia in mind with the interior minister stating: "We have to do it," ... "Georgia still maintains illegal police posts in the conflict zone and keeps troops on the border with South Ossetia. Moreover, reconnaissance flights of Georgian helicopters over the republic have become more frequent lately."²⁶⁶⁶ During the exercise a 70-year-old Georgian woman sustained a head wound, which Georgia stated was the result of an exploding shell and South Ossetia stated was the result of a stray bullet which grazed her²⁶⁶⁷. Georgia demanded the extradition of the lady with Interior Minister Irakly Okruashvili stating: "[W]e are not going to put up with the brazen steps the authorities of South Ossetia have been taking[...]Today's incident clearly shows that an alarming situation is taking shape there."²⁶⁶⁸

²⁶⁵⁶ Ibid

²⁶⁵⁷ Ibid

²⁶⁵⁸ Ibid

²⁶⁵⁹ Ibid

²⁶⁶⁰ Ibid

²⁶⁶¹ Vladimir Socor "Russian Military Bases In Georgia: No Negotiations, New Complications" *James Town*, June 18, 2004, <https://jamestown.org/program/russian-military-bases-in-georgia-no-negotiations-new-complications/>

²⁶⁶² Ibid

²⁶⁶³ Ibid

²⁶⁶⁴ Daan van der Schriek "South Ossetia gets ultimatum, rejects Georgian aid" *Refworld*, June 23, 2004, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a48506c&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

²⁶⁶⁵ Ibid

²⁶⁶⁶ Ibid

²⁶⁶⁷ Ibid

²⁶⁶⁸ Ibid

July 1, 2004: Peace talks between South Ossetia and Georgia hit a stalemate as Georgian president Saakashvili refuses to attend the talks until South Ossetia releases three officers detained in the area, whom South Ossetia accuses of being spies²⁶⁶⁹.

July 3, 2004: Saakashvili meets with Putin in Moscow during a CIS summit²⁶⁷⁰. Following the meeting Saakashvili stated: “During the visit I was convinced that the South Ossetians cannot hope for Russian help²⁶⁷¹. Just as Georgia does not interfere in Russian affairs, Russia would not interfere in Georgian” domestic issues²⁶⁷². He also stated that that a special operation is planned in one of the Georgian regions in the immediate future²⁶⁷³.

July 7, 2004: South Ossetian leaders reopen the main routes in and out of Tskhinvali, which were closed down earlier by South Ossetian paramilitary groups²⁶⁷⁴. The Ossetian called it a “gesture of good will”, the Ossetian authorities however continue to block the delivery of humanitarian goods from Georgia²⁶⁷⁵. On July 7, Georgian peacekeepers in South Ossetia seized nine trucks carrying Russian peacekeepers, weapons, ammunition, and uniforms²⁶⁷⁶. The convoy was allegedly on route from Russia to Tskhinvali and Georgian Interior Minister Irakli Okruashvili stated: “Such a large number of arms could not be the peacekeeping purposes.”²⁶⁷⁷.

July 8, 2004: South Ossetia moves 300 armed militants and armored vehicles into ethnic-Georgian villages and in the Vanati village they disarmed and captured 50 Georgian servicemen, who were taken to Tskhinvali²⁶⁷⁸. South Ossetia is allegedly importing weapons from Russia and distributing them to the local population and preventing civilians from fleeing²⁶⁷⁹. South Ossetia furthermore publicly appealed to Abkhazia, Trans-Dniester, and to Russian Cossacks to send volunteers urgently²⁶⁸⁰.

July 9, 2004: 50 Georgian police were captured in South Ossetia during a raid where armed separatists entered a Georgian village in South Ossetia and disarmed Georgian police stationed there²⁶⁸¹. Georgia stated that the police were part of the peacekeeping mission, whilst South Ossetia described them as “fighters”²⁶⁸². The policemen were later released but not before they were forced to kneel on TV, a move which angered Georgia with Prosecutor-General Irakly Okruashvili stating: "We'll force [South Ossetian leader Eduard] Kokoity to regret that he put our servicemen on their knees before the eyes of the entire Georgian

²⁶⁶⁹ Chloe Arnold “S Ossetia peace talks falter” *BBC*, July 1, 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3857649.stm>

²⁶⁷⁰ Zaal Anjaparidze “Brinkmanship Increases Between Tbilisi And Tskhinvali, But How Will Moscow Respond?” *James Town*, July 8, 2004, <https://jamestown.org/program/brinkmanship-increases-between-tbilisi-and-tskhinvali-but-how-will-moscow-respond/>

²⁶⁷¹ Ibid

²⁶⁷² Ibid

²⁶⁷³ Ibid

²⁶⁷⁴ Ibid

²⁶⁷⁵ Ibid

²⁶⁷⁶ Ibid

²⁶⁷⁷ Ibid

²⁶⁷⁸ Ibid

²⁶⁷⁹ Ibid

²⁶⁸⁰ Vladimir Socor “South Ossetian Leader Warns Georgia From Moscow” *James Town*, July 29, 2004, <https://jamestown.org/program/south-ossetian-leader-warns-georgia-from-moscow/>

²⁶⁸¹ “Georgian police freed in Ossetia” *BBC*, July 9, 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3879491.stm>

²⁶⁸² Ibid

people" ²⁶⁸³. Earlier that week Georgia intercepted a Russian convoy near the Kurta village in South Ossetia²⁶⁸⁴. Two of the trucks carried military equipment which was impounded²⁶⁸⁵.

July 10, 2004: Clashes erupt in South Ossetia with shootings at a checkpoint with injuries and casualties on both sides²⁶⁸⁶. At a news briefing, Saakashvili states that: "South Ossetia will be reintegrated into Georgia within a year at the latest, without any shots being fired."²⁶⁸⁷

July 11, 2004: South Ossetia and Georgia meets for talks on the escalating situation where they agree to "cease shooting and other provocative actions."²⁶⁸⁸. Meanwhile during a rally, Saakashvili states that the: "[c]urrent crisis in South Ossetia is not a problem between Georgians and Ossetians. This is a problem between Georgia and Russia."²⁶⁸⁹. He also stated that "certain forces in Russia" are preparing for "aggression against Georgia," and he called on Putin to "restrain these forces," ²⁶⁹⁰. He also warned that a conflict in South Ossetia would not be a fight between Georgians and Ossetians but would become "a serious problem between the two countries, Georgia and Russia." ²⁶⁹¹. He also stated that Georgia had prevented a full-scale conflict in the area, stating: "Due to coordinated activities by the Georgian government, international support and because of frequent contact with Russia and the United States, Georgia has avoided the bloody conflict which [South Ossetian leader Eduard] Kokoev and his backers in Russia wanted to launch,"²⁶⁹². Russia's foreign minister on the other hand stated that Georgia was to blame for the flare up and that Georgia had "illegally brought into the conflict zone hundreds and thousands of armed forces who do not come under the peacekeepers' control," and he also stated that Russia would be justified in breaking up "illegal formations" in South Ossetia²⁶⁹³

July 12, 2004: Saakashvili states that forces in Russia want to duplicate the events of 1992, when the opposition overthrew President Zviad Gamsakhurdia and drew him into exile, as Saakashvili stated: "However, this time they will confront not a fragmented but a highly consolidated Georgia,"²⁶⁹⁴. Saakashvili also noted however that Georgia had managed to avert a conflict with the "Ossetian separatists"²⁶⁹⁵. He also noted that Russia had a key role to play in resolving conflict²⁶⁹⁶. He even pointed out that it is "a Russian-Georgian issue." Further stating: "We tried hard to avoid the Georgia-Ossetian question. But it didn't work. This is an issue between Tbilisi and Moscow[...] We are ready for a constructive dialogue with Moscow, but if there are people from the Duma or elsewhere who will try to put pressure on us — it won't work. We are not afraid. We are ready to solve all the issues with Russia."²⁶⁹⁷. Saakashvili also stated that Kokoiiti: "had instructions from certain circles in Moscow to begin a bloody war[...] But yesterday he and his masters

²⁶⁸³ Ibid

²⁶⁸⁴ Ibid

²⁶⁸⁵ Ibid

²⁶⁸⁶ "New Clashes Erupt In South Ossetia" *RadioFreeEurope*, July 10, 2004, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1053788.html>

²⁶⁸⁷ EurasiaNet "Saakashvili: Russia to blame for South Ossetia crisis" *RefWorld*, July 12, 2004,

[https://www.refworld.org/cgi-](https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a48510c&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO)

[bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a48510c&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO](https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a48510c&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO)

²⁶⁸⁸ "Caucasus Report: July 15, 2004" *RadioFreeEurope*, July 15, 2004, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1341780.html>

²⁶⁸⁹ EurasiaNet "Saakashvili: Russia to blame for South Ossetia crisis" *RefWorld*

²⁶⁹⁰ Ibid

²⁶⁹¹ Ibid

²⁶⁹² Ibid

²⁶⁹³ Ibid

²⁶⁹⁴ Zaal Anjaparidze "Georgian Opposition Declines To Take Advantage Of Ossetia Crisis" *James Town*, July 13, 2004, <https://jamestown.org/program/georgian-opposition-declines-to-take-advantage-of-ossetia-crisis/>

²⁶⁹⁵ Igor Torbakov "South Ossetia: Tensions Subside But Uncertainty Lingers" *James Town*, July 14, 2004, <https://jamestown.org/program/south-ossetia-tensions-subside-but-uncertainty-lingers/>

²⁶⁹⁶ Ibid

²⁶⁹⁷ Ibid

understood that this could end badly for them[...]. It's clear that with energetic actions over the past few days we have managed to overcome a serious conflict.”²⁶⁹⁸. Meanwhile, three Georgian policemen remain in custody in South Ossetia albeit Kokoiti later ordered them to be handed over to Russian peacekeepers who are expected to hand them over to Georgia²⁶⁹⁹. Moscow at the same time demands that Georgia returns 169 unguided missiles which were meant for the Russian peacekeepers, but which were seized on July 7²⁷⁰⁰. Georgy Khaindrava, Georgia's minister for separatist conflicts, however stated that Georgia: “does not intend to trade missiles for people,” and added that the missiles should be destroyed²⁷⁰¹. Russia's Defense Minister, Sergei Ivanov, demanded the return of the missiles stating: “This Russian military property must be returned where it was stolen, that is, in South Ossetia”²⁷⁰².

Eventually Saakashvili accuses Russian peacekeepers of a pro-Ossetian bias and stated that the Russian peacekeeping mission “needs to be revised.”²⁷⁰³. He also accused Russia of sending weapons to the area stating:

Our intelligence did a very good job. We know exactly how many shells, bullets, and pieces of hardware have been brought from Russia not only to South Ossetia but also to Abkhazia. We know exactly which groups in Moscow provided this; we know exactly how much money has been sent by these groups to various separatists; we know exactly how many criminals have crossed [into Georgia] from Russia — about 190 men that are in a hotel in Java. They are true criminal-type elements²⁷⁰⁴.

According to head of the print and information committee of South Ossetia, Irina Gagloyeva, however approx 1,000 people have been involved in the latest incident²⁷⁰⁵. These are not ethnic Ossetians, but individuals from Abkhazia, Cossacks from Kuban and Perm, North Ossetia, the Trans-Dniester region, and Cherkassia, as she stated: “They have come to Ossetia of their own free will and are not mercenaries. Yet, they are ready, if necessary, to support their South Ossetian friends”²⁷⁰⁶. Meanwhile, Abkhazia also stated its assistance to South Ossetia with Valery Arshba, the vice-president of Abkhazia, stating: “We are not going to remain indifferent towards our South Ossetian brothers. We will help them as we can,”²⁷⁰⁷. Vyacheslav Eshba, Abkhazia's defense minister, furthermore stated: “Georgia is using Ossetia to rehearse attack on us”²⁷⁰⁸.

July 13, 2004: South Ossetian forces hold military exercises²⁷⁰⁹ and skirmishes continue to occur between the two sides²⁷¹⁰. Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania reaffirmed the presence of Russian and North Caucasian mercenaries stating: “They pose no threat to us, but we do not want to use force[...]. We keep the situation under control and are ready for any type of scenario.”²⁷¹¹ He also restated the hope of resolving the conflict peacefully²⁷¹². Meanwhile, Russia and South Ossetia state that approx. 3000 Georgian troops are stationed in the conflict area, which they demanded were reduced²⁷¹³. Russia has also started sending

²⁶⁹⁸ Ibid

²⁶⁹⁹ Ibid

²⁷⁰⁰ Ibid

²⁷⁰¹ Ibid

²⁷⁰² Ibid

²⁷⁰³ Zaal Anjaparidze “South Ossetia: Inside The Conflict Zone” *James Town*, July 14, 2004,

<https://jamestown.org/program/south-ossetia-inside-the-conflict-zone/>

²⁷⁰⁴ Ibid

²⁷⁰⁵ Ibid

²⁷⁰⁶ Ibid

²⁷⁰⁷ Ibid

²⁷⁰⁸ Ibid

²⁷⁰⁹ Torbakov “South Ossetia: Tensions Subside But Uncertainty Lingers” *James Town*

²⁷¹⁰ Anjaparidze “South Ossetia: Inside The Conflict Zone” *James Town*

²⁷¹¹ Ibid

²⁷¹² Ibid

²⁷¹³ Ibid

humanitarian aid to the area²⁷¹⁴. A humanitarian convoy with signs reading “President Putin’s gift to South Ossetia.” Were however halted by Georgia and the convoy was not allowed to reach its destination²⁷¹⁵.

July 14, 2004: During a meeting with the Joint Control Commission, Georgia and Russia agrees to demilitarize the entire region²⁷¹⁶. Georgia referred to South Ossetia as "an enclave of bandit groups, stuffed with weaponry" which poses a threat to Russia and Georgia²⁷¹⁷. Russia stated that demilitarization must equally apply to South Ossetian and Georgian illegal armed groups²⁷¹⁸. This comes following allegations from South Ossetia that Georgia in the previous weeks had deployed to South Ossetia, members of a guerilla organization previously deployed in Abkhazia²⁷¹⁹. Georgia responded to the allegations by stating that Abkhazia had sent fighters to South Ossetia in order to reinforce the South Ossetian army²⁷²⁰. Russia on the other hand accused Georgia of sending 3000 armed men to South Ossetia rather than the 500 peacekeepers it is entitled to deploy in the area²⁷²¹. All sides agreed to inspections in the conflict zone as an attempt to prevent further arrival of armed groups²⁷²².

July 15, 2004: Following the day where the sides agreed to demilitarization, South Ossetia accuses Georgia of sending between 200-800 Interior Ministry troops into the area²⁷²³. This claim was dismissed as disinformation by Georgia²⁷²⁴.

July 18, 2004: South Ossetia announces that the volunteers, which arrive son July 12, have returned home following a joint exercise with South Ossetian forces²⁷²⁵. South Ossetia’s foreign affairs minister, Murad Jioev however stated that South Ossetia remained: “in permanent contact with Abkhazia, Trans-Dniester, and Karabakh[...]to gain military support if necessary. Nearly all volunteers who had arrived in South Ossetia have left, but would return as need be”²⁷²⁶.

July 28, 2004: Georgian government troops clash with South Ossetian forces²⁷²⁷.

July 29, 2004: Georgia’s proposes to widen the mandate of the OSCE in South Ossetia the proposal was however rejected by Russia²⁷²⁸. Georgia proposed to expand the mission to include the entire South Ossetia territory and not just the “Georgian-South Ossetian conflict zone”²⁷²⁹. Russia however stated that the OSCE Mission’s mandate precludes enlargement of its area of responsibility and that the Mission’s personnel is already “fully sufficient”²⁷³⁰. It rather called for an OSCE facilitation of conflict settlement²⁷³¹.

²⁷¹⁴ Ibid

²⁷¹⁵ Ibid

²⁷¹⁶ “Caucasus Report: July 15, 2004” *RadioFreeEurope*, July 15, 2004, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1341780.html>

²⁷¹⁷ Ibid

²⁷¹⁸ Ibid

²⁷¹⁹ Ibid

²⁷²⁰ Ibid

²⁷²¹ Ibid

²⁷²² Ibid

²⁷²³ Liz Fuller “Analysis: South Ossetia Between War And Demilitarization” *RadioFreeEurope*, July 15, 2004, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1053886.html>

²⁷²⁴ Ibid

²⁷²⁵ Vladimir Socor “South Ossetian Leader Warns Georgia From Moscow” *James Town*, July 29, 2004, <https://jamestown.org/program/south-ossetian-leader-warns-georgia-from-moscow/>

²⁷²⁶ Ibid

²⁷²⁷ University of Central Arkansas “38. Georgia/South Ossetia (1990-present), *University of Central Arkansas*.

²⁷²⁸ Vladimir Socor “Russia Rejects Wider OSCE Role In South Ossetia” *James Town*, August 4, 2004, <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-rejects-wider-osce-role-in-south-ossetia/>

²⁷²⁹ Ibid

²⁷³⁰ Ibid

²⁷³¹ Ibid

August 4, 2004: An unidentified group shoots at the motorcade of Andrei Kokoshin, chair of Russian Parliaments Committee on CIS Affairs, during his trip in South Ossetia²⁷³².

August 9, 2004: Givi Targamadze, chair of the Georgian parliament's Committee on Defense and Security, states that the "Ossetian forces plan to assassinate South Ossetian leader Eduard Kokoit and use the incident to justify a new round of attacks to cleanse ethnic-Georgian villages"²⁷³³. He also "warned that the Georgian government's retaliation to this expected move would be "very tough."²⁷³⁴

August 10, 2004: Clashes occur in South Ossetia²⁷³⁵.

August 12, 2004: Both sides accuse each other of firing at villages in the conflict zone. South Ossetian forces amongst other shelled an ethnic-Georgian village and moved their heavy armored vehicles close to the villages²⁷³⁶. Georgia reported civilian and troop casualties²⁷³⁷. South Ossetia nevertheless blamed Georgia for the attacks with Irina Gagloeva, spokeswoman for the South Ossetian authorities, stating that fighting in several Ossetian villages had continued despite promises from Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania of a ceasefire²⁷³⁸. She also delivered an ultimatum stating that if shelling continued, then South Ossetian forces would purge the ethnic-Georgian villages of any paramilitary squads²⁷³⁹. Following an emergency meeting in Georgia, Saakashvili stated that Georgia would no longer leave South Ossetian attacks unanswered²⁷⁴⁰. In connection to the attacks, Georgian Ministries of Security the Interior also accused the Russian peacekeeping troops of cooperating with the South Ossetian militias and even participating in the attacks on the Georgian villages, stating: "For the first time the Russian peacekeepers openly fixed their position in the South Ossetian conflict. During last night' overnight shelling they provided the South Ossetian militias with information regarding the movements of Georgian peacekeepers,"²⁷⁴¹. Saakashvili announces three government priorities in defusing the situation namely: Ensuring the safety of the population in South Ossetia, prevent the resumption of smuggling in the breakaway region, and avoid Georgia's involvement in armed clashes²⁷⁴². As Saakashvili stated: "We do not need this conflict; we intend to reintegrate the country peacefully[...]All these tasks are decisive at the moment[...]We need to coordinate efforts to avoid further provocations and to settle the existing problems through peaceful means"²⁷⁴³. Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania also stated that Georgia: "Urge immediate talks with the South Ossetian separatists, as well as with top Russian officials, since Russia is actively involved in the recent developments in the conflict area. We also demand the complete demilitarization of the conflict area; that foresees the withdrawal of all extra troops from the South Ossetian

²⁷³² Zaal Anjaparidze "Who Will Detonate The South Ossetian Powder Keg?" *James Town*, August 12, 2004, <https://jamestown.org/program/who-will-detonate-the-south-ossetian-powder-keg/>

²⁷³³ Ibid

²⁷³⁴ Ibid

²⁷³⁵ Igor Torbakov "Kremlin Policies In South Ossetian Conflict Under Fire" *James Town*, August 10, 2004, <https://jamestown.org/program/kremlin-policies-in-south-ossetian-conflict-under-fire/>

²⁷³⁶ Zaal Anjaparidze "Who Will Detonate The South Ossetian Powder Keg?" *James Town*

²⁷³⁷ Ibid

²⁷³⁸ Ibid

²⁷³⁹ Ibid

²⁷⁴⁰ Ibid

²⁷⁴¹ Ibid

²⁷⁴² Zaal Anjaparidze "Georgia Prepares For Resumption Of Large-scale Armed Conflict In Ossetia" *James Town*, August 13, 2004, <https://jamestown.org/program/georgia-prepares-for-resumption-of-large-scale-armed-conflict-in-ossetia/>

²⁷⁴³ Ibid

conflict zone that are not part of the designated peacekeeping force there”²⁷⁴⁴. South Ossetia also acknowledges the need for talks²⁷⁴⁵.

August 13, 2004: The Georgian parliament vote for the withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers from South Ossetia²⁷⁴⁶. Meanwhile a Russian mediated ceasefire was signed between the two sides²⁷⁴⁷. Despite this, violence continues²⁷⁴⁸.

August 17, 2004: Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov states that Russia has a legitimate interest in South Ossetia as he stated: "One should not forget that most residents of South Ossetia are citizens of Russia, and we [the Russian government] should care about them,"²⁷⁴⁹

August 18, 2004: Putin states that Saakashvili is making the same "foolish" mistakes committed by former Georgian president Zviad Gamsakhurdia, whose equally was engulfed in the separatist conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia²⁷⁵⁰. Putin further stated that the current tension in South Ossetia is "a repetition of what happened in the 1990s,"²⁷⁵¹. He also called on Georgia to pursue negotiations rather than use force to resolve the conflict²⁷⁵². Meanwhile three Georgian soldiers were killed and five wounded following clashes in South Ossetia²⁷⁵³. Both sides accused each other of trying to storm their positions. Georgia's Defence Minister Georgi Baramidze stated: "After this night's shooting and attacks, there can be no question of any withdrawal of Georgian forces from the zone of conflict[...]There is a well-prepared armed group of about 15-20 people in the conflict zone - the South Ossetian side agrees with this. During the night they shoot at positions of both sides, trying to provoke all-out war"²⁷⁵⁴. Meanwhile, Georgia's Foreign Minister Salome Zourabichvili, called for an international conference on the Georgian-Ossetian conflict stating: "The situation is complex, tense and paradoxical[...]On one hand, we have an escalation of violence, but at the same time, we have an escalation of peace initiatives."²⁷⁵⁵. The OSCE noted the request but stated that the main priority at the time would be to reach a lasting ceasefire²⁷⁵⁶.

August 20, 2004: Georgia sends extra troops into South Ossetia following reports that Russian peacekeepers intended to dismantle checkpoints that Georgia has set up outside ethnic Georgian villages²⁷⁵⁷. Georgia later withdraw its troops following guarantees from the Russian peacekeepers²⁷⁵⁸. In response to Putin's comment on August 18, the Parliament Speaker Nino Burjanadze stated that it was hypocritical of Putin to call on Georgian leaders to embrace talks when Russia continues to employ force in its own

²⁷⁴⁴ Ibid

²⁷⁴⁵ Ibid

²⁷⁴⁶ University of Central Arkansas “38. Georgia/South Ossetia (1990-present), *University of Central Arkansas*.

²⁷⁴⁷ Ibid

²⁷⁴⁸ Ibid

²⁷⁴⁹ Igor Torbakov “South Ossetia crisis stokes tension between Russia and Georgia” *RefWorld*, August 25, 2004, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a485212f&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

²⁷⁵⁰ Ibid

²⁷⁵¹ Ibid

²⁷⁵² Ibid

²⁷⁵³ “Georgian troops killed in Ossetia clash” *Aljazeera*, August 18, 2004, <https://www.aljazeera.com/archive/2004/08/2008410122450595947.html>

²⁷⁵⁴ Ibid

²⁷⁵⁵ “Georgian Foreign Minister calls for international conference on South Ossetia” *OSCE*, August 18, 2004, <https://www.osce.org/cio/56608>

²⁷⁵⁶ Ibid

²⁷⁵⁷ “Georgia Withdraws Troops From South Ossetia” *RadioFreeEurope*, May 31, 2004, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1053065.html>

²⁷⁵⁸ Ibid

renegade region, Chechnya²⁷⁵⁹. He also stated: "When he [Putin] tells us that we [Georgia] should learn to negotiate[...]why is he not holding talks with the Chechens?"²⁷⁶⁰.

August 24, 2004: Givi Targamadze, chairman of the Georgian parliament's Defense and Security Committee, states that Russian troops was ready to launch a strike into Georgian territory on August 19, but that it was preempted by Saakashvili's decision to withdraw Georgian units from strategic positions in South Ossetia²⁷⁶¹. He further stated that Georgia possessed secretly taped video of Russian military preparations along the Georgian-Russian frontier, stating: "From now on, our whole strategy will be built on the notion that the army, the Georgian armed forces, should get ready to repel Russian aggression,"²⁷⁶². Saakashvili furthermore echoed this stating that "the [Georgian] population must be prepared" for the possibility of war²⁷⁶³.

August 25, 2004: Russia releases a statement which condemns the "militaristic rhetoric" from Georgia stating that the: "latest utterances show a complete absence of any sense of restraint[...]Against a backdrop of the failure of the military adventure in South Ossetia, acute social and economic problems in Georgia stand out in even bolder relief[...]All [the Georgian government's] energy ought to be focused on tackling these problems, instead of directing it in a search for a non-existent 'external enemy.'"²⁷⁶⁴

September 8, 2004: Russian and Georgian point to each other and South Ossetia as party to the terrorist attacks in Beslan, North Ossetia²⁷⁶⁵. Whereas a number of Russian lawmakers have been looking for traces of Georgian involvement in the attack, Georgia on the other hand have pointed to South Ossetia's involvement with Georgian special serviced investigating the possibility²⁷⁶⁶.

October 6, 2004: The JCC meets in Moscow and agrees to measures aimed at increasing the security situation in South Ossetia²⁷⁶⁷. All sides signed a protocol in which they agreed to: commit all parties to make only make changes in peacekeeping troops deployment with mutual prior notification and to create a scheme of mined fields and work over the supply of power to the region during the winter period²⁷⁶⁸. The sides also agreed to organize talks between Georgia's Prime Minister and South Ossetia's de facto president²⁷⁶⁹. Talks including foreign ministers of all sides were also agreed to²⁷⁷⁰.

²⁷⁵⁹ Igor Torbakov "South Ossetia crisis stokes tension between Russia and Georgia" *RefWorld*, August 25, 2004, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a485212f&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

²⁷⁶⁰ Ibid

²⁷⁶¹ Ibid

²⁷⁶² Ibid

²⁷⁶³ Ibid

²⁷⁶⁴ John Mackedon "Pause in hostilities allows Georgia to rethink approach on South Ossetia" *RefWorld*, September 13, 2004, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a48522c&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

²⁷⁶⁵ Zaal Anjaparidze "Russia Hints At Georgian Complicity In North Ossetian Attack" *James Town*, September 8, 2004, <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-hints-at-georgian-complicity-in-north-ossetian-attack/>

²⁷⁶⁶ Ibid

²⁷⁶⁷ "JCC Focused on Security Issues in South Ossetian Conflict Zone" *Old Civil*, October 6, 2004, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=7995>

²⁷⁶⁸ Ibid

²⁷⁶⁹ Ibid

²⁷⁷⁰ Ibid

November 1, 2004: Russia suggests that South Ossetia's leader, Eduard Kokoiti, should be invited to the end-of-year conference and the OSCE²⁷⁷¹. Russia also continues to reject the settlement of the conflict outside of the Joint Control Commission²⁷⁷². The JCC is five-sided including, Russia, South Ossetia, Georgia, North Ossetia and the OSCE²⁷⁷³. Meanwhile shoot outs occur on a nightly basis in South Ossetia²⁷⁷⁴. Guram Vakhtangashvili, who represents South Ossetia's Georgian-populated Didi Liakhvi electoral district in parliament warned that: "As a result of pressure from the Ossetian separatists, the number of internally displaced persons from South Ossetia may increase by 25,000"²⁷⁷⁵. He also stated that there was an urgent need to protect Georgian residents and that Ossetian militias groups had retaken strategic positions around Tskhinvali and the Georgian villages²⁷⁷⁶. Georgia also claims that South Ossetia has violated the ceasefire over 30 times with shelling of Georgian villages²⁷⁷⁷. South Ossetia claim that shelling originates from Georgia²⁷⁷⁸.

November 2, 2004: Georgia's parliamentary speaker Nino Burdjanadze meets with Russian officials in Moscow²⁷⁷⁹. Following the meeting, Burdjanadze stated: "Today, I made repeated offers that we should agree on a joint action plan that would help us build a good, normal relationship[...]I also suggested that we should issue a joint statement in which Russia would not only say it recognizes Georgia's territorial integrity, but would also commit itself to help Georgia restore its territorial integrity."²⁷⁸⁰. Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, stated in response: "The risk exists that either side may try at any time to forcibly decide developments. We believe it would be disastrous for the resolution of both the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict and the Georgian-[South] Ossetian conflict"²⁷⁸¹.

November 3-4, 2004: Ossetians kidnap two Georgian villagers and later detain 50 Georgians passing through Tskhinvali²⁷⁸². In response, Georgian villagers in South Ossetia blocked the road connecting Tskhinvali with the northern city of Java and also captured a number of South Ossetians²⁷⁸³. The sides later exchanged prisoners and the road was reopened²⁷⁸⁴.

November 4, 2004: Joint Peacekeeping Forces in South Ossetia claim that Georgia has increased its number of police forces in the area with over 100 forces deployed to Georgian villages²⁷⁸⁵.

²⁷⁷¹ Vladimir Socor "COMMENTARY: RUSSIA, GEORGIA, AND THE OSCE PREPARE FOR 2004 YEAR-END CONFERENCE" *James Town*, November 1, 2004, <https://jamestown.org/program/commentary-russia-georgia-and-the-osce-prepare-for-2004-year-end-conference/>

²⁷⁷² Ibid

²⁷⁷³ Ibid

²⁷⁷⁴ Zaal Anjaparidze "NEW DEVELOPMENTS ROCK SOUTH OSSETIA AND ABKHAZIA" *James Town*, November 1, 2004, <https://jamestown.org/program/new-developments-rock-south-ossetia-and-abkhazia/>

²⁷⁷⁵ Ibid

²⁷⁷⁶ Ibid

²⁷⁷⁷ Ibid

²⁷⁷⁸ Ibid

²⁷⁷⁹ Jean-Christophe Peuch "Georgia: South Ossetian leaders hold direct talks with government amid unabated tensions" *Refworld*, November 5, 2004, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a4857b1e&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

²⁷⁸⁰ Ibid

²⁷⁸¹ Ibid

²⁷⁸² Zaal Anjaparidze "GEORGIAN PRIME MINISTER MEETS WITH SOUTH OSSETIAN LEADER" *James Town*, November 9, 2004, <https://jamestown.org/program/georgian-prime-minister-meets-with-south-ossetian-leader/>

²⁷⁸³ Ibid

²⁷⁸⁴ Ibid

²⁷⁸⁵ Ibid

November 5, 2004: Talks are held between Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania and South Ossetian President Eduard Kokoity which Zhvania's office describe as tense²⁷⁸⁶. Prior to the meeting Zhvania stated on the issue of sovereignty: "This issue cannot remain indefinitely suspended in the air. This conflict has been going on for 14 years now, and it is still not settled. We simply cannot go on like that. This is why we are trying to make use of all possible ways to peacefully settle our dispute,"²⁷⁸⁷. Russia was also represented at the meeting²⁷⁸⁸.

November 9, 2004: Georgia and South Ossetian leaders meet in Sochi in where they agree to cease hostilities and demilitarize the South Ossetian conflict zone by November 20²⁷⁸⁹. They also agreed to specifically remove all armed groups except the peacekeeping troops²⁷⁹⁰. They however failed to reach an agreement about joint control of the Roki tunnel²⁷⁹¹. Following the meeting, South Ossetia stated that Georgia had: "acknowledged responsibility for the events of the summer of 2004, and the necessity for the Ossetians to take defensive measures."²⁷⁹². Shelling of Georgian villages resumes²⁷⁹³.

2005

January 26, 2005: Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili presents at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe an offer to extend broad autonomy to the secessionist republic of South Ossetia in return for its recognition of Tbilisi's authority²⁷⁹⁴. South Ossetia refused the offer stating that it would remain independent²⁷⁹⁵. To the plan, Saakashvili stated:

First and foremost, our vision for a peaceful and united Georgia is based on the respect for the desire for autonomy of the Tskhinvali region-South Ossetia. If during the Soviet period South Ossetia enjoyed all [possible] forms of Soviet autonomy, today, under this plan, it [would] enjoy a much [fairer] form [of autonomy] -- even broader than the autonomy [enjoyed by] North Ossetia in Russia[...] We want to have a strong Georgian state, and we want the [South Ossetian] conflict to be solved peacefully. The price we must pay for that is that we should give that territory certain political rights. But everything that concerns border control, defense, public order, human rights will be the prerogative of Georgia's central government²⁷⁹⁶.

Speaking in Russia, Kokoity rejected any peace proposal from Georgia stating: "South Ossetia already determined its own status. South Ossetia is an independent state, and this status is not going to be discussed[...] All our history dictates that autonomy within Georgia does not guarantee the security of the South Ossetian people."²⁷⁹⁷.

²⁷⁸⁶ Peuch "Georgia: South Ossetian leaders hold direct talks with government amid unabated tensions" *Refworld*

²⁷⁸⁷ Ibid

²⁷⁸⁸ Ibid

²⁷⁸⁹ Anjaparidze "GEORGIAN PRIME MINISTER MEETS WITH SOUTH OSSETIAN LEADER" *James Town*

²⁷⁹⁰ Ibid

²⁷⁹¹ Ibid

²⁷⁹² Ibid

²⁷⁹³ Ibid

²⁷⁹⁴ Peuch "Georgia: President Unveils South Ossetian Peace Plan In Strasbourg" *RadioFreeEurope*, January 26, 2005, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1057093.html>

²⁷⁹⁵ Ibid

²⁷⁹⁶ Ibid

²⁷⁹⁷ Molly Corso "Georgian President unveils South Ossetia peace plan" *Refworld*, January 27, 2005,

<https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a484ae5&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

February 2, 2005: A car explosion in Gori which led three policemen dead and several wounded is characterized by Georgia as a terrorist attack with “foreign forces” likely being responsible for it²⁷⁹⁸.

March 18, 2005: The Joint Control Commission (JCC) with representatives from Georgian, South Ossetia, Russia and North Ossetian sign a protocol which envisages measures aimed at demilitarization of South Ossetian conflict zone²⁷⁹⁹. The sides agreed to sides agreed to carry out dismantling of military fortifications in the conflict zone with Georgian State Minister for Conflict Resolution Issues Goga Khaindrava stating that the withdrawal of unauthorized troops from the conflict zone would be the next step of demilitarization²⁸⁰⁰. Khaindrava stated that both sides will position these troops in one particular location, which should become accessible for joint -- Russian, Georgian, Ossetian -- peacekeeping troop stationed in the conflict zone, as well as for OSCE observers for carrying out regular monitoring there²⁸⁰¹.

May 2005: Shooting erupts in South Ossetia resulting in the death of a Georgian policeman and four South Ossetians²⁸⁰².

May 12, 2005: Two OSCE monitoring staff are threatened at gun point and detained by a South Ossetian volunteer group²⁸⁰³. They were freed following an intervention by the JPF²⁸⁰⁴.

June 29, 2005: The Russian Foreign Ministry releases a “Commentary Regarding Georgian Foreign Ministry Protest Over Humanitarian Aid to South Ossetia” where it responds to allegations that “a part of the cargo is of dual use and can be used for military purposes”²⁸⁰⁵. Here it states: “This entirely does not correspond to reality. We know that the Moscow mayor's office invited Georgian embassy officials to be present at the dispatch ceremony of the cargo so they could see for themselves its completely peaceful character. But the Georgian embassy in Moscow did not avail itself of this invitation.”²⁸⁰⁶

July 5, 2005: South Ossetia staged military exercises with 500 troops in the Java district²⁸⁰⁷.

July 9, 2005: Saakashvili states on TV: “The status quo cannot continue. I am not going to wait for the next 100 years to resolve these problems[...]Therefore, we will be very aggressive in seeking peace.”²⁸⁰⁸.

²⁷⁹⁸ EurasiaNet “Saakashvili: Gori blast is terrorist attack” *Refworld*, February 2, 2005,

[https://www.refworld.org/cgi-](https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a484b01e&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO)

[bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a484b01e&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO](https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a484b01e&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO)

²⁷⁹⁹ Baku Today “Caucasus: JCC agrees on demilitarization measures” *ReliefWeb*, March 18, 2005,

<https://reliefweb.int/report/georgia/caucasus-icc-agrees-demilitarization-measures>

²⁸⁰⁰ Ibid

²⁸⁰¹ Ibid

²⁸⁰² Crow “A timeline of the Georgia-Russia Conflict” *RUSI*

²⁸⁰³ “OSCE Chairman concerned over detention of two OSCE staff in South Ossetia” *OSCE*, May 12, 2005,

<https://www.osce.org/cio/46408>

²⁸⁰⁴ Ibid

²⁸⁰⁵ “Russian MFA Information and Press Department Commentary Regarding Georgian Foreign Ministry Protest Over Humanitarian Aid to South Ossetia” *Russia's Foreign Ministry*, June 29, 2005,

https://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/maps/ge/-/asset_publisher/uwHHxf8KDaOY/content/id/434110

²⁸⁰⁶ Ibid

²⁸⁰⁷ Molly Corso, “Georgia promotes South Ossetia peace plan” *Refworld*, July 12, 2005,

[https://www.refworld.org/cgi-](https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a4851023&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO)

[bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a4851023&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO](https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a4851023&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO)

²⁸⁰⁸ Ibid

July 10-11, 2005: Saakashvili holds a conference aimed at promoting the peace plan he proposed in January, which South Ossetia declined to attend²⁸⁰⁹. Saakashvili said the peace plan was a "dream list" for residents of South Ossetia and stated: "We understand it will take years[...]But we want action. Nothing ever happens on its own, so we need your assistance."²⁸¹⁰ The plan's provisions would: 1) Ensure language rights and the preservation of cultural heritage. 2) Provide compensation for damages suffered during the 1990-1992 conflict with Georgia. 3) Create a truth commission to investigate alleged crimes against civilians. 4) Establish "a simplified border regime" for South Ossetians residing along the border with Russia. 5) Guarantee South Ossetian representation in the central Georgian government.²⁸¹¹ In an interview Saakashvili stated:"[i]f the de-facto leaders of Ossetia love Ossetians even a tenth as much as we do, they will certainly engage in negotiations." Which Dmitri Medoyev, South Ossetia's representative to Russia responded to saying: "Our train left Georgia 15 years ago[...]And [it] is now heading towards Russia."²⁸¹².

July 18, 2005: While recognizing that "peace initiatives are being pursued quite actively", Georgia's Minister of Defense Irakli Okruashvili states: "We have enough equipment, and people trained[...]to ward off any internal threat that may face Georgia. Naturally, this concerns the two lost territories [Abkhazia and South Ossetia]."²⁸¹³

July 26, 2005: South Ossetia and Abkhazia sign a mutual assistance agreement and Eduard Kokoiti, states that Georgia and international organizations "want to impose on us peaceful initiatives of an aggressive nature".²⁸¹⁴

July 27, 2005: Anatoly Barankevich, the head of the South Ossetian defense forces, states that Georgian troops are engaged in menacing activities not far from the separatist region's border with him stating: "Georgian troops are holding all kinds of exercises[...]that we view as purposeful preparations for combat operations"²⁸¹⁵

September 20, 2005: Georgia blames Russian troops for the shelling of the South Ossetian capital, which injured 10 people²⁸¹⁶. Russia and South Ossetia denied the claims whilst Georgia called for the end to Russia's role in the peacekeeping mission²⁸¹⁷. The shelling coincided with celebrations commemorating the 15th anniversary of the breakaway region's declaration of independence from Georgia in 1990²⁸¹⁸. Georgia's State Minister for Conflict Resolution Giorgi Khaindrava stated in regard to the peace process: "I think the whole process as such has been wrecked,"²⁸¹⁹. He also stated that the peacekeeping mission: "should be an international format. I think it is a common European problem."²⁸²⁰.

²⁸⁰⁹ Ibid

²⁸¹⁰ Ibid

²⁸¹¹ Ibid

²⁸¹² Ibid

²⁸¹³ Theresa Freese "Tension again on the rise in South Ossetia" *Refworld*, July 29, 2005,

<https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a4851723&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

²⁸¹⁴ Ibid

²⁸¹⁵ Ibid

²⁸¹⁶ Molly Corso, "Shelling shatters chances for Georgia-South Ossetia peace?" *Refworld*, September 23, 2005,

<https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a4852dc&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

²⁸¹⁷ Ibid

²⁸¹⁸ Ibid

²⁸¹⁹ Ibid

²⁸²⁰ Ibid

September 21, 2005: In a televised speech Saakashvili states: "In reality, Russia is ruling this small enclave [South Ossetia], not just through its officials, but with ethnic Russians sent there by Russia and appointed by Russia[...]"There is no place here for burying your head in the sand. We hope that Russia – this is not a Georgian-Ossetian problem, it is a Georgian-Russian issue – will play a constructive role so that once and for all we can put an end to all breaches of the peace."²⁸²¹. Meanwhile Georgian State Minister for Conflict Resolution Giorgi Khaindrava stated regarding the presence of heavy weaponry in South Ossetia: "The next step is to start a war, as our opponents probably plan[...][How] could the newest military hardware get into the region? How did it get there? Obviously, we will put this question to our Russian colleagues because there is no other way than the Roki tunnel [on the Georgian-Russian border]. How can the peacekeeping forces led by Russia simply stay in the conflict zone, look at these outrageous incidents and do nothing?"²⁸²².

September 22, 2005: Georgia's Prime Minister Zurab Noghaideli states that, despite the shelling on September 20, he wanted to pursue plans for a meeting with South Ossetian separatist leader Eduard Kokoity, originally slotted for some time in late September: "Such a meeting would have been very important if it had been held earlier. I think it might have prevented the incidents yesterday and the day before[...]. But it seems that the de-facto leadership in Tskhinvali has no interest in ruling out acts of provocation and calming down the situation. Nevertheless, we, for our part, will do our utmost for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. That is why it is essential that such a meeting takes place."²⁸²³.

October 12, 2005: The Russian Foreign Ministry issues a statement regarding Georgia's resolution on the situation in the zones of the Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian conflicts²⁸²⁴. Here they state that: "Apart from the obviously biased and partial assessments of the state of affairs in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, it contains some rude attacks against Russia. The resolution also charges that the conflicts still have not been settled because of Moscow's position and even that Russia harbors intentions to annex a part of Georgia. As the chief target are selected the peacekeeping forces stationed in accordance with the operative international agreements in the zones of the said conflicts. The Georgian parliamentarians have chosen a language of ultimatums: the deadlines are set, after which the government of Georgia is directed to take action for the soonest withdrawal from the country's territory of the peacekeeping forces and to denounce the relevant international agreements. The Russian side regards the resolution as a provocative move, aimed at whipping up tensions, breaking the existing negotiation formats and liquidating the juridical base of a peaceful settlement of the conflicts on the territory of Georgia. By accusing Russia of the unsettledness of the problem of the territorial integrity of Georgia, the parliament of that country is obviously trying to shift the blame on to somebody else"²⁸²⁵.

October 24-25, 2005: An emergency session of the JCC is held in Moscow following the use of force by Ossetian troops on September 20²⁸²⁶. Following the meeting Georgian State Minister for Conflict Resolution Issues Goga Khaindrava called for an overhaul of the JCC and the Russian dominated peacekeeping operation²⁸²⁷. Since 2004, 15 protocols on demilitarizing South Ossetia have been signed within the framework of the JCC, Khaindrava however stated that instead of demilitarization: "We have

²⁸²¹ Ibid

²⁸²² Ibid

²⁸²³ Ibid

²⁸²⁴ "Regarding Georgian Parliament Resolution on Situation in Zones of Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian Conflicts" *Russia's Foreign Ministry*, October 12, 2005,

https://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/foreign_policy/international_safety/conflicts/-/asset_publisher/xIEMTQ3OvzcA/content/id/424646

²⁸²⁵ Ibid

²⁸²⁶ Vladimir Socor "JCC, "PEACEKEEPING" FORMATS IN SOUTH OSSETIA SHOWN TO BE UNTENABLE" *James Town*, October 26, 2005, <https://jamestown.org/program/jcc-peacekeeping-formats-in-south-ossetia-shown-to-be-untenable/>

²⁸²⁷ Ibid

ended up with unprecedented militarization” of South Ossetia by Russia and “everyone knows perfectly well that the arms come from Russia through the Roki tunnel.”²⁸²⁸. He also noted that the OSCE had a mandate to monitor the Roki tunnel but that this mandate remained largely unfulfilled²⁸²⁹. He also pointed to “JCC’s passivity and the indifference Russian “peacekeepers” showed toward the September 20 demonstration of force in Tskhinvali, where “heavy armaments and illegal armed formations were brought in, smartly outfitted young men with assault rifles, submachine guns, and grenade launchers marching around, accompanied by armored vehicles, parading ostentatiously before the eyes of the whole world.”²⁸³⁰. As he further stated this is: “evidence that the [existing] peacekeeping operation is untenable.”²⁸³¹.

October 27, 2005: Georgia’s Prime Minister Zurab Nougaideli presents “South Ossetia Conflict Resolution Plan” at the OSCE²⁸³². Here he stated that the goals were: Effective conflict settlement strategy; Moving forward peace process; Ensure democratic development and economic revival of the region; Full-scale conflict settlement. The objectives: Create comprehensive state policy on conflict settlement; Create common strategy for international partners; Engage old and new partners in new framework talks; Ensure international support for conflict settlement plan²⁸³³.

November 1, 2005: Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Noghaideli presents to the OSCE the recent version of President Mikheil Saakashvili's proposals for resolving the South Ossetian conflict²⁸³⁴. The peace plan gives South Ossetia broad autonomy within Georgia, it calls for the inclusion on the US, EU and the OSCE as part of the peace process and it advocates the demilitarization of the conflict zone and the imposing of strict border controls at the Roki tunnel linking South Ossetia with the Russian Federation²⁸³⁵. The plan also envisages resolving the conflict by 2007²⁸³⁶.

December 5, 2005: Russia accuses Georgia of attacking and shooting against South Ossetian posts and refusing vehicles with Russian and South Ossetian plates to pass to different areas in South Ossetia²⁸³⁷. To this Russia further states: “The enumerated actions are accompanied by threats and accusations against South Ossetian leaders and Russian peacekeepers that they are supposedly involved in crime, including abductions of people, arms trade, contraband and the like. It got to the point where Vano Merabishvili, Georgia's minister of the interior and state security, in an interview with a Georgian TV company declared that the president of South Ossetia, the chairman of the Council of Ministers of South Ossetia, the South Ossetian minister of defense, and other leaders of the unrecognized republic "will either be punished for crimes perpetrated or will not be among the living." All this looks very much like a call for political assassinations.”²⁸³⁸

²⁸²⁸ Ibid

²⁸²⁹ Ibid

²⁸³⁰ Ibid

²⁸³¹ Ibid

²⁸³² “Presentation "South Ossetia Conflict Resolution Plan" by the Prime Minister of Georgia, H.E. Zurab Nougaideli” *OSCE*, October 27, 2005, <https://www.osce.org/pc/16801>

²⁸³³ Ibid

²⁸³⁴ Liz Fuller, “Georgia: Latest Peace Initiative For South Ossetia Unveiled” *RadioFreeEurope*, November 1, 2005, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1062552.html>

²⁸³⁵ Ibid

²⁸³⁶ Ibid

²⁸³⁷ “Russian MFA Information and Press Department Commentary Regarding a Question from RIA Novosti Concerning Situation in Zone of Georgian-Ossetian Conflict” *Russia’s Foreign Ministry*, December 5, 2005, https://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/foreign_policy/international_safety/conflicts/-/asset_publisher/xIEMTQ3OvzcA/content/id/418514

²⁸³⁸ Ibid

December 13, 2005: South Ossetia proposes a peace plan which Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Noghaideli stated came as a “surprise” to him, but nevertheless saw it as a “step forward”²⁸³⁹. The South Ossetian peace plan calls for the creation of a working group within the “four-party Joint Control Commission (JCC) that is responsible for monitoring and implementing the 1992 Georgian-South Ossetian ceasefire.”²⁸⁴⁰. The purpose of this working group should be to focus on further demilitarization, confidence building and on ways to boost the regional economy²⁸⁴¹. The plan is according to South Ossetia meant to be implemented in three stages, as stated: “The [first stage] includes the demilitarization of the conflict zone, the restoration of confidence, and the establishment of security guarantees[...]The second stage includes the social and economic rehabilitation [of the conflict zone] and the third stage includes the political settlement of the relations between Georgia and the republic of South Ossetia. This program should serve as a basis for talks that would involve the four sides' highest political leaders.”²⁸⁴². In response to the peace plan, Georgia stated: “[Georgia] has been often criticized for making unilateral proposals. And indeed those were unilateral proposals because our colleagues [in the JCC] did not want to take part in this process. Thank God, common sense has prevailed. Everyone understands -- and I, too, believe -- that this is an important step on Kokoity's part[...]We must now join forces so that the Ossetian and Georgian populations of the [conflict zone] can live together again. Were it not for these political tensions and these various forces that have been hindering the implementation of the peace process, there would have long been no problems. We welcome [Kokoity's] initiative.”²⁸⁴³.

2006

January 31, 2006: A traffic accident between a Georgian civilian's car and a truck belonging to the Russian peacekeeping force in the village of Tkviavi led to a confrontation between Georgian police and Russian officers when a Georgian police officer tried to confiscate the truck²⁸⁴⁴. The dispute was solved with negotiations between Gen. Kulakhmetov and a Georgian presidential representative²⁸⁴⁵. On the same day Vladimir Putin stated that Russia would recognize the South Ossetia and Abkhazia if Western nations decided to acknowledge the independence of Kosovo in the Balkans²⁸⁴⁶. He also criticizes Georgia's handling of a gas crisis which took place in January where Saakashvili suggested that Russia had intentionally turned off the natural gas tap. To this Putin stated: “While workers were trying to fix the gas pipeline in freezing temperatures, in response we only saw Georgian authorities spitting at us,”²⁸⁴⁷

February 8, 2006: Georgia detains three Russian troops for being in the conflict zone without passport or Georgian visas²⁸⁴⁸. Russia condemned the arrest as a “provocation” and stated that the arrest was pushing

²⁸³⁹ Jean-Christophe Peuch “Georgia: Tbilisi Welcomes South Ossetia Peace Proposals” *RadioFreeEurope*, December 13, 2005, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1063791.html>

²⁸⁴⁰ Ibid

²⁸⁴¹ Ibid

²⁸⁴² Ibid

²⁸⁴³ Ibid

²⁸⁴⁴ Sergei Blagov “Russia and Georgia spar over South Ossetia, Abkhazia” *Refworld*, February 9, 2006, [https://www.refworld.org/cgi-](https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a484ba14&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO)

[bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a484ba14&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO](https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a484ba14&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO)

²⁸⁴⁵ Ibid

²⁸⁴⁶ Ibid

²⁸⁴⁷ Ibid

²⁸⁴⁸ Theresa Freese “As deadline looms, Georgia changes tone on South Ossetian peacekeepers” *Refworld*, February 10, 2006, [https://www.refworld.org/cgi-](https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a484bc1e&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO)
[bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a484bc1e&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO](https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a484bc1e&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO)

both sides towards conflict²⁸⁴⁹. Both Georgia and Russia accuse each other of building up their troop presence in the area²⁸⁵⁰.

February 9, 2006: Georgia's parliament plans to vote on the presence of Russian peacekeeping troops in South Ossetia on February 15²⁸⁵¹. The US ambassador to the OSCE stated to a decision to dispel the Russian troops without a substitute in place would be destabilizing and urged Georgia to exercise caution²⁸⁵². It is expected that the Georgian parliament will issue a statement calling for the prompt and unilateral withdrawal of Russian troops from the conflict zone as a destabilizing force²⁸⁵³. To this Russia, however, argues that Georgia does not have the legal right to secure a unilateral withdrawal of peacekeepers from South Ossetia and that this decision must be made by all members of JCC²⁸⁵⁴. Georgian Foreign Minister Gela Bezhuashvili proposed a joint Georgian-South Ossetian police force for the conflict zone once demilitarization is complete and also pressed for fulfillment of earlier agreements on allowing OSCE peacekeepers to act and move freely throughout South Ossetia and to establish permanent control over the Roki Tunnel that connects North and South Ossetia²⁸⁵⁵.

February 10, 2006: Following negotiations with Russia, the three Russian men are handed over to the OSCE, who handed them over to Russia²⁸⁵⁶. At a news conference, Georgian Defense Minister Irakli Okruashvili stated that the current situation in South Ossetia "is not alarming." And that "[R]ecent developments in relations with Russia make us more cautious, more watchful than before[...]. We will not compromise where observance of the law is concerned, but we will also do our best not to lose control over the situation in the region,"²⁸⁵⁷.

February 15, 2006: The Georgian parliament adopts a resolution which calls for the replacement of Russian peacekeepers in the breakaway region of South Ossetia²⁸⁵⁸. The resolution criticized the Russian peacekeepers' performance, stating that they were abetting an attempt by Russia to annex South Ossetia and it also called on the Georgian government to work with the international community on an alternative peacekeeping plan²⁸⁵⁹. Russia criticized the move stating that Georgia has no right to amend the Sochi agreement unilaterally²⁸⁶⁰. Georgia however argues that it does in fact have the right to do so²⁸⁶¹. Former Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze comments on the time he signed the agreement where he states the 1992 war was Georgia's fault and that a revision of the agreement should be agreed upon with Russia: "Frankly speaking, it is our fault. We shouldn't have entered South Ossetia in the first place"²⁸⁶². Russia responded stating that the resolution: "causes concern in Moscow because it is part of the anti-Russian campaign being mounted in Georgia in recent weeks and calls for a dismantling of the existing mechanisms and legal-treaty basis of the settlement of the Georgia-Ossetia conflict. The decision is fraught with growing

²⁸⁴⁹ Ibid

²⁸⁵⁰ Ibid

²⁸⁵¹ Ibid

²⁸⁵² Ibid

²⁸⁵³ Ibid

²⁸⁵⁴ Ibid

²⁸⁵⁵ Ibid

²⁸⁵⁶ Ibid

²⁸⁵⁷ Ibid

²⁸⁵⁸ Eurasianet "Georgian parliament votes to boot Russian peacekeepers from South Ossetia" *Refworld*, February 15, 2006, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a484b1e&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

²⁸⁵⁹ Ibid

²⁸⁶⁰ "Georgia: Shevardnadze Discusses 1992 South Ossetia Agreement" *RadioFreeEurope*, February 23, 2006, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1066081.html>

²⁸⁶¹ Ibid

²⁸⁶² Ibid

tensions in the conflict zone. The decision of the Georgian lawmakers is a clear indication that Georgia may embark on a road leading to destabilization of the entire region. It remains to hope that the executive branch in Georgia will treat this problem with all responsibility and restraint”²⁸⁶³.

February 21, 2006: Russia, North and South Ossetia criticize that the Mixed Control Commission for the settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict cannot be held due to Georgia’s refusal to participate. To this Russia stated: “While the South Ossetian side demonstrates a striving to find compromise peaceful ways for settling the conflict and has put forward concrete proposals for joint work on a common action program to settle the conflict, the Georgian side actually ignores the peace initiatives and is building up arms and stepping up bellicose rhetoric. It seems that Tbilisi is making a choice in favor of a force-based scenario. No unilateral initiatives can substitute for the proposed joint work.”²⁸⁶⁴.

March 9, 2006: Georgia removes visa requirements for EU and US citizens visiting the country²⁸⁶⁵. Gleb Pavlovsky, a Kremlin adviser, implied that the solution to the crisis was to assassinate a leading figure in the Georgian government stating: “The cost of a single bullet being lower than the cost of war,”²⁸⁶⁶. South Ossetian defence minister Anatoly Barankevich stated: “If Russian peacekeepers are withdrawn, we will do everything we can to withstand the aggression of the Georgian armed forces.”²⁸⁶⁷

March 2006: Russia initiates a number of import restrictions of goods from Georgia²⁸⁶⁸.

June 2, 2006: Lavrov states in an interview with Russian media that Russia recognizes the territorial integrity of Georgia but that the conflicts in Georgia means that Georgia cannot really control its territory: “we recognize the territorial integrity of Georgia. But in the conditions when a significant part of the territory of Georgia is internationally recognized conflict zones - both South Ossetia and Abkhazia - the Georgian authorities and Tbilisi really cannot control these territories. The classical definition of the notion Sovereignty is an ability to control a territory. This is international law. In order to solve this problem, it is necessary to return to the table of negotiations, which are being stalled in every way, even sabotaged by the Georgian side”²⁸⁶⁹. Regarding whether Russia is spurring separatist movements he states: “We are not spurring any tendencies. We state an objective given that the territorial integrity of Georgia cannot be ensured in full measure so long as the conflicts remain unsettled. Their settlement is being sabotaged by the Georgian side. The examples I have cited to you - the refusal to sign documents on a purely peaceful settlement, together with the facts of the purchases by Georgia of attack weapons and ammunition in quantities enormous for normal security purposes of that country - cannot but lead us to suspect that, indeed, a force-based option of the solution of this problem is being contemplated.”²⁸⁷⁰

²⁸⁶³ “Statement in Connection with the Adoption of a Resolution on South Ossetia by the Georgian Parliament” *Russia’s Foreign Ministry*, February 15, 2006, https://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/maps/ge/-/asset_publisher/uwHHxf8KDaOY/content/id/413242

²⁸⁶⁴ “Statement by the Leaders of the Russian, South Ossetian and North Ossetian Parts of the Mixed Control Commission (MCC) for Settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict Following Their Consultations in Moscow on February 20-21, 2006” *Russia’s Foreign Ministry*, February 21, 2006, https://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/foreign_policy/international_safety/conflicts/-/asset_publisher/xIEMTQ3OvzcA/content/id/412490

²⁸⁶⁵ “Russia-Georgia ties deteriorate” *Aljazeera*, March 9, 2006, <https://www.aljazeera.com/archive/2006/03/2008410121926327778.html>

²⁸⁶⁶ Ibid

²⁸⁶⁷ Ibid

²⁸⁶⁸ Human Rights Watch “Background - Relations between Russia and Georgia” *Human Rights Watch Report* (2007), Retrieved on December 3, 2019: <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2007/russia1007/5.htm>

²⁸⁶⁹ “Transcript of Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Sergey Lavrov's Interview to Russian Media on a Number of Pressing International Problems, June 2, 2006” *Russia’s Foreign Ministry*, June 2, 2006, https://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/402010

²⁸⁷⁰ Ibid

July 2006: Georgian parliament demands that the Russian peacekeepers depart from South Ossetia and Abkhazia and asks for international troops to replace them²⁸⁷¹.

September 3, 2006: South Ossetians claim that they downed a Georgian government helicopter, which was violating their airspace²⁸⁷². Irakly Okruashvili, the Georgian defence minister stated that: "This is yet another provocation out of the many already staged by the regime in Tskhinvali [South Ossetia's centre] and the military command of Russian peacekeepers deployed in the zone of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict."²⁸⁷³

September 8, 2006: Georgian police and South Ossetian police clash²⁸⁷⁴.

September 29, 2006: Georgia arrests four Russian officers for espionage and Georgia later states that Russian troops have started to move close to the Georgian border²⁸⁷⁵. The commander of the Russian military forces in Georgia states that the military might reconsider its plans to withdraw its troops from Georgia by 2008 because of the arrests of four Russian officers stating: "if our servicemen are arrested and put in custody, there will be problems with the withdrawal since there will be no people left to prepare weapons for the pullout"²⁸⁷⁶. Meanwhile, Sergei Ivanov, the Russian defence minister, calls Georgia a "bandit" state and states that Georgia's actions were "to push Russian peacekeepers out by any means possible[...]and then to submit an application to join Nato[...]It is absolutely clear to us that Georgia has chosen the military path, the forceful path, for resolving the conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia,"²⁸⁷⁷.

October 27, 2006: Georgia's Prime Minister Zurab Nougaideli, calls for the implementation of the OSCE-approved peace plan and suggests an increase in OSCE monitors: "I wish to reiterate my willingness and that of my government, to engage in a direct dialogue with members of the Russian Government as soon as possible[...]How do we bring new momentum to our efforts at building peace? I think the answer is staring us in the face. It is the very peace plan that this institution universally endorsed almost one year ago in Ljubljana. Only now we must implement its provisions and steps[...]Likewise, to reduce tension and counter the growing threats, it is high time that we establish a joint Georgian-Russian-OSCE permanent monitoring presence at the Roki Tunnel"²⁸⁷⁸. He also announced on behalf of Georgia's President Mikheil Saakashvili Georgia's readiness to meet directly with the de-facto leader of South Ossetia, Eduard Kokoity: "This step, indeed this new initiative, is intended to create dialogue, build trust, and create a powerful signal that there is no alternative to peace"²⁸⁷⁹.

October 31, 2006: Clashes erupt in the Dzhava District in South Ossetia²⁸⁸⁰.

²⁸⁷¹ Crow "A timeline of the Georgia-Russia Conflict" *RUSI*

²⁸⁷² "South Ossetia Claims It Downed Georgian Helicopter" *RadioFreeEurope*, September 3, 2006, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1071056.html>

²⁸⁷³ "Georgia: Russia involved in attack" *Aljazeera*, September 3, 2006, <https://www.aljazeera.com/archive/2006/09/2008410122215363856.html>

²⁸⁷⁴ University of Central Arkansas "38. Georgia/South Ossetia (1990-present), *University of Central Arkansas*.

²⁸⁷⁵ "Russia moves troops closer to Georgia" *Aljazeera*, September 29, 2006, <https://www.aljazeera.com/archive/2006/09/2008410151321732196.html>

²⁸⁷⁶ Ibid

²⁸⁷⁷ Ibid

²⁸⁷⁸ "Georgian Prime Minister calls for implementation of South Ossetia peace plan, suggests increase of OSCE monitors" *OSCE*, October 27, 2006, <https://www.osce.org/pc/47824>

²⁸⁷⁹ Ibid

²⁸⁸⁰ University of Central Arkansas "38. Georgia/South Ossetia (1990-present), *University of Central Arkansas*

November 12, 2006: The Tbilisi-backed Union for National Salvation of Ossetians (UNSO) conducts another referendum on independence and presidential elections in South Ossetia²⁸⁸¹. The South Ossetians once again voted in favor of independence²⁸⁸². Meanwhile the Georgian electorate in South Ossetia participated in a parallel ballot in which they elected their own de facto president, Dmitry Sanakoyev²⁸⁸³. South Ossetia votes for independence with allegedly 99% of the voters backing independence from Georgia²⁸⁸⁴. US and European countries state that they will not recognize the result²⁸⁸⁵. A separate presidential vote was held which was won by the current leader, Eduard Kokoity, who wants South Ossetia to join Russia²⁸⁸⁶. Kokoity stated afterwards: "It's not a symbolic referendum - it's an answer to those who won't recognise the will of the people of South Ossetia,"²⁸⁸⁷. Georgia accused Russia of encouraging the separatist movement²⁸⁸⁸.

November 13, 2006: The OSCE states that it does not recognize nor acknowledge the outcome of the referendum in South Ossetia with the OSCE's Chairman-in-Office, Belgian Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht, stating: "The 'referendum on independence' and 'presidential election' in the South Ossetian region does not help to bring a peaceful solution of the conflict closer[...]The so-called elections increase tensions and divisions at a time when the sides to the Georgian-Ossetian conflict should be devoting all efforts to stabilizing the situation and moving forward the negotiating process[...]We have made it clear from the outset that we do not recognize such a unilateral referendum, and believe it to be counterproductive."²⁸⁸⁹

December 8, 2006: The Russian state Duma adopts two non-binding resolutions on on South Ossetia and Abkhazia²⁸⁹⁰. On South Ossetia, the Duma urged the Kremlin to "build a policy" around Tskhinvali's "expression of free will" referring to the entities referendum²⁸⁹¹. To this Georgia responded: "Through such biased approach the Russian State Duma not only puts under serious doubt the role of Russia as an impartial mediator and facilitator, but also undermines the moral and legal basis for the presence of Russian peacekeepers in the conflict zones,"²⁸⁹².

2007

January 29, 2007: Police and gunmen in South Ossetia exchange gunfire in the border village of Ergneti with no injuries reported²⁸⁹³.

²⁸⁸¹ Vladimir Socor "PRO-OSSETIAN AUTHORITIES EMERGING IN SOUTH OSSETIA" *James Town*, November 17, 2006, <https://jamestown.org/program/pro-ossetian-authorities-emerging-in-south-ossetia/>

²⁸⁸² University of Central Arkansas "38. Georgia/South Ossetia (1990-present), *University of Central Arkansas*

²⁸⁸³ Liz Fuller "Georgia: Tbilisi Ups The Ante Over South Ossetia" *RadioFreeEurope*, March 29, 2007, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1075580.html>

²⁸⁸⁴ "South Ossetians vote for independence" *The Guardian*, November 18, 2006, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/nov/13/russia.georgia>

²⁸⁸⁵ Ibid

²⁸⁸⁶ Ibid

²⁸⁸⁷ Ibid

²⁸⁸⁸ Ibid

²⁸⁸⁹ "Referendum in South Ossetia region not recognized and unproductive, OSCE Chairman says" *OSCE*, November 13, 2006, <https://www.osce.org/cio/47895>

²⁸⁹⁰ Molly Corso "Georgia, Russia jockey over separatist territories" *Refworld*, December 8, 2006, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a485651e&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

²⁸⁹¹ Ibid

²⁸⁹² Ibid

²⁸⁹³ Radio Free Europe "Shoot-out reported in Georgian breakaway region" *Refworld*, January 29, 2007, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=469f5ba614&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

March 15, 2007: In his annual address to parliament, Saakashvili stated that Europe was Georgia's "chief political sector" and that the country was united in its desire to join NATO and the European Union²⁸⁹⁴. He also stated: "Georgia is returning to its historical family[...]We are not simply Europeans, but the most ancient Europeans. Europe is coming back to Georgia, and Georgia is returning into Europe's fold."²⁸⁹⁵ He also expressed a wish for a more active engagement of the EU and US in the settling of the conflicts in Georgia²⁸⁹⁶.

March 25, 2007: Sporadic fighting erupts again with two Georgian police officers killed whilst patrolling the road between the villages of Nikozi and Avnevi²⁸⁹⁷.

March 27, 2007: Georgia constructs a military base 20 km away from Tskhinvali, which South Ossetia claims is a sign that Georgia aims to use force in an attempt to reestablish its authority over the area²⁸⁹⁸. Irina Gagloyeva, the head of South Ossetia's press service states that: "[T]he military buildup continues along the borders of Georgia[...][T]hey are preparing to solve our problem exclusively by strong-arm methods. Meanwhile, the trite statements on the part of Georgian politicians on a commitment to peace are only an ordinary verbal smokescreen."²⁸⁹⁹.

March 29, 2007: Georgia seeks international backing for the establishment of a pro-Georgian interim administration in South Ossetia which would be led by recently elected Dmitry Sanakoyev²⁹⁰⁰. Russia states to the Sanakoyev issue that it was "watching with concern the momentum-gathering massive propaganda campaign in Tbilisi around the so called Dmitry Sanakoyev movement. Its objective is obvious - to produce in the eyes of a not quite experienced internal and external observer a semblance of respectability for this agent group, a creation of Georgian special services, that has landed itself in one of the Georgian enclaves on the territory of South Ossetia"²⁹⁰¹.

April 12, 2007: Saakashvili's revised peace plan passes a second reading in the parliament²⁹⁰². The plan seeks to create a new Georgian administrative entity inside South Ossetia with Dmitri Sanakoyev tapped as head of the entity²⁹⁰³. The entity should serve as a vehicle for the "peaceful resolution of the conflict; restoring constitutional order in the area; protecting the rights and interests of people and ethnic groups living there; and creating appropriate conditions for democratic elections."²⁹⁰⁴. Russia has called the proposal criminal and accused the Georgian government of attempting to sabotage the peace process²⁹⁰⁵.

²⁸⁹⁴ "Georgian President Lays Out Goals In Annual Address" *RadioFreeEurope*, March 15, 2007,

<https://www.rferl.org/a/1075296.html>

²⁸⁹⁵ Ibid

²⁸⁹⁶ Ibid

²⁸⁹⁷ Molly Corso "Military base construction fuels Georgian-South Ossetian tension" *Refworld*, March 27, 2007,

[https://www.refworld.org/cgi-](https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a484d914&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO)

[bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a484d914&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO](https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a484d914&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO)

²⁸⁹⁸ Ibid

²⁸⁹⁹ Ibid

²⁹⁰⁰ Liz Fuller "Georgia: Tbilisi Ups The Ante Over South Ossetia" *RadioFreeEurope*, March 29, 2007,

<https://www.rferl.org/a/1075580.html>

²⁹⁰¹ Russia's Foreign Ministry "Russian Foreign Ministry Commentary Regarding Georgia's Propaganda Campaign Around the Puppet Government of Dmitry Sanakoyev" *Russia's Foreign Ministry*, March 29, 2007,

[https://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/foreign_policy/international_safety/conflicts/-](https://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/foreign_policy/international_safety/conflicts/-/asset_publisher/xIEMTQ3OvzcA/content/id/377730)

[/asset_publisher/xIEMTQ3OvzcA/content/id/377730](https://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/foreign_policy/international_safety/conflicts/-/asset_publisher/xIEMTQ3OvzcA/content/id/377730)

²⁹⁰² Molly Corso "Georgia: Saakashvili makes new move in geopolitical chess match over South Ossetia" *Refworld*,

April 12, 2007, [https://www.refworld.org/cgi-](https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a484e0c&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO)

[bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a484e0c&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO](https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a484e0c&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO)

²⁹⁰³ Ibid

²⁹⁰⁴ Ibid

²⁹⁰⁵ Ibid

The Russian ambassador in Tbilisi, Vyacheslav Kovalenko, also stated concern that the proposal would stir an already hostile environment and possibly cause a "new surge in hostilities,"²⁹⁰⁶.

April 24, 2007: Georgia introduces Dmitiri Sanakoyev to NATO members during a NATO Parliamentary Assembly²⁹⁰⁷. South Ossetia and Abkhazia condemned the promotion of Sanakoyev call and the "puppet governments" that Tbilisi supports in both conflict zones²⁹⁰⁸. The statement also said: "The purpose of such moves is no secret to anyone[...]Georgian authorities are trying to create an illusion of settlement, making use of the surrogate authorities on the territories it temporarily controls[...]If the Georgian government intends to spark further tensions, Sukhumi and Tskhinvali will officially withdraw from [peace] talks."²⁹⁰⁹. They also stated that if Georgia achieved NATO membership then they would equally withdraw from talks²⁹¹⁰.

May 8, 2007: The Georgian parliament votes to set up a provisional administrative entity in South Ossetia²⁹¹¹. The vote is part of a larger chain of steps needed for the establishment of the entity²⁹¹². One of the controversies attached to the process was the name of the administration²⁹¹³. Some inside the Georgian parliament are oppose to South Ossetia as a name and rather use the name Samachablo or Tskhinvali Region²⁹¹⁴. South Ossetia stated that it was considering withdrawing from talks with Georgia if Georgia continued to undermine the negotiation process by promoting its "puppet government", with Kokoity stating: "Georgia's actions towards South Ossetia make us believe that [the Georgian side] is not willing to deal with the situation in a peaceful manner. Georgia continues to escalate tensions, provoking the Ossetian side and ignoring the negotiating process[...]Only civilized dialogue is acceptable for the South Ossetian side; otherwise we will have to consider whether to participate or not in negotiations in the future[...]There is no one with whom we can hold talks to resolve this issue"²⁹¹⁵

May 9, 2007: A group of men identifying themselves as South Ossetians fired at the Joint Peacekeeping Force, which included OSCE observers²⁹¹⁶.

May 13, 2007: Violence erupts in South Ossetia at two Georgian villages leading to the injury of a policeman and a civilian²⁹¹⁷. The violence follows the day after South Ossetia blockaded Georgian villages and demanded Georgia withdrew interior ministry forces²⁹¹⁸.

²⁹⁰⁶ Ibid

²⁹⁰⁷ Molly Corso "Georgia promotes its conflict-resolution plan" *Refworld*, April 24, 2007,

<https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46a484e41c&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

²⁹⁰⁸ Ibid

²⁹⁰⁹ Ibid

²⁹¹⁰ Ibid

²⁹¹¹ "Parliament Sets Up S.Ossetia Provisional Administration" *Old Civil*, May 8, 2007,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=15080>

²⁹¹² Ibid

²⁹¹³ Ibid

²⁹¹⁴ Ibid

²⁹¹⁵ Ibid

²⁹¹⁶ "OSCE Condemns Attack On Monitors In South Ossetia" *RadioFreeEurope*, May 09, 2007,

<https://www.rferl.org/a/1076370.html>

²⁹¹⁷ "At Least Two Injured In South Ossetia Clashes" *RadioFreeEurope*, May 13, 2007,

<https://www.rferl.org/a/1076448.html>

²⁹¹⁸ Ibid

July 1, 2007: Violence continues with several wounded²⁹¹⁹. Georgia states that South Ossetia had fired mortars at villages and South Ossetia states that Georgian forces had launched grenade attacks on Tskhinvali²⁹²⁰. The day before villagers had poured paint and petrol on Russian vehicles and checkpoints in protest over attempts by Russian forces to prevent the building of a new road linking ethnic Georgian villages²⁹²¹.

July 24, 2007: Georgia holds its first state commission which seeks to define the status of South Ossetia²⁹²². The meeting included several representatives from the Georgian side, including the provisional administration, however it did not include Kokoity from South Ossetia²⁹²³. Kokoity stated that Tibilis is pursuing a policy of disinformation aimed at destabilizing the situation²⁹²⁴. He pointed to the inclusion of Dmitri Sanakoyev, head of the "provisional administration" at meetings held at e.g. the EU and NATO and stated: [A]llowing Sanakoyev to speak at an EU meeting [in Brussels] confuses the international community about who, in fact, is the legitimate representative of South Ossetia and the person fulfilling the nation's will²⁹²⁵. He also dismissed an invitation to the state commission stating that the status of South Ossetia was already decided in November 2006, where it voted for independence²⁹²⁶. As he further stated: "We wished dialogue was being conducted between legally elected representatives," said Kokoity. "It's proof that [Georgian President Mikheil] Saakashvili is panicky and afraid of dialogue with representatives of the South Ossetian nation, according to law." ²⁹²⁷.

July 3, 2007: Residents of Georgian villages in South Ossetia are blockading a road leading to Tskhinvali in a demand for the resumption of irrigation water supplies to their villages²⁹²⁸. South Ossetia cut off the water supply in early June as a response to Georgia's move to cut off drinking water supplies to Tskhinvali²⁹²⁹. Georgia restored the water supply in June but stated that South Ossetia had failed to do the same²⁹³⁰.

August 9, 2007: Georgia states that it has proof that an aircraft which entered Georgian airspace and dropped a guided missile near South Ossetia, was a Russian aircraft²⁹³¹. Georgia asked the UNSC to hold an emergency session regarding the incident²⁹³². Chief of the Russian Armed Forces General Staff General Yuri Baluyevsky however stated: "I'm convinced that it was a provocation by Georgia[...]a provocation against the Russian peacekeepers and Russia as a whole"²⁹³³. The reporting of a military aircraft entering the airspace at the stated time was also confirmed by international groups²⁹³⁴.

²⁹¹⁹ "Troops clash in Georgian province" *Aljazeera*, July 1, 2007, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2007/07/200852512917594277.html>

²⁹²⁰ Ibid

²⁹²¹ Ibid

²⁹²² Paul Rimple "South Ossetia power struggle simmers on" *Refworld*, July 31, 2007, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46c2fa32c&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

²⁹²³ Ibid

²⁹²⁴ Ibid

²⁹²⁵ Ibid

²⁹²⁶ Ibid

²⁹²⁷ Ibid

²⁹²⁸ Radio Free Europe "Georgian villagers blockade road to Ossetian capital" *Refworld*, July 3, 2007, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=469f5ba71e&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

²⁹²⁹ Ibid

²⁹³⁰ Ibid

²⁹³¹ Paul Rimple "Georgian rocket attack raises questions" *Refworld*, August 9, 2007, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=46c59a591a&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

²⁹³² Ibid

²⁹³³ Ibid

²⁹³⁴ Ibid

November 7, 2007: Russia's foreign ministry states that: "Georgian authorities undertook a hostile new attack against Russia. Speaking on national television, Mikhail Saakashvili delivered himself of a whole slew of accusations, mentioning both the old tired claims against our peacekeepers and the Russian spy scares. Something new also emerged: it turns out, the mass protests in Georgia are likewise the handiwork of Moscow. Thus the Georgian leadership continues carefully shaping an enemy image in the person of Russia. The reasons why they do so are clear. They must justify the obvious failures of the economic and social policy of the present government, the plight of the population, their unwillingness to constructively tackle the problems with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the authoritarianism of the country's leadership and, finally, the scorn for democratic freedoms, which found more than vivid expression in the latest events on the streets of Tbilisi."²⁹³⁵

November 8, 2007: Saakashvili declares a 15-day state of emergency following protests demanding his resignation²⁹³⁶. Security forces forcibly dispersed crowds in front of the parliament and took an opposition TV station off air²⁹³⁷. Saakashvili blamed Russia for the crisis stating that Russian security services had been behind the violent clashes, stating: "Georgia is facing a very serious threat of unrest. High-ranking officials in Russian special services are behind this[...] We cannot let our country become the stage for dirty geo-political escapades by other countries. Our democracy needs the firm hand of the authorities."²⁹³⁸. As a result, Georgia recalled its ambassador to Moscow and expelled three Russian embassy staff members²⁹³⁹. Meanwhile the Prime Minister stated: "An attempt to conduct a coup was made, and we had to react to that"²⁹⁴⁰. Russia stated that the claims of its involvement was "hysterical" and an "irresponsible provocation" and that the expulsion of diplomats would be met with an adequate response²⁹⁴¹. The opposition parties in Georgia denied Russia's involvement stating that it was peaceful demonstrators from Georgia²⁹⁴². The crisis was triggered following allegations by the former defense minister that Saakashvili was involved in corruption and had plotted the assassination of a prominent businessman²⁹⁴³.

November 21, 2007: On the withdrawal of Russian bases from Georgia, Russia stated: "Expressing grievances of all kinds against Russia has, alas, become an integral part of the policy of the current Georgian leadership. With their groundless, but noisy statements they in Tbilisi hope to conceal their own lack of constructiveness in relations with our country. How many propaganda lances were broken in recent years around the withdrawal of the Russian military bases (RMB) from Georgia, and what sins was Russia not being accused of! But now the withdrawal is over. It will be useful to find out who and how treated their respective obligations[...] Russian peacekeepers continue to serve in the Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian zones of conflict, protecting calm there. It is they who represent the chief obstacle for those who under cover of peaceable rhetoric continue preparing military adventures in Abkhazia and South Ossetia."²⁹⁴⁴

²⁹³⁵ Russia's Foreign Ministry "Statement by Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs" *Russia's Foreign Ministry*, November 7, 2007, https://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/maps/ge/-/asset_publisher/uwHHxf8KDaOY/content/id/358618

²⁹³⁶ Luke Harding "State of emergency in Georgia as street protests turn violent" *The Guardian*, November 8, 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/nov/08/russia.georgia>

²⁹³⁷ Ibid

²⁹³⁸ Ibid

²⁹³⁹ Ibid

²⁹⁴⁰ Ibid

²⁹⁴¹ Ibid

²⁹⁴² Ibid

²⁹⁴³ Ibid

²⁹⁴⁴ Russia's Foreign Ministry "Russian MFA Information and Press Department Commentary Regarding Completion of Withdrawal of Russian Bases from Georgia" *Russia's Foreign Ministry*, November 21, 2007,

2008

February 18, 2008: Kosovo declares independence from Serbia and countries such as U.S, France and Germany recognize the declaration²⁹⁴⁵. Russia on the other hand demanded an emergency meeting at the UNSC and stated that the declaration was “null and void”²⁹⁴⁶.

March 5, 2008: Following the Kosovo declaration, South Ossetia and Abkhazia demand international recognition for their independence²⁹⁴⁷. The South Ossetian parliament issued a declaration stating that "the Kosovo precedent presents a convincing argument" for recognition of South Ossetia's independence²⁹⁴⁸. Kokoity further stated: "Considering the precedent created by the arguments that served as basis for the declaration of Kosovo's independence, which was virtually created by the European Union -- it says that Kosovo should be recognized due to the impossibility of coexistence between Kosovo and Serbia within the same state[...]so we also want to announce that future coexistence between South Ossetia and Georgia within the same state is impossible."²⁹⁴⁹. Georgia dismissed South Ossetia's demand stating that: "the so-called South Ossetian parliament is not a legitimate body, and its declarations cannot have any consequences."²⁹⁵⁰. When asked about unification with Russia, Kokoity further stated: "It is necessary first to achieve -- in strict accordance to the norms of international law and today's realities -- our independence. We will aspire to this, and we will fight for this. Afterward, it will be up to the people of South Ossetia. No one should forget that we represent a small group of people, split into two. In order to protect our language and culture, we are obliged to consolidate all our forces."²⁹⁵¹.

March 11, 2008: Russia states that Abkhazia and South Ossetia will separate from Georgia if Georgia joins NATO: "This is why I think that if Nato accepts that Georgia takes part in the Membership Action Plan (Map), that this could provoke the secession of the two territories[...]This would be enough for the separatists to go through with secession[...]It is a very dangerous process because it could reheat the conflict. All this is of concern to us, because it's happening near our borders[...]Many citizens of the northern Caucasus have links with South Ossetia and Abkhazia."²⁹⁵². Elene Khoshtaria, Georgia's deputy minister for European and Euro-Atlantic integration, stated about Russia's statement that: "The statement[...]is nothing but an attempt to blackmail allied nations and Georgia. Georgia's Nato membership bid is not against Russia, it's about our dedication to the common values of democratic nations[...]I am confident that Nato member states will make a decision on Georgia's membership independently and that third-party blackmail cannot hamper this process."²⁹⁵³

https://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/foreign_policy/international_safety/conflicts/-/asset_publisher/xIEMTQ3OvzcA/content/id/356594

²⁹⁴⁵ Dan Bilefsky “Kosovo Declares Independence” *The New York Times*, November 7, 2008,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/18/world/europe/18kosovo.html?mtref=undefined&gwh=05C02B113199243932B7ABF7CDBBFBCA&gwt=pay&assetType=REGIWALL>

²⁹⁴⁶ Ibid

²⁹⁴⁷ Ian Bancroft “After Kosovo, the deluge” *The Guardian*, March 17, 2008,

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/mar/17/afterkosovothedeluge>

²⁹⁴⁸ “Georgia: South Ossetian Call For Recognition Cites 'Kosovo Precedent'” *RadioFreeEurope*, March 5, 2008,

<https://www.rferl.org/a/1079593.html>

²⁹⁴⁹ Ibid

²⁹⁵⁰ Ibid

²⁹⁵¹ Ibid

²⁹⁵² “Moscow warns Nato on Georgia” *Aljazeera*, March 11, 2008,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2008/03/2008525115654863895.html>

²⁹⁵³ Ibid

March 18, 2008: Georgia suggests a change in the JCC peace format which it has called "2+2+2."²⁹⁵⁴. The format would pair Georgia and the Provisional Administration of South Ossetia and be counterbalanced by Russia and the South Ossetian separatist leadership²⁹⁵⁵. The third tandem would comprise the OSCE and the EU²⁹⁵⁶. During a parliamentary hearing the Georgia's State Minister for Reintegration Temur Iakobashvili stated: "If our proposal is not supported, we will no longer work under the JCC format,"²⁹⁵⁷. Both Russia and South Ossetia have rejected the proposed changes with Russia stating that Georgia cannot withdraw from the JCC without renouncing the Sochi agreement²⁹⁵⁸.

April 3, 2008: At the summit in Bucharest, NATO welcomed Ukraine's and Georgia's aspirations for membership and agreed that they would eventually become members²⁹⁵⁹. NATO also agreed to engage in "intensive engagement" with the countries in order to address the outstanding matters regarding their membership action plan²⁹⁶⁰.

April 11, 2008: Russia's General Yuri Baluyevsky states that Russia will take military and other steps if Ukraine and Georgia join NATO: "Russia will take steps aimed at ensuring its interests along its borders[...]These will not only be military steps, but also steps of a different nature,"²⁹⁶¹. Maka Gigauri, spokeswoman for Georgia's foreign ministry, stated that Baluyevsky's comment was: "a demonstration of open aggression against Georgia[...]This is why we, Ukraine and Georgia, want to become NATO members. Such attempts by Russia to prevent Georgia and Ukraine from becoming NATO members will prompt an appropriate reaction from the leaders of NATO member states."²⁹⁶².

April 16, 2008: Putin orders the establishment of ties with the separatist administrations in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which Georgia stated was a violation of international law²⁹⁶³.

April 21, 2008: Georgia accuses Russia of shooting down a drone over Abkhazia²⁹⁶⁴ and Russia stated that Georgia had violated the cease-fire agreement by using drones to track developments in the separatist area²⁹⁶⁵.

April 29, 2008: Russia increases its number of peacekeepers near Abkhazia stating: "Georgia is increasing its group of forces in close vicinity to the conflict zones,"²⁹⁶⁶. There have been "threats to use military force and provocations on behalf of Georgian authorities[...]"Such developments of the situation prompted the

²⁹⁵⁴ Jean-Christophe Peuch "Georgia seeks to modify South Ossetian peace negotiation format" *Refworld*, March 18, 2008, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=47ea258028&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

²⁹⁵⁵ Ibid

²⁹⁵⁶ Ibid

²⁹⁵⁷ Ibid

²⁹⁵⁸ Ibid

²⁹⁵⁹ "NATO decisions on open-door policy" *NATO*, April 3, 2008, <https://www.nato.int/docu/update/2008/04-april/e0403h.html>

²⁹⁶⁰ Ibid

²⁹⁶¹ "Russia army vows steps if Georgia and Ukraine join NATO" *Reuters*, April 11, 2008, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-nato-steps-idUSL1143027920080411>

²⁹⁶² Ibid

²⁹⁶³ "TIMELINE: Georgia and Russia's worsening relations" *Reuters*, August 11, 2008, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-georgia-ossetia-russia/timeline-georgia-and-russias-worsening-relations-idUSHO05105720080811>

²⁹⁶⁴ "2008 Georgia Russia Conflict Fast Facts" *CNN*, Updated on April 1, 2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/03/13/world/europe/2008-georgia-russia-conflict/index.html>

²⁹⁶⁵ "Russia boosts troops on tense border" *CNN*, April 29, 2008, <https://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/europe/04/29/russia.georgia/index.html>

²⁹⁶⁶ Ibid

need to increase the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Armed Forces,"²⁹⁶⁷. It also states: "The Georgian side and some of our other partners claim that the Russian Federation President's April 16 instructions to the Government regarding protection of the rights and interests of the people of Abkhazia and South Ossetia run counter to the generally recognized principles and norms of international law and aim at "annexing" these regions. In this context we consider it necessary to give the following commentary[...]The measures announced by Russia for the protection of the interests of the residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are due to the special situation in these regions. It is characterized by the fact that in view of the unsettledness of the armed conflicts Georgia does not fully exercise its jurisdiction on their territories; control is exercised there by the de facto power entities. Furthermore, residents of these areas are essentially deprived of the possibility to realize the most elementary human rights at times. This situation has now been around for many years. Yet life goes on in Abkhazia and South Ossetia: people are born; enter into marriage; study; work; trade and so on. They have basic, fundamental rights without which a normal human life is impossible. In fact, the residents of the unrecognized republics have all these years been hostages to the inter-nationality conflicts, which – let us not forget it – broke out after the Tbilisi authorities abolished the autonomy of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and Georgian State Council troops marched on Sukhumi."²⁹⁶⁸.

May 19, 2008: Russia accuses Georgia of provocation stating: "The Georgian side has undertaken yet another provocation against members of the CIS Collective Peacekeeping Force (PKF). On May 18, on the outskirts of Zugdidi (the southern security zone of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict), about 20 masked Georgian security officers blocked the road and did not let an armed personnel carrier of peacekeepers through[...]It is abundantly clear that this was a preplanned hostile action of the Georgian authorities against PKF soldiers. Further, the participants of the Georgian "masks-show" behaved like real street bandits. Such precisely is the usual style of the provocative sallies regularly being organized by Tbilisi against peacekeepers in the conflict zones. Unfortunately, it has not changed throughout recent years[...]In a bid to discredit the Russian peacekeeping forces in Abkhazia and South Ossetia at all costs, the Georgian leadership stops at nothing"²⁹⁶⁹.

July 4, 2008: Russia accuses Georgia of attacking Tskhinvali with a mortar attack and states: "The fire from Georgian positions was being directed at residential quarters of the city; there are civilian casualties."²⁹⁷⁰. It also states that Georgia violated the conflict zones airspace stating: "The actions of Tbilisi show that an open act of aggression was committed against South Ossetia, an internationally recognized party in the conflict settlement efforts. It is also indicative that the Georgian side has refused to participate in a joint investigation of the incidents."²⁹⁷¹

July 9, 2008: Georgia reports that a Russian military aircraft entered Georgian airspace and Russia responded stating that the aircraft was sent to prevent an attempt by Georgian forces from entering South Ossetia to free four Georgian servicemen who were arrested by separatist law enforcement agents on July

²⁹⁶⁷ Ibid

²⁹⁶⁸ Russia's Foreign Ministry "Russian MFA Information and Press Department Commentary on Legal Aspects of Recent Russian Initiatives Regarding Abkhazia and South Ossetia" *Russia's Foreign Ministry*, April 29, 2008, https://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/foreign_policy/international_safety/conflicts/-/asset_publisher/xIEMTQ3OvzCA/content/id/340232

²⁹⁶⁹ Russia's Foreign Ministry "Russian MFA Information and Press Department Commentary Regarding New Georgian Provocation against Peacekeepers" *Russia's Foreign Ministry*, May 19, 2008, https://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/maps/ge/-/asset_publisher/uwHHxf8KDaOY/content/id/337588

²⁹⁷⁰ Russia's Foreign Ministry "Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation in Connection with Georgia's Provocative Actions in South Ossetia" *Russia's Foreign Ministry*, July 4, 2008, https://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/maps/ge/-/asset_publisher/uwHHxf8KDaOY/content/id/331523

²⁹⁷¹ Ibid

8²⁹⁷². Russia also stated the action was a way: "to cool off hot heads in Tbilisi and to prevent the situation from developing into a force scenario, the likelihood of which was more than realistic."²⁹⁷³.

July 11, 2008: Georgia recalls its ambassador to Russia for consultations after Russia announced that Russian military aircraft had flown over South Ossetia²⁹⁷⁴. Russia stated that it had received a warning from Russian peacekeeping forces that Georgia was considering sending in forces to rescue four of its servicemen held by separatists and stated that the flights were made to observe the situation and to send a message that "dampened the zeal of hotheads in Tbilisi."²⁹⁷⁵

July 26, 2008: An explosion occurs close to Tskhinvali with South Ossetia blaming it on a car bomb planted by Georgia, which Georgia denies²⁹⁷⁶.

August 1, 2008: Georgian troops and South Ossetian forces clash leading to six deaths²⁹⁷⁷.

August 2, 2008: South Ossetia accuses Georgia of opening fire on Tskhinvali with heavy weaponry killing three civilians²⁹⁷⁸. Kokoity stated to the alleged attack: "our response to Tbilisi's aggressive actions will be very tough and hard-hitting[...]. We reserve the right to strike Georgian cities. We have something that can reach them."²⁹⁷⁹. Shota Utiashvili, the Georgian interior ministry spokesman, denied the accusation that Georgia had fired first, stating: "The Ossetians opened fire, including with grenade launchers, and the Georgian side only returned fire."²⁹⁸⁰. He also stated that it was Georgian police and not military forces which had been involved in the clashes and denied that there were any snipers present in South Ossetia²⁹⁸¹.

August 5, 2008: Special ambassador Yuri Popov states that Russia will intervene if conflict breaks out in South Ossetia in order to protect its citizens living there, as stated: "If events develop according to the worst-case violence scenario, Russia will not allow itself to remain indifferent, considering that Russian citizens live in South Ossetia, particularly in the conflict zone[...]. I don't want to make any grim predictions, but if such events are repeated, the situation may spiral out of control and lead to sad consequences"²⁹⁸². "South Ossetia's separatist government accused Georgia on Friday of killing six people and injuring seven in an attack on the outlying village of Satikari"²⁹⁸³. South Ossetian and Georgian Officials are expected to meet in the next days²⁹⁸⁴.

²⁹⁷² Molly Corso "Georgia: President describes Russia as the "elephant in the room" in peace process" *Refworld*, July 10, 2008, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=487b1244c&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

²⁹⁷³ Ibid

²⁹⁷⁴ Anna Barnard "Georgia: Ambassador to Russia Recalled" *The New York Times*, July 11, 2008, https://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/11/world/europe/11briefs-AMBASSADORTO_BRF.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FSouth%20Ossetia&mtrref=undefined&gwh=F002433CBE8379AACE92F5FC648509D5&gwt=pay&assetType=REGIWALL

²⁹⁷⁵ Ibid

²⁹⁷⁶ "Deadly bomb blasts rock S Ossetia" *Aljazeera*, July 26, 2008,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2008/07/2008726073343869.html>

²⁹⁷⁷ University of Central Arkansas "38. Georgia/South Ossetia (1990-present), *University of Central Arkansas*

²⁹⁷⁸ "Deaths in South Ossetia fighting" *Aljazeera*, August 2, 2008,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2008/08/200881215132611918.html>

²⁹⁷⁹ Ibid

²⁹⁸⁰ Ibid

²⁹⁸¹ Ibid

²⁹⁸² "Russia vows to defend S Ossetia" *BBC*, August 5, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7543099.stm>

²⁹⁸³ Ibid

²⁹⁸⁴ Ibid

August 6, 2008: Georgia and Russia announce that the first bilateral talks will be held in South Ossetia, however South Ossetia rejects meeting with Georgia²⁹⁸⁵. Both sides accuse each other of opening fire in villages with South Ossetia stating that four Ossetian villages came under heavy fire throughout the day. Georgia stated that it had only returned fire after South Ossetia began shelling Georgian villages²⁹⁸⁶. Shota Utiashvili, a Georgian interior ministry spokesman stated: "The South Ossetian side is trying to create an illusion of serious escalation, an illusion of war, while in fact the situation is quite calm in the conflict zone,"²⁹⁸⁷. Meanwhile hundreds of women and children were evacuated from South Ossetia which South Ossetia states is a sign of preparation for a conflict²⁹⁸⁸. Georgia states that the children were being sent to summer camps²⁹⁸⁹.

August 7, 2008: Georgia launches a military offensive against South Ossetia²⁹⁹⁰. Reports state that volunteers from North Ossetia and Abkhazia are on their way to South Ossetia to assist the Ossetians²⁹⁹¹.

August 8, 2008: Russian tanks enter South Ossetia, rolling towards the capital of South Ossetia and Russian fighters bomb Georgian air bases²⁹⁹². A representative of the Russian force stated: "Now our peacekeepers are waging a fierce battle with regular forces from the Georgian army in the southern region of Tskhinvali,"²⁹⁹³. Putin declared: "War has started." And Georgia's ambassador to the OSCE stated: "If this is not war, then I wonder what it is." ²⁹⁹⁴. Russia and Georgia disagree on who started the conflict and Lavrov stated: "We are receiving reports that a policy of ethnic cleansing was being conducted in villages in South Ossetia, the number of refugees is climbing, the panic is growing, people are trying to save their lives,"²⁹⁹⁵. Georgia states that it will withdraw 1,000 soldiers from its military contingent of around 2,000 troops in Iraq to help in the fighting against South Ossetian separatist rebels and Georgia has asked the US to provide military aircraft to transport its troops²⁹⁹⁶. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated: "The United States calls for an immediate ceasefire to the armed conflict in Georgia's region of South Ossetia[...] We call on Russia to cease attacks on Georgia by aircraft and missiles, respect Georgia's territorial integrity, and withdraw its ground combat forces from Georgian soil," ²⁹⁹⁷.

August 9, 2008: A delegation of US, NATO and EU officials travel to Georgia in an effort to negotiate a ceasefire²⁹⁹⁸. Georgian states that it has fought off attacks by Abkhazian separatists, backed by Russian air

²⁹⁸⁵ "South Ossetia rejects peace talks" *Aljazeera*, August 6, 2008,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2008/08/200886171817421680.html>

²⁹⁸⁶ Ibid

²⁹⁸⁷ Ibid

²⁹⁸⁸ Ibid

²⁹⁸⁹ Ibid

²⁹⁹⁰ Shaun Walker "Georgia launches offensive in South Ossetia" *Independent*, August 8, 2008,

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/georgia-launches-offensive-in-south-ossetia-888287.html>

²⁹⁹¹ Ibid

²⁹⁹² Michael Schwartz, Anna Barnard and C. J. Chivers "Russia and Georgia clash over separatist region" *The New York Times*, August 8, 2008,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/09/world/europe/09georgia.html?mtrref=undefined&gwh=EAA5DD22EB675491A4496598C5C96B21&gwt=pay&assetType=REGIWALL>

²⁹⁹³ Adrian Blomfield "Georgia: Russia enters into 'war' in South Ossetia" *The Telegraph*, August 8, 2008,

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/georgia/2525400/Georgia-Russia-enters-into-war-in-South-Ossetia.html>

²⁹⁹⁴ Ibid

²⁹⁹⁵ Ibid

²⁹⁹⁶ Ibid

²⁹⁹⁷ Ibid

²⁹⁹⁸ Angus McDowall "Georgia: Western delegation in Tbilisi to negotiate ceasefire" *The Telegraph*, August 9,

2008, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/georgia/2530135/Georgia-Western-delegation-in-Tbilisi-to-negotiate-ceasefire.html>

raids, and that Russian forces invaded the Georgian province of Abkhazia hours after taking control of most of South Ossetia²⁹⁹⁹. The Georgian parliament formalized the move to war footing and Saakashvili stated that Russia had been planning the assault for months and compared the Russian act with Stalin's invasion of Finland in 1939 and said "the entire post-Cold War order of Europe and the world is at stake"³⁰⁰⁰. Saakashvili also stated that Russia was conducting ethnic cleansing of Georgians in Ossetia and Abkhazia's Kodoro Gorge region³⁰⁰¹. During the last two days the UNSC has failed in convening an emergency meeting³⁰⁰². There are reports of high numbers of casualties on all sides with Sssetian separatists stating that Georgian shelling had killed more than 1,600 people and Georgia stating that Russian air raids had killed many civilians³⁰⁰³. As stated by Saakashvili: "Hours ago Russia's Black Sea fleet started to move to Gerogia's territory in Abkhazia[...]. Russian troops and heavy equipment are in upper Abkhazia." ³⁰⁰⁴. Georgia also stated that it would offer an "immediate ceasefire and called for the disengagement of all forces and the demilitarisation of every area where there is friction"³⁰⁰⁵. Moscow announced that "it would send reinforcements into South Ossetia and President Dmitry Medvedev has pledged to "force the Georgian side to peace[...]. Our peacekeepers and reinforcement units are currently running an operation[...]. They are also responsible for protecting the population. That's what we are doing now"³⁰⁰⁶. A Russian infantry officer also said that "units of the 58th army had arrived in Tskhinvali overnight and would seek to "establish peace"" and that ""special units" would arrive "in the next few hours""³⁰⁰⁷.

Russia carries out bombing raids across Georgia with Putin stating: "The actions of the Georgian authorities in South Ossetia are of course a crime, and above all it's a crime against their own people[...]. That's because a mortal blow has been dealt to the territorial integrity of Georgia itself. "Therefore huge damage has been inflicted on its statehood. It's hard to imagine how South Ossetia can be convinced to be a part of the Georgian state. "From a legal point of view our actions are absolutely justified and legitimate, moreover they are necessary in line with existing international agreements[...]. Russia is not only carrying out peacekeeping tasks but is also obliged if one of the sides violates a cease-fire agreement, to protect the other side."³⁰⁰⁸. Russia also states that it wants Georgia to withdraw its forces to the position they had prior to the conflict³⁰⁰⁹. Georgia declares the country to be in a state of war and approved martial law with Saakashvili stating: "We appeal to our friends and allies to call on Russia to cease hostilities immediately. Georgia is a peace-loving nation, but today we are being attacked north to south, east to west[...]. Russian troops, Russian tanks that moved into South Ossetia, on their way expelled the whole ethnically Georgian population of South Ossetia[...]. They've committed, as of this morning, ethnic cleansing in all areas they control in South Ossetia[...]. Russian forces have been specifically targeting civilian quarters. They specifically attacked and blew up the whole civilian quarter in the town of Gori, far away from the place where the conflict area is and where direct friction between forces is[...]. They attacked civilian installations in the western part of Georgia. They've attacked residential quarters all around the country. They've attacked civilian hospitals. And most of the casualties are among civilians."³⁰¹⁰. At the UN the UNSC failed to issue a statement calling for a ceasefire with Russia's UN ambassador, Vitaly Churkin, stating that Georgia was deliberately

²⁹⁹⁹ Ibid

³⁰⁰⁰ Ibid

³⁰⁰¹ Ibid

³⁰⁰² Ibid

³⁰⁰³ Ibid

³⁰⁰⁴ Ibid

³⁰⁰⁵ Ibid

³⁰⁰⁶ Ibid

³⁰⁰⁷ Ibid

³⁰⁰⁸ "Smith calls for ceasefire in bloody South Ossetia conflict" *ABC News*, August 10, 2008, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2008-08-10/smith-calls-for-ceasefire-in-bloody-south-ossetia/470320>

³⁰⁰⁹ Ibid

³⁰¹⁰ "South Ossetia Fighting Rages As Talk Turns To War" *RadioFreeEurope*, August 9, 2008, https://www.rferl.org/a/South_Ossetia_Fighting_Rages_As_Talk_Turns_To_War/1189803.html

targeting Russian peacekeepers in South Ossetia and that Georgia was entirely to blame for the escalation and was continuing "its treacherous attacks" on South Ossetia "with the connivance of a number of Security Council members."³⁰¹¹. He also stated: "Russia will not pull out[...]. In order for us to withdraw we have to make sure there won't be genocide there. This is a grave matter."³⁰¹²

August 10, 2008: Georgia states that it has ordered a ceasefire and offered peace talks with Russia but Russia states that the exchange of fire has yet to stop and Russia also continued to bomb targets near Tbilisi³⁰¹³. Meanwhile in Abkhazia the separatist government announced that it had ordered a military operation to clear Georgian forces out of Abkhazia's Kodori Gorge³⁰¹⁴.

August 11, 2008: Abkhazian separatists and Russian air-force launch an attack against Georgian forces in Abkhazia and Russia allegedly lands 4000 troops in the area³⁰¹⁵. Georgia stated that the operation was orchestrated by Russia with Georgia's parliamentary speaker, David Bakradze, stating that he has "irrefutable proof" that the Russian military was masterminding the "plan" and that "The enemy will be offered all resistance."³⁰¹⁶. Russia stated that it did not wish to escalate the conflict and that: "We do not intend to take the initiative in escalating the conflict in this region. We are primarily interested in stabilisation there"³⁰¹⁷.

August 12, 2008: Georgia and Russia agree to a ceasefire agreement which requires the immediate withdrawal of Russian forces from Georgian territory³⁰¹⁸. Meanwhile Russia calls on Georgia to agree to "abjure all use of force in his country in any attempt to resolve the territorial disputes with the two breakaway pro-Russian provinces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia; and that Georgian forces withdraw entirely from South Ossetia and are no longer part of the joint "peacekeeping" contingent there with Russian and local Ossetian forces"³⁰¹⁹. Russia also "insisted that the populations of the two breakaway regions had to be allowed to vote on whether they wanted to join Russia"³⁰²⁰. Russia also declared that Georgians would not return to South Ossetia as peacekeepers (which they have jointly been together with Russia for 15 years) with Dmitri Rogozin, Russia's ambassador to NATO in Brussels stating: "They shot their brother Russian peacekeepers, then they finished them off with bayonets, so we are not going to see them there any more,"³⁰²¹. In a speech alongside the French President, Medvedev stated that Georgia had killed civilians and lied, stating: "You know, lunatics' difference from other people is that when they smell blood it is very difficult to stop them[...]. As for claims by the Georgian president that the ceasefire has been observed for two days, that's a lie. Georgian forces continued to fire at peacekeeper[...]. It's strange when someone who's killed thousands of people is characterised as a terrorist and bastard, while another is presented as legally elected

³⁰¹¹ "Security Council Postpones Agreement on South Ossetia" *DW*, August 9, 2008,

<https://www.dw.com/en/security-council-postpones-agreement-on-south-ossetia/a-3549096>

³⁰¹² "UN Security Council Remains Deadlocked Over South Ossetia" *DW*, August 9, 2008,

<https://www.dw.com/en/un-security-council-remains-deadlocked-over-south-ossetia/a-3550565>

³⁰¹³ "Georgia 'calls Ossetia ceasefire'" *BBC*, August 10, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7552659.stm>

³⁰¹⁴ *Ibid*

³⁰¹⁵ Luke Harding "Abkhazia: Moscow sends troops into second enclave" *The Guardian*, August 11, 2008,

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/11/georgia.russia>

³⁰¹⁶ *Ibid*

³⁰¹⁷ *Ibid*

³⁰¹⁸ "Georgia signs cease-fire with Russia" *CNN*, August 15, 2008,

<https://edition.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/08/15/us.russia/index.html>

³⁰¹⁹ Ian Traynor and Luke Harding "Surrender or else, Russia tells Georgia" *The Guardian*, August 12, 2008,

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/12/russia.georgia>

³⁰²⁰ *Ibid*

³⁰²¹ *Ibid*

president of a sovereign state,"³⁰²². Medvedev also stated at a meeting with defense officials: "I have taken the decision to end the operation to force Georgian authorities into peace[...]The purpose of the operation has been achieved[...]The security of our peacekeeping forces and the civilian population has been restored[...]The aggressor has been punished and suffered significant losses."³⁰²³. Temur Yakobashvili, Georgia's reintegration minister, stated: "The Russians have halted their advance. There is no movement of Russian forces, but they are staying at their occupied positions,"³⁰²⁴

August 13, 2008: The EU announces a plan to send EU peacekeepers to South Ossetia in order to help enforce the ceasefire³⁰²⁵. The OSCE also announced that it would increase its numbers of monitors from 200 to 300 to help with the monitoring of the ceasefire³⁰²⁶. Georgia reports continued Russian bombing and Medvedev described Saakashvili as a "lunatic": "You know, lunatics' difference from other people is that when they smell blood it is very difficult to stop them. So you have to use surgery"³⁰²⁷. A rally in Georgia in support of the war denounced Russia's aggression and referred to Putin as a terrorist with Saakashvili stating to the crowd: "I promise you today, that I'll remind them of everything they have done and one day we will win"³⁰²⁸. Meanwhile, Kakha Lomaia, the secretary of Georgia's Security Council, states that: "Today, Georgian ambassador to the Netherlands filed a law suit to the International Court of Justice[...]because of ethnic cleansing conducted in Georgia by Russia in 1993 to 2008,"³⁰²⁹. Meanwhile, Human Rights Watch states that Russia is exaggerating the number of people killed in the conflict stating: "The figure of 2,000 people killed is very doubtful[...]Our findings so far do not in any way confirm the Russian statistics. On the contrary, they suggest the numbers are exaggerated."³⁰³⁰. HRW also stated that the burning and looting of Georgian villages was reported stating: "The torching of houses in these villages is in some ways a result of the massive Russia propaganda machine which constantly repeats claims of genocide and exaggerates the scale of casualties[...]That is then used to justify retribution."³⁰³¹

August 14, 2008: The US and the EU demand that any settlement of the conflict to be based on the territorial integrity of Georgia³⁰³². Russia however rejected those terms stating: "We recognise the sovereignty of Georgia[...]but territorial integrity, it's another matter[...]South Ossetia and Abkhazia never were part of Georgia as an independent country."³⁰³³. Meanwhile aid from the US arrived in Georgia and the EU foreign ministers held an emergency session on the crisis where France's foreign minister, Bernard Kouchner, stated that the deal he and President Nicolas Sarkozy had mediated was "partially unsatisfactory"³⁰³⁴.

August 15, 2008: Russia states in response to criticism against its actions: 'If someone continues to attack our citizens, our peacekeepers, then of course we will answer just as we did[...]Russia, as guarantor of

³⁰²² "Russia's Medvedev strikes a tough tone" *Reuters*, August 12, 2008, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-georgia-ossetia-leader/russias-medvedev-strikes-a-tough-tone-idUKLC60503920080812>

³⁰²³ "Russia 'ends Georgia conflict'" *Aljazeera*, August 12, 2008, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2008/08/20088129113899870.html>

³⁰²⁴ Ibid

³⁰²⁵ Rosalind Ryan "EU may send peacekeepers to enforce ceasefire in South Ossetia" *The Guardian*, August 13, 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/13/georgia.russia8>

³⁰²⁶ Ibid

³⁰²⁷ "Georgia claims fighting continues" *Aljazeera*, August 13, 2008, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2008/08/2008812152116928720.html>

³⁰²⁸ Ibid

³⁰²⁹ Ibid

³⁰³⁰ Tom Parfitt "Russia exaggerating South Ossetian death toll, says human rights group" *The Guardian*, August 13, 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/13/georgia>

³⁰³¹ Ibid

³⁰³² Ian Traynor "Moscow rejects west's call to preserve Georgia borders as US aid flights begin" *The Guardian*, August 14, 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/14/georgia.russia2>

³⁰³³ Ibid

³⁰³⁴ Ibid

security in the Caucasus and the region, will make the decision which unambiguously supports the will of these two Caucasus peoples[...]Unfortunately after what has happened it is unlikely Ossetians and Abkhaz can live in one state with Georgians,³⁰³⁵. Saakashvili however stated that NATO's decision to admit Georgia as a member encouraged Russia to build up forces and attack Georgia, as he further stated: "Who invited the trouble here?" he asked. "Who invited this arrogance here? Who invited the innocent deaths here? Not only those people who perpetrated this are responsible, but also those people who failed to stop it."³⁰³⁶. The US announced that it and its allies were considering kicking Russia out from the Group of 8 due to its actions in Georgia³⁰³⁷.

August 16, 2008: Angela Merkel meets with President Medvedev close to Georgian borders where she stated that: "Some of Russia's actions were not proportionate," and that "It is rare that all the blame is on one side. In fact, both sides are probably to blame. That is very important to understand"³⁰³⁸. The Condoleezza Rice, the US secretary of state went to Georgia where she denounced Russian "bullying and intimidation" as "unacceptable" and further stated that the events would have: "profound implications for Russia[...]This calls into question what role Russia really plans to play in international politics[...]You can't be a responsible member of institutions which are democratic and underscore democratic values and on the other hand act in this way against one of your neighbours."³⁰³⁹. Meanwhile Russia announces that it is skeptical of an international peacekeeping mission with Medvedev stating: "We are not against international peacekeepers[...]But the problem is that the Abkhazians and the Ossetians do not trust anyone except Russian peacekeepers."³⁰⁴⁰.

August 18, 2008: More than 130 civilian Georgians are held captive in South Ossetia's capital in the interior ministry's headquarters³⁰⁴¹. The civilians were taken from the streets in accordance to their nationality during the war³⁰⁴². An Ossetian interior minister stated that the hope was to use the civilians as exchange for Ossetian civilians allegedly abducted by Georgia³⁰⁴³. Georgia stated about the situation and the hostages held in South Ossetia: "We know about them[...]They want to exchange them for our hostages. The problem is we don't have any hostages so we can't do any exchange."³⁰⁴⁴. Ossetia responded: "We estimate 500 Ossetian civilians were kidnapped and taken away by Georgian forces from the south of Tskhinvali,"³⁰⁴⁵.

August 19, 2008: The OSCE increases its number of Monitors in to 100 with an extra 20 unarmed military monitoring officers deployed to South Ossetia³⁰⁴⁶.

³⁰³⁵ "Georgian President signs ceasefire" *RTE*, August 15, 2008, <https://www.rte.ie/news/2008/0815/106980-georgia/>

³⁰³⁶ "Georgia signs cease-fire with Russia" *CNN*, August 15, 2008, <https://edition.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/08/15/us.russia/index.html>

³⁰³⁷ Ibid

³⁰³⁸ Ian Traynor, Luke Harding and Helen Womack "Moscow warns it could strike Poland over US missile shield" *The Guardian*, August 16, 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/15/russia.poland.nuclear.missiles.threat>

³⁰³⁹ Ibid

³⁰⁴⁰ Ibid

³⁰⁴¹ Tom Parfitt "South Ossetia holds civilian Georgians hostage" *The Guardian*, August 18, 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/18/georgia.russia>

³⁰⁴² Ibid

³⁰⁴³ Ibid

³⁰⁴⁴ Ibid

³⁰⁴⁵ Ibid

³⁰⁴⁶ "Conflict resolution" *OSCE*, Retrieved on December 6, 2019, <https://www.osce.org/georgia-closed/45509>

August 23, 2008: Russia states that it has withdrawn its troops from Georgia, which is denied by the Pentagon which states that Russian soldiers are digging trenches near Georgia's main Black Sea port of Poti³⁰⁴⁷. Russia states it has set up checkpoints in a "security zone"³⁰⁴⁸. Georgia accused Russia of lying with Shota Utiashvili, Georgia's interior ministry spokesman stating: "It is not true that the withdrawal is complete[...]They cannot stay in Senaki and Poti. Their presence there is illegal,"³⁰⁴⁹. Russia also announced that 500 peacekeepers would remain in a buffer zone around South Ossetia³⁰⁵⁰.

August 25, 2008: Medvedev and Putin state that they see no problem in being locked out from NATO and the WTO with Putin stating: "We don't feel or see any advantages from membership, if they exist at all"³⁰⁵¹. Meanwhile Georgia is urging the EU to commit to "fully fledged peace-keeping operations" with Salome Samadashvili, Georgia's Ambassador to the EU, stating: "So far the EU has been very fearful. We hope the meeting [on Monday][...]will end with real proposals for the EU to take a leading role in the peace process...The first thing is to get Russian troops off our soil. The second is a peace process lead by the EU."³⁰⁵². Medvedev also issued a warning to the president of Moldova stating: "After the Georgian leadership lost their marbles, as they say, all the problems got worse and a military conflict erupted[...]This is a serious warning, a warning to all - and I believe we should handle other existing conflicts within this context."³⁰⁵³.

August 26, 2008: Russia announces that it recognizes South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states³⁰⁵⁴. Medvedev called on other countries to do the same and stated that it "was not an easy choice, but it is the only possibility to save the lives of the people."³⁰⁵⁵. Medvedev also stated that Russia had been obliged to act because of Georgia's "genocide" of separatists and that Russia felt obliged to recognise South Ossetia and Abkhazia as other countries had done with Kosovo earlier this year³⁰⁵⁶. He also stated: "The most important thing was to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe to save the lives of people for whom we are responsible, because most of them they are Russian citizens," he said. "So we had to take a decision recognising the two states as independent."³⁰⁵⁷. Georgia's President Mikhail Saakashvili accused Russia of trying to: "break the Georgian state, undermine the fundamental values of Georgia, and to wipe Georgia from the map[...]Today's step by Russia is completely illegal and will have no legal basis, neither for Georgia nor for the rest of the world,"³⁰⁵⁸. Saakashvili also stated that the announcement was: "the first attempt in Europe after Nazi Germany and the Stalinist Soviet Union to[...]change the borders of Europe by force" and "a blatant attempt to legalise the results of ethnic cleansing [which] Russian troops are continuing to commit, right now as we speak, and that have been committed during the last several years"³⁰⁵⁹. He also stated that Russia troops were "throwing out the remaining population, destroying the villages, killing and raping and looting people" in the areas and that: "This is 21st century brutal invasion, and 21st

³⁰⁴⁷ "Russia claims pullout is complete" *Aljazeera*, August 23, 2008,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2008/08/2008822162921226385.html>

³⁰⁴⁸ Ibid

³⁰⁴⁹ Ibid

³⁰⁵⁰ Ibid

³⁰⁵¹ Adrian Blomfield and Bruno Waterfield "Russia mocks West's displeasure over war in Georgia" August 25, 2008, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/georgia/2620637/Russia-mocks-Wests-displeasure-over-war-in-Georgia.html>

³⁰⁵² Ibid

³⁰⁵³ Ibid

³⁰⁵⁴ "Russia Recognizes Abkhazia, South Ossetia" *RadioFreeEurope*, August 26, 2008,

https://www.rferl.org/a/Russia_Recognizes_Abkhazia_South_Ossetia/1193932.html

³⁰⁵⁵ Ibid

³⁰⁵⁶ "West condemns Russia over Georgia" *BBC*, August 26, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7583164.stm>

³⁰⁵⁷ Ibid

³⁰⁵⁸ Ibid

³⁰⁵⁹ Ibid

century large-scale ethnic cleansing," he said. "How can the world allow them to get away with this?"³⁰⁶⁰. Meanwhile there were scenes of jubilation in South Ossetia where the announcement was welcomed and the South Ossetia leader stated that he would ask Russia to set up a military base in South Ossetia³⁰⁶¹. The US condemned the act and stated: "We expect Russia to live up to its international commitments, reconsider this irresponsible decision, and follow the approach set out in the six-point [cease-fire] agreement[...]Russia's action only exacerbates tensions and complicates diplomatic negotiations. In accordance with United Nations Security Council resolutions that remain in force, Abkhazia and South Ossetia are within the internationally recognized borders of Georgia, and they must remain so."³⁰⁶². UK stated that Russia recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia is "unjustifiable and unacceptable" and urges Russia to "abide by international law as the basis for resolving this crisis"³⁰⁶³. Meanwhile Georgia accuses Russia of moving its artillery closer to Tbilisi with Saakashvili stating: "They are trying to take the heights of Akhagori[...]This is the most worrying thing at the moment. They would be within 20km of Tbilisi. "We are in a very precarious situation[...]Some people in the West have been in denial for a long time[...]Now there can be no more denial. "The West has to show that this will cost them - really cost them. You are dealing with bullies here and bullies do not understand the tender message."³⁰⁶⁴,³⁰⁶⁵.

August 28, 2008: According to the HRW, recent satellite images confirm the widespread burning of Georgian villages inside South Ossetia³⁰⁶⁶. As stated by HRW: "Human Rights Watch researchers personally witnessed Ossetian militias looting and burning down ethnic Georgian villages during their research in the area[...]These satellite images indicate just how widespread the torching of these villages has been in the last two weeks."³⁰⁶⁷. Meanwhile the EU meet at an emergency meeting where they amongst other discuss the possibility of economic sanctions against Russia³⁰⁶⁸.

August 29, 2008: Georgia announces that it will break diplomatic ties with Russia³⁰⁶⁹. Russia responded saying: "The possible end of diplomatic relations with Georgia is not the choice of Moscow, and Tbilisi will have to bear the entire responsibility,"³⁰⁷⁰

August 30, 2008: Georgia states that it will tighten visa requirements for Russian citizens, stating that they will no longer be granted visas at the border³⁰⁷¹.

³⁰⁶⁰ Ibid

³⁰⁶¹ Ibid

³⁰⁶² "Russia Recognizes Abkhazia, South Ossetia" *RadioFreeEurope*

³⁰⁶³ "UK urges Russia to 'abide by law'" *BBC*, August 26, 2008,

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/7582509.stm

³⁰⁶⁴ Adrian Blomfield "Georgia president claims Russians are now within artillery range of Tbilisi" *The Telegraph*, August 26, 2008, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/georgia/2625402/Georgia-president-claims-Russians-are-now-within-artillery-range-of-Tbilisi.html>

³⁰⁶⁵ "Medvedev's Statement on South Ossetia and Abkhazia" *The New York Times*, August 26, 2008,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/27/world/europe/27medvedev.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FSouth%20Ossetia&mtref=undefined&gwh=63A99F582BFF2D090998CDEA4F391FE7&gwt=pay&assetType=REGIWALL>

³⁰⁶⁶ Human Rights Watch "Georgia: Satellite Images Show Destruction, Ethnic Attacks" *Refworld*, August 28, 2008,

<https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=48b7a0fb3&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

³⁰⁶⁷ Ibid

³⁰⁶⁸ Mark Tran, Julian Borger and Ian Traynor "EU threatens sanctions against Russia" *The Guardian*, August 28, 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/28/eu.russia>

³⁰⁶⁹ "Georgia breaks ties with Russia" *BBC*, August 29, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7588428.stm>

³⁰⁷⁰ Ibid

³⁰⁷¹ "Georgia tightens visa regime for Russian citizens" *Reuters*, August 30, 2008,

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-georgia-ossetia-russia-visa/georgia-tightens-visa-regime-for-russian-citizens-idUSLU72444020080830>

September 1, 2008: Medvedev announces that Russia will send military aid to South Ossetia and Abkhazia and Georgia asked the EU to impose sanctions on those doing business with the breakaway regions and to send a civilian mission to monitor the buffer zone³⁰⁷².

September 4, 2008: Nicaragua recognizes the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, criticizing Georgia for attempting to regain control of the areas³⁰⁷³.

September 8, 2008: France's president negotiates another deal which envisions the deployment of EU observers to Georgia by October and the withdrawal of Russian troops inside Georgia³⁰⁷⁴. Medvedev state that Russia's "withdrawal of forces depended on Georgia's signing a "non-aggression pact" with South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Medvedev said Russia would continue to provide "military assistance" to the breakaway provinces"³⁰⁷⁵. The deal also states the need for international discussions³⁰⁷⁶. Medvedev stated that the international discussion would focus on: • Stability and security in the region; • Return of refugees based on the internationally recognized principles and practice of post-conflict settlement; • Other issues for discussion should be mutually agreed between the sides³⁰⁷⁷

September 9, 2008: Russia announces that its troops will stay in South Ossetia and Abkhazia for a long time to come as a necessity to avert Georgian attempts to regain control of the areas³⁰⁷⁸. Russia will sign formal agreement with the two areas³⁰⁷⁹. Yesterday Mikhail Saakashvili, reiterated Georgia claim to the areas stating that the Russians: "should get the hell out of the territories they control".³⁰⁸⁰ According to Russia media, Russia plans to establish diplomatic relations with South Ossetia and Abkhazia³⁰⁸¹.

September 10, 2008: Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov accuses the US of encouraging Georgia to start a war in the South Caucasus in order to test Russian resolve³⁰⁸².

September 15, 2008: The EU establishes the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM-Georgia) with the purpose of to ensuring that there is no return to hostilities; facilitating the resumption of a safe and normal life for the local communities living on both sides of the Administrative Boundary Lines (ABL) with; to build confidence among the conflict parties; to inform EU policy in Georgia and the wider region³⁰⁸³.

³⁰⁷² "Russia vows aid for separatists" *Aljazeera*, September 1, 2008,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2008/08/200883120037291803.html>

³⁰⁷³ "Nicaragua recognizes independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia" *The New York Times*, September 4, 2008,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/04/world/americas/04iht-georgia.4.15904253.html?mtref=undefined&gwh=8FEC4E3D86AB9F63F5859AA85E61B3C1&gwt=pay&assetType=REGIWALL>

³⁰⁷⁴ Luke Harding and Jenny Percival "Russian troops to stay in Abkhazia and South Ossetia" *The Guardian*, September 9, 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/sep/09/georgia.russia>

³⁰⁷⁵ Ibid

³⁰⁷⁶ "New Agreement in Force" *Old Civil*, September 8, 2008, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=19435>

³⁰⁷⁷ Ibid

³⁰⁷⁸ Harding and Percival "Russian troops to stay in Abkhazia and South Ossetia" *The Guardian*

³⁰⁷⁹ Ibid

³⁰⁸⁰ Ibid

³⁰⁸¹ Ibid

³⁰⁸² Bridget Kendall "US 'provoked Russia-Georgia war'" *BBC*, September 10, 2008,

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7609557.stm>

³⁰⁸³ EUMM "Our Mandate" *EUMM*, Retrieved on December 6, 2019, https://eumm.eu/en/about_eumm/mandate

September 23, 2008: Georgia shoots down a Russian drone in an area near South Ossetia, which is due to be patrolled by EU observers³⁰⁸⁴. Georgia states that the drone was spying on Georgian troops and the country's oil pipeline³⁰⁸⁵. Russia dismissed the claim as a "provocation"³⁰⁸⁶. 200 EU observers are to be deployed in the next week as part of the ceasefire agreement however Russia is refusing to allow the deployment of observers inside South Ossetia and Abkhazia and states that it intends to station 8000 troops in the two separatist areas³⁰⁸⁷. The EU states that Russia's intention to station troops in the areas is a breach of the ceasefire agreement³⁰⁸⁸. The EU also stated: "Russia has to understand that its near-abroad policy is no longer in place. At the same time, we are saying to the Georgians that they have to be respectful to their neighbours." ³⁰⁸⁹.

September 30, 2008: Human Rights Watch accuses South Ossetian troops of systematically destroying and burning down Georgian villages in South Ossetia³⁰⁹⁰. The secretary of Georgia's National Security Council states that South Ossetian separatists are trying to change the ethnic makeup of the area and stated: "We are dealing with classic case of ethnic cleansing. Not only is a specific ethnic group, in this case Georgians, being driven out from a specific territory, but their homes are being destroyed afterward in order to make it difficult, or even impossible, for them to return," ³⁰⁹¹. According to refworld, South Ossetian leadership do not denying the occurrence of this but rather South Ossetian President Eduard Kokoity has stated that Georgians will not be able to return to the area because their homes have been burnt down³⁰⁹². He allegedly also stated that Ossetians were not allowed to return to Georgia in the beginning of 1990³⁰⁹³. Human Rights Watch also accused South Ossetia of amongst other forced labor and torture stating: "We have learned that hundreds of civilians from Georgia were detained in holding cells in South Ossetia. These included women and the elderly[...]We know that these people were held in inhuman conditions, crammed together in one space. They were practically not fed. They were forced to work. They cleaned streets. The men were forced to bury the corpses of Georgian soldiers." ³⁰⁹⁴. Meanwhile, the EU prepares the deployment of 200 civilian monitors throughout Georgia³⁰⁹⁵. Russia stated that it would not allow the mission to work in the buffer zone. This was criticized by Georgia who stated: "We feel sad that we have a neighbor which doesn't respect international law, doesn't respect its neighbors' sovereignty and doesn't respect its own commitments,"³⁰⁹⁶. The OSCE earlier walked out on talks with Russia on the matter of access to the mission³⁰⁹⁷. Then Lavrov stated that the European negotiators had made an "absolutely unscrupulous attempt" to appease Georgia by suggesting that they would be able to patrol South Ossetia itself³⁰⁹⁸.

³⁰⁸⁴ Luke Harding "Georgia downs Russian spy plane near South Ossetia" *The Guardian*, September 23, 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/sep/23/georgia.russia>

³⁰⁸⁵ Ibid

³⁰⁸⁶ Ibid

³⁰⁸⁷ Ibid

³⁰⁸⁸ Ibid

³⁰⁸⁹ Ibid

³⁰⁹⁰ Radio Free Europe "Rights Groups Say South Ossetian Militias Burning Georgian Villages" *Refworld*, September 30, 2008, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=48e3743a2&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

³⁰⁹¹ Ibid

³⁰⁹² Ibid

³⁰⁹³ Ibid

³⁰⁹⁴ Ibid

³⁰⁹⁵ Ellen Barry "Europeans set to deploy monitors in Georgia", *The New York Times*, September 30, 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/01/world/europe/01georgia.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FSouth%20Ossetia&mtref=undefined&gwh=2E745C08298F176D36CC55A65AE1A8A7&gwt=pay&assetType=REGIWALL>

³⁰⁹⁶ Ibid

³⁰⁹⁷ Ibid

³⁰⁹⁸ Ibid

October 1, 2008: The EU mission begins with the spokesperson of the mission stating: "The teams are now patrolling the areas and making their first contacts. They will report back to headquarters throughout the day."³⁰⁹⁹. Javier Solana, the EU's head of foreign policy, stated that Russia was expected to adhere to the EU peace plan and evacuate its forces from Georgia by the October 10 deadline: "I am optimistic that all the parties will comply, as we have done, to the terms of the agreement[...]The objective of this mission is to allow Russian forces to withdraw."³¹⁰⁰

October 2, 2008: Merkel visits Russia in an attempt to ease tensions between Russia and the west following the war in Georgia³¹⁰¹. Meanwhile EU observes start patrolling in Georgia and inside the buffer-zone next to South Ossetia³¹⁰². The UNHCR states that the refugee situation would be resolved if Russian troops leave stating: "Ninety per cent are from the buffer zone. As soon as the Russians withdraw we expect the vast majority to go back[...]The mere presence of EU monitors helps. It gives the impression that the international community is here."³¹⁰³.

October 4, 2008: A car bomb kills seven Russian troops in South Ossetia³¹⁰⁴. Russia states that Georgia "deliberately planned terrorist attack" that the incident was meant to derail the EU-brokered ceasefire deal³¹⁰⁵. Georgia responded saying that "Russian intelligence agencies had plotted the attack outside the headquarters of Russian peacekeeping forces inside the breakaway republic as a pretext for Moscow to keep its troops inside the country"³¹⁰⁶. As Georgia stated: "If provocations and tensions are in the interest of anyone, it's the Russians[...]They are doing everything not to pull out troops within the set term."³¹⁰⁷. According to Russia, Russian troops detained two cars in the ethnic Georgian village of Ditsa and stated: "The cars and the detained people were escorted to Tskhinvali. During the search of one of the cars, an explosive device equivalent to some 20kg of TNT went off,"³¹⁰⁸. Russia checks all vehicles entering the separatist area at a series of checkpoints³¹⁰⁹. South Ossetia's president stated: "The latest terrorist acts in South Ossetia prove that Georgia has not abandoned its policy of state terrorism[...]These actions undermine the efforts of the international community to stabilise the situation in the region and torpedo the Medvedev-Sarkozy peace plan."³¹¹⁰.

October 5, 2008: Shota Utiashvili, the spokesman for the Georgian interior ministry, confirmed the removal of the checkpoint, where 20 to 30 Russian soldiers had been deployed stating: "It looks like the start of the withdrawal[...]Georgian police are moving into the area immediately."³¹¹¹.

³⁰⁹⁹ "EU observers begin Georgia mission" *Aljazeera*, October 1, 2008,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2008/10/200810175751828280.html>

³¹⁰⁰ Ibid

³¹⁰¹ "US dominance is over' – Medvedev" *BBC*, October 2, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7647729.stm>

³¹⁰² Luke Harding "EU monitors begin patrols of Russian-held zone in Georgia" *The Guardian*, October 2, 2008,

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/oct/02/georgia.russia>

³¹⁰³ Ibid

³¹⁰⁴ Luke Harding "Car bomb kills Russian troops in South Ossetia" *The Guardian*, October 4, 2008,

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/oct/04/georgia.russia>

³¹⁰⁵ Ibid

³¹⁰⁶ Ibid

³¹⁰⁷ Ibid

³¹⁰⁸ Ibid

³¹⁰⁹ Ibid

³¹¹⁰ Ibid

³¹¹¹ "Russia clears Georgia checkpoint" *Aljazeera*, October 5, 2008,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2008/10/2008105103841598156.html>

October 6, 2008: The European Court of Human Rights has received nearly 2,000 applications from South Ossetians complaining of illegal treatment at the hands of Georgia³¹¹². Russia has also filed complaints against Georgia and stated that it would assist any citizens of South Ossetia wanting to do the same³¹¹³.

October 8, 2008: Russia begins the pull-out of its troops from Georgian buffer-zone with the EU observers due to take over security in the area³¹¹⁴. Russia is however refusing to leave territory seized during the conflict with Russian and South Ossetian forces staying in the strategic town of Akhgori - which was under Georgian administration and which lies inside the old Soviet borders of South Ossetia³¹¹⁵. Inside Georgia, opposition members are calling for an enquiry into the war stating that Russia provoked the situation but that Saakashvili launched the attack, causing Russia to respond³¹¹⁶.

October 15, 2008: The first Geneva talks are held in Geneva³¹¹⁷. The talks are a result of the six-point peace plan and the follow-up document created on September 8³¹¹⁸, which amongst other asked for international discussions³¹¹⁹. The talks officially have representatives from the EU, the OSCE, the UN and the US, Georgia, and Russia and on Russian request, representatives from Abkhazia and South Ossetia³¹²⁰. On the day, the conflict parties did however not meet, and the talks were suspended to November 18 due to procedural difficulties³¹²¹. Meanwhile, Saakashvili accused Russia of "walking out" of the talks stating: "[This] basically means that Russia has no interest whatsoever at this stage in any diplomatic process,"³¹²². Russia however stated that Saakashvili's description of the event was "just a lie" and that: "The Georgian version just doesn't hold water[...] We deplore the absence of the Georgian delegation but we did not see it as tragic."³¹²³. OSCE mediator Heikki Talvitie stated: "Let's put it in a way that we have two meetings[...] One formal, one informal, and all participants were in one or the other meeting. We are not negotiating face to face we are discussing. We are not going to make decisions."³¹²⁴.

October 17, 2008: The UNHCR reports that about 20,000 Georgians have returned home since Russian troops pulled out of the buffer zone around South Ossetia³¹²⁵. The agency warned those who returned of watching out for mines and other unexploded weapons³¹²⁶.

³¹¹² Reuters "South Ossetians complain to court" *The New York Times*, October 6, 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/07/world/europe/07ossetians.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FSouth%20Ossetia&mtref=undefined&assetType=REGIWALL&mtref=www.nytimes.com&assetType=REGIWALL&mtref=www.nytimes.com&gwh=D8E8F542AF09CDEF97C17B207DCFE9CA&gwt=pay&assetType=REGIWALL>

³¹¹³ Ibid

³¹¹⁴ Luke Harding "Russia begins final pull-out from Georgia buffer zone" *The Guardian*, October 8, 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/oct/08/georgia.russia>

³¹¹⁵ Ibid

³¹¹⁶ Ibid

³¹¹⁷ Nona Mikhelidze "The Geneva Talks over Georgia's Territorial Conflicts: Achievements and Challenges" *Istituto Affari Internazionali Report* (November, 2010) <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/124968/iai1025.pdf>

³¹¹⁸ Ibid

³¹¹⁹ "New Agreement in Force" *Old Civil*

³¹²⁰ Mikhelidze "The Geneva Talks over Georgia's Territorial Conflicts: Achievements and Challenges" *Istituto Affari Internazionali Report*

³¹²¹ "Georgia-Russia talks move fails" *BBC*, October 15, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7670897.stm>

³¹²² Ibid

³¹²³ Ibid

³¹²⁴ Ibid

³¹²⁵ The Associated Press "Georgia: 20,000 refugees return" *The New York Times*, October 17, 2008, https://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/18/world/europe/18forbriefs-20000REFUGEE_BRF.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FSouth%20Ossetia

³¹²⁶ Ibid

October 21, 2008: Russia announces that it will build permanent military bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia which are "aimed above all at defending our interests and those of these republics,"³¹²⁷. The announcement follows the signing of an agreement with the breakaway regions³¹²⁸.

November 7, 2008: Thousands of anti-government protestors held a demonstration condemning Saakashvili's handling of the conflict and blamed him for losing South Ossetia and Abkhazia³¹²⁹. The protests also included accusations of electoral fraud and called for early elections³¹³⁰.

November 9, 2008: Georgia accuses South Ossetian security forces of occupying a Georgian village outside South Ossetia borders³¹³¹. South Ossetia stated that it had only entered part of the village, which was located in South Ossetia with Kokoity stating: "Unfortunately it seems the Georgian leadership is bad at geography and doesn't even know the borders of its own state,"³¹³².

November 12, 2008: Russia asks the OSCE for an inquiry into the accounts that Georgia had attacked Tskhinvali on August 7 with indiscriminate artillery and rocket fire³¹³³. Georgia contested the claim and Russia embraced it stating that Russia was "very much interested in finding the truth about what the O.S.C.E. observers say, what they reported and to whom those reports were presented[...]. We are not trying to accuse anyone of anything. We are very far from this thought. However, taking into account continuous 'leaks' to the media on this subject, we have raised a question in the permanent O.S.C.E. council in Vienna asking to clarify it"³¹³⁴. Georgia meanwhile stated that Russia was sending out information out aimed at undermining the Georgian government with Temuri Yakobashvili, Georgia's minister for reintegration, stating that Russia "has made large money available to launch information warfare against Georgia, using the K.G.B. arsenal of blackmail, bribes, recruitment and manipulation of information," ... "The results of these activities get into the press."³¹³⁵

³¹²⁷ "Separatists 'to host Russia bases'" *Aljazeera*, October 21, 2008,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2008/10/20081021192020856486.html>

³¹²⁸ Ibid

³¹²⁹ Olesya Vartanyan and Michael Schwirtz "Protesters condemn president of Georgia" *The New York Times*, November 7, 2008,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/08/world/europe/08georgia.html?mtrref=undefined&assetType=REGIWALL&trref=www.nytimes.com&gwh=9C654AA40320A08B9833E5E75C0350B3&gwt=pay&assetType=REGIWALL>

³¹³⁰ Ibid

³¹³¹ Radio Free Europe "South Ossetians enter Georgian village; EU concerned" *Refworld*, November 9, 2008,

<https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=49183d650&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

³¹³² Ibid

³¹³³ Ellen Barry "Russia seeks inquiry into monitors' account of Georgia War" *The New York Times*, November 12, 2008,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/13/world/europe/13georgia.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FSouth%20Ossetia&mtrref=undefined&gwh=077B24F1DACF03861408A0BDD80EAFAC&gwt=pay&assetType=REGIWALL>

³¹³⁴ Ibid

³¹³⁵ Ibid

November 15, 2008: Ossetian militia fighters withdraw from Perevi, an ethnic Georgian village near the boundary with South Ossetia³¹³⁶. The village, which the EU states is clearly outside South Ossetia was occupied by Russia in August³¹³⁷. The Russian troops left the week before the Ossetians³¹³⁸.

November 17, 2008: Russia and Georgia clash in a row over a drone which allegedly crashed in Georgia, killing two policemen and wounding eight others³¹³⁹. To the incident Georgia stated: "Georgia's sovereign airspace was violated by a Russian unpiloted reconnaissance drone," whilst Russia stated that: "These claims have nothing to do with the reality"³¹⁴⁰.

November 19, 2008: The negotiators for the conflict sides meet “informally” for the second round of talks in Geneva³¹⁴¹. They are meeting each other in an individual capacity, without identifying who they are representing³¹⁴². Maxim Gvinjia, the deputy foreign minister of breakaway Abkhazia, stated that these were not talks, but “discussions”³¹⁴³.

November 23, 2008: Saakashvili and Poland’s president Lech Kaczynski of Poland stated that they were met with machine-gun fire when they visited a Russian checkpoint near the South Ossetian³¹⁴⁴. South Ossetia and Russia denied any shooting had taken place and stated the two presidents intentionally provoked their forces and stated that the account of the shooting was “one more instance of wishful thinking on the part of Georgia.”³¹⁴⁵. Saakashvili stated: “Frankly, I didn’t expect the Russians to open fire[...]The reality is you are dealing with unpredictable people. It seems they weren’t happy to see our guest and they weren’t happy to see me either.”³¹⁴⁶

November 26, 2008: Erosi Kitsmarishvili, a former Georgian envoy to Russia, stirs controversy by saying that the war was started by Georgia and not Russia³¹⁴⁷. He also stated that Saakashvili had told him in March about plans to use force to retake Abkhazia³¹⁴⁸. Georgia continues to maintain that its assault was the result of a Russian invasion whereas Russia states that it intervened following Georgian shelling of South Ossetia.³¹⁴⁹

³¹³⁶ Ellen Barry and Olesya Vartanyan “Militia leaves a Georgian village” *The New York Times*, November 15, 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/16/world/europe/16georgia.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FSouth%20Ossetia&mtref=undefined&assetType=REGIWALL&mtref=www.nytimes.com&assetType=REGIWALL&mtref=www.nytimes.com&assetType=REGIWALL&mtref=www.nytimes.com&gwh=4B5DB5F992145FBBB387DA8F9A4C2493&gwt=pay&assetType=REGIWALL>

³¹³⁷ Ibid

³¹³⁸ Ibid

³¹³⁹ “Russia and Georgia in drone row” *BBC*, November 17, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7734147.stm>

³¹⁴⁰ Ibid

³¹⁴¹ “Parties meet informally in Geneva” *Old Civil*, November 19, 2008,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=19982>

³¹⁴² Ibid

³¹⁴³ Ibid

³¹⁴⁴ Ellen Barry and Olesya Vartanyan “Two Presidents say they encounter gunfire” *The New York Times*, November 23, 2008,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/24/world/europe/24georgia.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FSouth%20Ossetia&mtref=undefined&gwh=9C65B067853E7F4C35E22BEA46EB660E&gwt=pay&assetType=REGIWALL>

³¹⁴⁵ Ibid

³¹⁴⁶ Ibid

³¹⁴⁷ “Georgian row over origins of war” *BBC*, November 26, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7750194.stm>

³¹⁴⁸ Ibid

³¹⁴⁹ Ibid

November 28, 2008: Opposition to Saakashvili accuses him of walking into a conflict he could not win to which he stated: "It was a difficult decision, but it was an inevitable one. Any democratic government would take the same decision, to protect its citizens[...]When we asked the Russians through the Americans what was the goal of their intervention, their answer was 'the complete destruction of Georgia'."³¹⁵⁰

December 2, 2008: The EU establishes a fact-finding mission to investigate the cause of the conflict³¹⁵¹.

December 3, 2008: NATO agrees to a “conditional and graduated re-engagement” with Russia which does not imply a resuming of the NATO-Russia council but “lower level talks” would be held³¹⁵². During a meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Brussels a reiteration was also made for the support of Georgian and Ukraine NATO membership, with minister encouraging Georgia and Ukraine to pursue reforms despite the lack of a timetable for membership³¹⁵³. “Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili warned the "grave risks of returning to business as usual" with Russia without holding it to account for its actions in Georgia” and further stated "If the international response is not firm, Moscow will make other moves to redraw the region's map by intimidation or force"³¹⁵⁴. A South Ossetian separatist stated in response: "It is the opposite[...]There was a large Russian military presence here before but now there are just Russian peacekeepers."³¹⁵⁵.

December 4, 2008: The annual Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) ministerial meeting is held in Helsinki with Georgia’s Foreign Minister Eka Tkeshelashvili stating that talks to bring peace to Georgia could stall if Russia insisted on keeping the troops on what Tbilisi considers to be its territory: "There can be no confidence in the Geneva negotiations if there is no confidence in the compliance of the ceasefire[...]monitors have no access to the occupied areas of my country."³¹⁵⁶.

December 18, 2008: The conflict sides and mediators meet for a third round of Geneva talks where progress was made in terms of agreeing on mechanisms to tackle security-related incidents³¹⁵⁷. Like the former talks, this talk also occurred in two informal working groups without any official plenary session³¹⁵⁸. The two working groups focus on security issues and IDP’s and refugees and this working group format allows negotiators to meet without identifying who they are representing, which avoids differences on the status of negotiators mainly related with representatives of breakaway Abkhazia and South Ossetia³¹⁵⁹.

December 23, 2008: Russia once again accuses Georgia of genocide with the head of a Russian prosecutors' investigative committee stating that it had found evidence of this³¹⁶⁰. The head of the Russian prosecutors' investigative committee Alexander Bastykin stated that: "We can say that we have witnessed the genocide

³¹⁵⁰ “Saakashvili defends S Ossetia war” *Aljazeera*, November 28, 2008,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2008/11/20081128162726119476.html>

³¹⁵¹ Official Journal of the European Union “Council Decision 2008/901/CFSP of 2 December 2008 concerning an independent international fact-finding mission on the conflict in Georgia” *Eur-Lex*, December 3, 2008, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32008D0901&from=EN>

³¹⁵² “Nato 'to resume ties with Russia” *BBC*, December 3, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7759833.stm>

³¹⁵³ *Ibid*

³¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*

³¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*

³¹⁵⁶ “Russia Unwilling to Make Compromises at OSCE Meeting” *DW*, December 4, 2008,

<https://www.dw.com/en/russia-unwilling-to-make-compromises-at-osce-meeting/a-3849728>

³¹⁵⁷ “Mediators on Third Round of Geneva Talks” *Old Civil*, December 18, 2008,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=20157>

³¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*

³¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*

³¹⁶⁰ “Russia accuses Georgia of genocide” *ABC News*, December 23, 2008, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2008-12-24/russia-accuses-georgia-of-genocide/248806>

of the Ossetian people,"... "What is important is that we have established that there was a conscious and planned action to destroy the Ossetians as an ethnic group,"³¹⁶¹. Alexander Lomaia, the former secretary of Georgia's National Security Council responded that this was a cynical lie, stating: "Russia was telling lies to the whole world that there were thousands of civilians killed by the Georgian army in South Ossetia[...]The Russian prosecutor's statements are yet another cynical lie. This is nothing but a Kremlin propaganda campaign,"³¹⁶². Despite verbal aggression between the two countries, there are reports that Russia and Georgia have had talks together regarding the restoring of flights between the two countries and the restoring of diplomatic ties³¹⁶³. Meanwhile, Russia has stalled the renewal of the mandate of OSCE monitors³¹⁶⁴.

December 25, 2008: Medvedev states that Russia knew that Georgia was preparing for the conflict and hence Russia also prepared for the conflict in advance³¹⁶⁵. As he stated: "We of course were assuming that not everything was OK with our neighbor's [referring to Georgia] brains – though we did not expect it was to such degree[...]Taking into consideration that they [Georgians] were preparing for that [military actions] – I has once spoken about it – at some point I felt, that our Georgian counterpart [referring to President Saakashvili] simply stopped communicating with the Russian Federation. Before that he was requesting: let's meet, discuss, have negotiations in Sochi; but then he just walked away from communication. At that point I started to suspect that he had decided to carry out forceful action[...]So, of course, we were preparing for that[...]And I think that as a result of those preparatory measures, which were carried out [by Russia], losses of the operation were minimal. The Russian army has destroyed the Georgian military infrastructure. At the same time [the Russian army] avoided actions, which could have been of inhuman nature."³¹⁶⁶. He also blamed "some senior leaders of Ukraine for taking decision to supply Georgia with arms and to send there people trained in firing at the Russian servicemen." And stated it was "a crime committed against the Russian-Ukrainian relations."³¹⁶⁷. He also stated: "This is my deep conviction. First of all, [Russia will protect its interests] by international and legal tools[...]but, when necessary, by using an element of force[...]If there is a threat to life and dignity of the Russian citizens, the Russia's positions, of course will be extremely simple and wisely firm. We will protect interests of our citizens anywhere no matter where they are. And there is no violation of the international law in this."³¹⁶⁸

Saakashvili responded to Medvedevs statement saying that it was an acknowledgement of Russia's aggression against Georgia, as he stated: "By these remarks of the Russian President – if somebody had any doubts in the world, in Russia or even in our country, if somebody had any questions about what has happened in August – this person [Medvedev] has given a clear-cut answer to it[...]I was thinking much what the reason of this open acknowledgment of their aggression was after four months from the war. I think that – and it troubles me as it concerns us – there is a serious economic crisis in Russia, there are serious social protests, serious internal tension and political struggle – and this acknowledgement and also new aggressive threats serve to distract attention from all of these [problems][...]What should we do in this situation?[...]We are sure that the way towards our unification and peace passes through Georgia's internal strengthening. It means that we should do our best – under conditions when the crisis is raging in Russia

³¹⁶¹ Ibid

³¹⁶² Ibid

³¹⁶³ Ibid

³¹⁶⁴ "Russia rejects OSCE's Georgia plan" *Aljazeera*, December 23, 2008,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2008/12/20081223162356654509.html>

³¹⁶⁵ "Medvedev on War with Georgia" *Old Civil*, December 25, 2008, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=20192>

³¹⁶⁶ Ibid

³¹⁶⁷ Ibid

³¹⁶⁸ Ibid

and in the rest of the world – to rescue and maintain Georgian economy, to preserve our economy, to maintain and develop Georgia’s stability and to become stronger and everything will be all right.”³¹⁶⁹

December 31, 2008: The OSCE mission to Georgia is terminated, although a number of monitors stayed in the area until July 2009³¹⁷⁰.

2009

January 16, 2009: A Georgian policeman is shot and killed near the border with South Ossetia³¹⁷¹. Gen. Gilles Janvier, an official with the European Union’s monitoring mission, called the attack “a totally unacceptable breach” of the cease-fire agreement,” and pressed for investigations in South Ossetia and Georgia³¹⁷². Meanwhile, Lavrov of Russia stated that he doubted the shooting had occurred: “Very many reports of this kind are not confirmed,”³¹⁷³.

January 25, 2009: The OSCE applauds the Georgian decision to resume gas supplies to South Ossetia³¹⁷⁴. The supplies have been disrupted since August 8, 2008³¹⁷⁵. In its statement the OSCE stated that other urgent humanitarian issues now included the access to water in the conflict zone³¹⁷⁶.

January 28, 2009: Russia states that Georgia has captured a Russian soldier and pressured him into making statements against the Russian military. The Russian soldier was shown on Georgian television asking for asylum, stating: "I am asking the president of Georgia to grant me asylum. I cannot bear the hardship Russian soldiers are experiencing here anymore. I hope asylum will be granted,"³¹⁷⁷.

February 10, 2009: Two representatives of the OSCE are detained in South Ossetia on allegations that they had entered the area illegally with South Ossetia’s foreign ministry saying that the organization’s mandate “expired after the events of August 2008 and is null and void,”³¹⁷⁸. Grigol Vashadze, Georgia’s foreign minister, stated the incident should be taken as a warning that South Ossetia is “a territory where no law exists, no human rights exists and where there is no respect for international agreements.”³¹⁷⁹.

³¹⁶⁹ “Saakashvili on Medvedev’s war acknowledgement” *Old Civil*, December 25, 2008,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=20198>

³¹⁷⁰ “Conflict resolution” *OSCE*

³¹⁷¹ Ellen Barry “Georgia: Officer shot near Ossetia” *The New York Times*, January 16, 2009,

https://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/17/world/europe/17briefs-OFFICERSHOTN_BRF.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FSouth%20Ossetia&mtrref=undefined&gwh=EEA7D31D66B897E50BE9D6F6EDCB5B9F&gwt=pay&assetType=REGIWALL

³¹⁷² Ibid

³¹⁷³ Ibid

³¹⁷⁴ “OSCE Chairperson welcomes resumption of natural gas supplies to South Ossetia” *OSCE*, January 25, 2009,

<https://www.osce.org/cio/50564>

³¹⁷⁵ Ibid

³¹⁷⁶ Ibid

³¹⁷⁷ “Georgia 'captures Russian soldier'” *Aljazeera*, January 28, 2009,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2009/01/2009127144213480384.html>

³¹⁷⁸ Ellen Barry “Georgia: OSCE monitors detained in South Ossetia” *The New York Times*, February 10, 2009,

https://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/11/world/europe/11webbriefs-OSCEMONITORS_BRF.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FSouth%20Ossetia&mtrref=undefined&gwh=EA5DD0B2C0D3A34E8F5C551A1A4A9173&gwt=pay&assetType=REGIWALL

³¹⁷⁹ Ibid

February 19, 2009: The sides meet for the Geneva International Discussions in which they agree to the establishment of “proposals for joint incident prevention and response mechanisms”³¹⁸⁰. The mechanism, later called Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM), would allow for regular weekly meetings “between structures responsible for security and public order in areas of tension and relevant international organizations.”, a 24-hour hotline would also be established and “agreed joint visits may be conducted” in the areas of concern³¹⁸¹. Georgia stated that the agreement was “a good step in the right direction,” but also added that “it is not a breakthrough[...]Now Russia’s political will is needed to implement reached agreements,”³¹⁸².

March 26, 2009: South Ossetia accuses Georgia of launching attacks against one of its border villages³¹⁸³. They also claim that Georgian troops attacked Russian military strongholds in the village using gunfire and grenades³¹⁸⁴. Georgia denied the allegations with Georgia’s Interior Minister stating that the allegations were made to: “mislead the international community and create an informational background for the resumption of Russia’s aggression against Georgia.”³¹⁸⁵.

April 9, 2009: Thousands gather in street protests in Tbilisi to demonstrate demanding the immediate resignation of Saakashvili³¹⁸⁶. They accuse him of authoritarianism and disapprove of his handling of the 2008 conflict³¹⁸⁷.

April 10, 2009: The opposition party in Georgia announces a “civil disobedience campaign” due to the refusal of Saakashvili to step down³¹⁸⁸. The campaign included rallies in front of the parliament and the blockade of some of the main streets in Tbilisi³¹⁸⁹.

April 30, 2009: Russia signs a border cooperation treaty with Abkhazia and South Ossetia³¹⁹⁰. The treaty gives Russia control over the area’s borders³¹⁹¹. Saakashvili stated that the treaty was another attempt by Russia to legalize the areas stating: “But you cannot legalize something that is fundamentally illegal. It is very dangerous to everybody, including Russia itself,”³¹⁹².

³¹⁸⁰ “Proposals on Incident Prevention Agreed at Geneva Talks” *Old Civil*, February 19, 2009, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=20445>

³¹⁸¹ Ibid

³¹⁸² Ibid

³¹⁸³ Radio Free Europe “South Ossetia accuses Georgia of shelling village” *Refworld*, March 26, 2009, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=49cccaa2c&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

³¹⁸⁴ Ibid

³¹⁸⁵ Ibid

³¹⁸⁶ Luke Harding “Thousands gather for street protests against Georgian president” *The Guardian*, April 9, 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/apr/09/georgia-protests-mikheil-saakashvili>

³¹⁸⁷ Ibid

³¹⁸⁸ “Georgian Opposition Launches Civil-Disobedience Campaign” *RadioFreeEurope*, April 10, 2009, https://www.rferl.org/a/Georgian_Opposition_Launches_CivilDisobedience_Campaign_/1606425.html

³¹⁸⁹ Ibid

³¹⁹⁰ “Moscow Signs Border Treaties with Tskhinvali, Sokhumi” *Old Civil*, April 30, 2009, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=20823>

³¹⁹¹ Ibid

³¹⁹² “Saakashvili Condemns Moscow’s Border Pact with Sokhumi, Tskhinvali” *Old Civil*, April 30, 2009, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=20827>

May 2, 2009: Russian border guards begin taking up long-term positions along the borders of South Ossetia and Abkhazia³¹⁹³. The development follows the signing of security treaties with the areas which call for joint patrols³¹⁹⁴. Shota Utiashvili, a senior official in Georgia's Interior Ministry, stated that he worried that F.S.B. units "might be more willing to stage operations" along the Georgian border³¹⁹⁵.

May 16, 2009: Ahead of the fifth round of Geneva talks, Russia states that it will focus on creating legally binding agreements regarding the non-use of force between Georgia and South Ossetia³¹⁹⁶. Russia also stated: "An important element of security in the South Caucasus is imposing international embargo supplies of offensive armament to Georgia[...]Calls for restoring territorial integrity by force, which was lost as a result irresponsible policies of the Georgian leadership, are still made in Tbilisi,"³¹⁹⁷. Russia also accused Georgia of installing "new fortifications and observation posts" and of increasing military presence in the areas adjacent to Abkhazia and South Ossetia: "All it happens against the background of deep internal political crisis, to which the present leadership has led the country[...]It's not a surprise that in these circumstances the Georgian leadership tries to distract public attention from pressing internal problems by artificially creating[...]dangerous external tricks."³¹⁹⁸

May 18, 2009: The fifth Geneva talks are held in which Russia suspends its participation due to the Abkhazian decision of not attending and following the walk-out of South Ossetia³¹⁹⁹. Abkhazia refused to take part following the wording in a UN report for the talks which stated "Abkhazia, Georgia" and hence, according to Abkhazia, failed to include the fact that Abkhazia was now independent³²⁰⁰.

May 31, 2009: South Ossetia holds parliamentary elections with polling stations being arranged in Russia for expatriates and refugees who fled the area during the 2008 war³²⁰¹. Four parties are competing, but the central election commission has barred the only two parties not loyal Kokoity and the opposition has also accused the president of embezzling funds allocated for restoration of infrastructure destroyed in the war³²⁰². The president however denied the accusations stating that it was Georgian propaganda and that the election was a "maturity test for the small independent state"³²⁰³.

July 1, 2009: The sixth round of Geneva talks is held in which it was agreed to hold the first IPRM meeting on July 14³²⁰⁴.

July 9, 2009: South Ossetia refuses to participate in the IPRM meetings due to disagreements over who should chair the talks³²⁰⁵. The meeting, which are facilitated by OSCE and EU Monitoring Mission in

³¹⁹³ Ellen Barry "Russia digs in alongside breakaway territory" *The New York Times*, May 2, 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/03/world/europe/03russia.html?ref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FSouth%20Ossetia>

³¹⁹⁴ Ibid

³¹⁹⁵ Ibid

³¹⁹⁶ "Russian MFA on Upcoming Geneva Talks" *Old Civil*, May 16, 2009, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=20933>

³¹⁹⁷ Ibid

³¹⁹⁸ Ibid

³¹⁹⁹ "Russia Walks Out of Geneva Talks" *Old Civil*, May 18, 2009, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=20942>

³²⁰⁰ Ibid

³²⁰¹ "South Ossetia holds election" *Aljazeera*, May 31, 2009, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2009/05/2009531181621857963.html>

³²⁰² Ibid

³²⁰³ Ibid

³²⁰⁴ "OSCE Chairmanship sees further progress in Geneva discussions" *OSCE*, July 1, 2009, <https://www.osce.org/cio/51115>

³²⁰⁵ "Tskhinvali Sets Conditions for Routine Security Talks" *Old Civil*, July 9, 2009, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=21213>

Georgia, have already been held twice with representation from both Georgia, South Ossetia and Russia³²⁰⁶. In a statement, South Ossetia however noted: “We have offered two options: either the representatives of Russia and EU should be chairs of these meeting, as they have signed Medvedev-Sarkozy agreement, or each participating side based on rotation principle. None of these proposals were accepted[...]During the sixth round of Geneva discussions, we have offered a third option: the meetings to be chaired alternately by the Georgian and South Ossetian sides.”³²⁰⁷

July 13, 2009: Medvedev visits Tskhinvali with the Kremlin later releasing a statement stating: “Joint implementation of projects for socio-economic rehabilitation of the [South Ossetian] republic was discussed during the Russian President’s working visit in South Ossetia,”³²⁰⁸. Medvedev also stated when in South Ossetia: “I would like to thank you for inviting me in the new state – South Ossetia, which has been created as a result of difficult dramatic events and which was supported by the Russian people in the difficult times,”³²⁰⁹. Georgia condemned the visit with Saakashvili stating that it was “shameful and immoral” and that South Ossetia’s de facto leader Kokoity was an “unwashed, murderer” and “corrupt criminal”³²¹⁰. Davit Bakradze, the Georgian parliamentary chairperson, also noted: “This is not the way through which Russia would be able to adequately respond to the developments in the world. This visit once against confirms that there are people in the Russian leadership who made it part of their action plan to damage Georgia[...]This is a step directed against the Georgian statehood,”³²¹¹.

June 15, 2009: Medvedev states that Russia is ready to discuss security in the South Caucasus with western states but that it has two red lines with respect to Georgia³²¹². The first line is the recognition of the breakaway entities stating: “Our decision is irreversible; the decision we have taken was certainly painful,”³²¹³. The second was Russia’s “attitude towards the current regime in Tbilisi” with Medvedev further stating: “It is our view that that this political regime has committed a crime and we will have nothing common with this [regime][...]At the same time, after elections, which will take place in Georgia sooner or later, we surely will be ready to return to discussions of various issues if the Georgian people elect a new leadership capable of maintaining a friendly dialogue with Russia and with close neighbors of the Georgian state - peoples of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.”³²¹⁴. He also stated that in regard to the conflict in 2008: “everything that happened was a result of irresponsible and delinquent policy pursued by the Georgian leadership.”³²¹⁵.

July 20, 2009: Georgia hopes that the US will join the EU monitoring mission as they believe that this would deter aggression from Russia and the separatists. Eka Tkeshelashvili, the secretary of Georgia’s National Security Council, stated that the broadening of the monitoring mission to include the United States and other nonunion members would make it “politically very costly to Russia to do anything on the ground[...]It has the potential for reaching a very tangible impact,” she said. “It’s always very hard to think what are the red lines that ultimately Russia might respect, because we saw last year that it passed most of

³²⁰⁶ Ibid

³²⁰⁷ Ibid

³²⁰⁸ “Medvedev Visits Tskhinvali” *Old Civil*, July 13, 2009, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=21226>

³²⁰⁹ Ibid

³²¹⁰ Ibid

³²¹¹ Ibid

³²¹² “Medvedev Speaks on Russia’s Red Lines on Georgia” *Old Civil*, June 15, 2009, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=21107>

³²¹³ Ibid

³²¹⁴ Ibid

³²¹⁵ Ibid

the red lines that we could have imagined.”³²¹⁶. The EU stated that it had informal discussions on whether to invite the US³²¹⁷.

July 28, 2009: Russia warns against the inclusion of the US in the EUMM as extremely harmful and states that: “The U.S. presence will sharply increase the likelihood of border provocations, given the United States’ role in last year’s events[...]As for U.S.-Russian relations, such a move will certainly not improve, but only worsen relations by adding a new issue.”³²¹⁸

June 30, 2009: UN monitors begin pulling out, alongside the last OSCE monitors, from Georgia³²¹⁹. Russia rejected extending the mandate of the monitors³²²⁰. Russia rather demanded separate monitoring missions for Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which Georgia said was a violation of Georgian sovereignty³²²¹. The only mission in the area is now the EU mission, which is set to expire on September 30, 2009³²²². The mandate of the EUMM does not extend to the breakaway regions and Russia has been barring access to areas which fell under separatist control in 2008³²²³. States such as France have accessed for the EUMM to gain access to the entire conflict zone in order to assess the human rights situation, but this is denied by Russia³²²⁴. Russia denies that it has blocked negotiations on extending the mandate of the UN and OSCE missions and stated: “What happened with the OSCE mission to [Georgia] and the UN Security Council resolution on the UN mission in the region is a supreme act of diplomatic cynicism,” ... “Our impression is that Tbilisi – and perhaps some other capitals – have decided to seek a solution to the problem in the waters of instability.”³²²⁵.

July 13, 2009: Medvedev visits South Ossetia where he inspected a new Russian military base³²²⁶.

July 14, 2009: Medvedev states that the Georgian people would one day rule a tough verdict on Saakashvili for attacking South Ossetia with him stating: “Of course full responsibility for what has happened [last August] lies on this regime, but it’s not our business to deal with it[...]One day the Georgian people itself will rule a heavy sentence to Saakashvili’s regime and to those who took part in those bloody actions[...]Our task is to help young state to stand on its feet, to overcome difficulties, simply to survive in difficult conditions, which exist in Caucasus[...]I can tell you frankly: they live there poorly and in difficult conditions. They were all grateful to Russia for those difficult decisions, which we had to take last August. Part of those people might not be alive now if we have not taken those decisions. They were thanking Russia

³²¹⁶ Ellen Barry “Georgia wants U.S. to monitor conflict” *The New York Times*, July 20, 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/21/world/europe/21georgia.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FSouth%20Ossetia&mtref=undefined&gwh=FD660A3D903FA01316D197B233949AE0&gwt=pay&assetType=REGIWALL>

³²¹⁷ Ibid

³²¹⁸ Ellen Barry “Russia warns U.S against sending monitors to Georgia” *The New York Times*, July 28, 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/29/world/europe/29russia.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FSouth%20Ossetia&mtref=undefined&gwh=FE1ECE965BD2E5E2094B8C952A2649D5&gwt=pay&assetType=REGIWALL>

³²¹⁹ “U.N. monitors leave Georgia, OSCE mission shuts” *Reuters*, June 30, 2009, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-georgia-monitors-idUSTRE55T3OR20090630>

³²²⁰ Ibid

³²²¹ Ibid

³²²² Eurasianet “Georgia: OSCE terminates its 17-year Georgian mission” *Refworld*, June 20, 2009,

<https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=4a532cc419&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

³²²³ Ibid

³²²⁴ Ibid

³²²⁵ Ibid

³²²⁶ Ellen Barry “On visit to breakaway region, Russian president promises help in rebuilding” *The New York Times*, July 13, 2009,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/14/world/europe/14russia.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FSouth%20Ossetia&mtref=undefined&gwh=ED3C4BAB2FE45C934CB1E5277FB7C119&gwt=pay&assetType=REGIWALL>

with tears on their eyes[...].It strengthens Russia's reputation in Caucasus and in the world[...]We have a [military] base there[...]Decent conditions for the service are created there and this [military base] is a direct signal for them, who can't settle-down and for them in whose minds idiotic plans emerge time after time."³²²⁷

July 28, 2009: South Ossetia's Interior Minister states that a policeman who has been missing for several days is believed to be detained by Georgian security forces³²²⁸. Shota Utiashvili, the head of the Georgian Interior Ministry's Information Department, stated that Georgia could neither confirm nor deny the allegation³²²⁹.

August 1, 2009: South Ossetia accuses Georgia of firing mortars towards a military observation post in the area³²³⁰. Russia warned Georgia by stating that it reserved the right to use force in order to protect the civilian population in the area, stating: "In the event of further acts of provocation threatening the population of the republic and the Russian military contingent based in the territory of South Ossetia, the Russian Defence Ministry reserves the right to use all available force and means to defend the citizens of the republic of South Ossetia and Russian servicemen,"³²³¹. Georgia denied the shooting and stated that Russia's comment showed Russia's aggressive intent³²³².

August 3, 2009: Georgia states that Russia is trying to take more territory inside South Ossetia with them stating: "It's very alarming that as the first anniversary of the Russian aggression against Georgia comes close, Russia and its puppets are deliberately inciting tensions and behave defiantly"³²³³. Meanwhile Russia accused Georgian forces of firing mortars into South Ossetia and it also warned that Russia "reserves the right to use all available forces and means to protect the citizens of South Ossetia and Russian servicemen" in case of further "provocations"³²³⁴.

August 5, 2009: Lavrov states that Saakashvili and his "masters of provocations" want to see the US join the EU mission in a bid to inflame tensions with Russia³²³⁵.

August 6, 2009: South Ossetia approves a new Prime Minister, Vadim Brovtsev, a former director of a Russian construction company³²³⁶.

August 7, 2009: Kokoity declares the border closed citing a potential threat from the H1N1 influenza which has emerged in Georgia³²³⁷. South Ossetia however also states that tensions remain and both sides accuse

³²²⁷ "Medvedev Speaks of his Trip to Tskhinvali" *Old Civil*, July 14, 2009,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=21234>

³²²⁸ Radio Free Europe "South Ossetia says Georgians abducted policeman" *Refworld*, July 28, 2009,

[https://www.refworld.org/cgi-](https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=4a82b71023&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO)

[bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=4a82b71023&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO](https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=4a82b71023&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO)

³²²⁹ Ibid

³²³⁰ "Russia warns Georgia as South Ossetia tension rises" *ABC News*, August 1, 2009,

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-08-02/russia-warns-georgia-as-south-ossetia-tension-rises/1375380>

³²³¹ Ibid

³²³² Ibid

³²³³ "Georgia accuses Russia of land grab" *Aljazeera*, August 3, 2009,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2009/08/200983143035450569.html>

³²³⁴ Ibid

³²³⁵ "Georgia not 'aggressively rearming'" *Aljazeera*, August 5, 2009,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2009/08/2009851724430788.html>

³²³⁶ "South Ossetian Parliament Approves New Prime Minister" *RadioFreeEurope*, August 6, 2009,

https://www.rferl.org/a/South_Ossetian_Parliament_Approves_New_Prime_Minister/1793942.html

³²³⁷ "South Ossetia ready for 'invasion'" *Aljazeera*, August 7, 2009,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2009/08/200986182358922172.html>

each other of conducting cross-border attacks³²³⁸. David Sanakoyev, the human rights ombudsman to South Ossetia's president states: "People are very worried that there will be a new war[...]The only comforting fact is that Russia's ministry of defence has promised to defend the population from any possible attacks."³²³⁹

August 8, 2009: Medvedev states on the first anniversary of the 2008 conflict: "Last year's events have finally redrawn the political map of the Caucasus[...]The recognition of South Ossetia's and Abkhazia's independence was the only possible solution[...]Such decisions are made once and for all, and there is no way back."³²⁴⁰. At a candle-vigil in Tskhinvali, Kokoity stated: "The goal of the operation was the destruction and exile of the South Ossetian people[...]South Ossetian fighters courageously thwarted Tbilisi's plans for blitzkrieg. Russian troops came to the rescue of South Ossetia and pushed the bloodthirsty enemy back"³²⁴¹

August 9, 2009: Russia calls for an international embargo on arms supply to Georgia as Russia fears that Georgia may once again use force to reclaim the territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia³²⁴². Medvedev also stated that the recognition of the separatist areas was essential to ensure security in the Caucasus and would not be revoked³²⁴³. In other events, South Ossetia opened a "genocide museum" in South Ossetia to commemorate those who died during the war³²⁴⁴.

August 14, 2009: South Ossetia is asking residents to turn in their weapons voluntarily however the process is slow³²⁴⁵. A local resident stated that for an Ossetian "a weapon is an essential part of daily life, his worldview, his accessory, if you will". When asked how many private individuals owned a gun he stated: "As many as there are people in the population, that's how many weapons there are."³²⁴⁶

August 25, 2009: Russia states that it has uncovered evidence that Ukrainian troops and volunteers fought on the Georgian side in the conflict in 2008³²⁴⁷. They also stated that they had found Ukrainian built missile inside South Ossetia³²⁴⁸. Vladimir Markin, a spokesman for the Russian prosecutor-general's office stated: "Servicemen from the regular divisions of the Ukrainian defence ministry and also no less than 200 members of the Ukrainian nationalist organisation UNA-UNSO participated with Georgian forces in armed aggression against South Ossetia,"³²⁴⁹. He also claimed that investigators had found Ukrainian anti-aircraft missiles in South Ossetia three months before the war, insinuating that Ukraine had assisted Georgia in

³²³⁸ Ibid

³²³⁹ Ibid

³²⁴⁰ "Russia reaffirms S Ossetia pledge" *Aljazeera*, August 8, 2009, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2009/08/20098813306465661.html>

³²⁴¹ Ibid

³²⁴² "Medvedev calls for Georgia arms ban" *Financial Times*, August 9, 2009, <https://www.ft.com/content/cde387e4-850e-11de-9a64-00144feabdc0>

³²⁴³ Ibid

³²⁴⁴ Ibid

³²⁴⁵ Ellen Barry "South Ossetia tries to disarm its citizens" *The New York Times*, August 14, 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/15/world/europe/15ossetia.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FSouth%20Ossetia&mtref=undefined&gwh=FB0018ECF38A16C71157E3D8EB2B8149&gwt=pay&assetType=REGIWALL>

³²⁴⁶ Ibid

³²⁴⁷ "Russia accuses Ukraine on Georgia conflict" *Financial Times*, August 24, 2009, <https://www.ft.com/content/c9cfd6f6-90dc-11de-bc99-00144feabdc0>

³²⁴⁸ Ibid

³²⁴⁹ Ibid

preparing for the conflict³²⁵⁰. Ukraine's Yushchenko openly supported Saakashvili during the escalation of violence in 2008³²⁵¹.

September 10, 2009: Venezuela acknowledges the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia³²⁵².

September 14, 2009: Saakashvili states that Georgia should be “equipped with knowledge” in order to prevail over “cruel enemy” and “occupant country,”³²⁵³. He also stated: “The President of our huge neighbor and of the occupant country, Russia, dedicated half of his hour-long congratulating speech about new school year [on September 1] speaking how bad Georgia is[...]I came here to speak how good we are and how good our country is,” ... “We are good and strong people because many other people, which experienced this tragedy [reference to the August war] would not have got back on their feet[...]Our land is still occupied, but although we have not yet won, they have already lost this struggle. To eventually win this struggle we need knowledge; we won't be able to prevail over them neither with weapons nor with number of people and nor with cruelty, because we are opposite to that; and in order to get rid of this cruel enemy we need to be equipped with knowledge.”³²⁵⁴

September 17, 2009: The seventh Geneva talks takes place in which discussions continued in the two working groups³²⁵⁵.

September 30, 2009: The EU fact-finding mission releases its report, which states that Georgia initiated the conflict but also that historical tensions and overreactions contributed to the conflict^{3256, 3257}. The report also stated that Russia used disproportionate force against Georgia to which Dmitry Ragozin, Russia's ambassador to Nato, stated: "If Russian troops had acted disproportionately, then why didn't they make it all the way to Tblisi?"³²⁵⁸.

October 15, 2009: EU special representative for the crisis in Georgia and co-chair of Geneva discussions publishes an article in which he states: “A regular dialogue has been established on all important post-conflict issues despite irreconcilable differences regarding the Russian recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia that took place on 26 August – two weeks after the end of hostilities. The work of the two groups has evolved despite these persistent disagreements – disagreements that led ultimately to the very regrettable closure of the OSCE's mission in Georgia (22 December 2008) as well as of the UN Mission's activities (15 June 2009)[...]The Geneva discussions are now entering a second phase, whose purpose is to attain a more developed security regime and humanitarian protection framework, designed to increase regional security. This is the clear goal of the ongoing discussions regarding the ‘basic elements for a

³²⁵⁰ Ibid

³²⁵¹ Ibid

³²⁵² “Venezuela's Chavez recognises Georgian rebel regions” *Reuters*, September 10, 2009,

<https://www.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-42361120090910>

³²⁵³ “Saakashvili: Georgia should Confront Cruel Enemy with Knowledge” *Old Civil*, September 14, 2009,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=21461>

³²⁵⁴ Ibid

³²⁵⁵ “OSCE Chairmanship says latest Geneva discussions were constructive contribution” *OSCE*, September 17,

2009, <https://www.osce.org/cio/51320>

³²⁵⁶ “EU: Russia, Georgia share responsibility for 2008 conflict” *CNN*, September 30, 2009,

<https://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/europe/09/30/russia.georgia.eu/index.html>

³²⁵⁷ “Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia” *ECHR*, September 2009,

https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/HUDOC_38263_08_Annexes_ENG.pdf

³²⁵⁸ “Russia stands by Georgia war action” *Aljazeera*, September 30, 2009,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2009/09/200993014346803472.html>

framework agreement on the non-use of force” that will be examined during the 8th Session of the Geneva Discussions on 11 November 2009.”³²⁵⁹

November 11, 2009: The eight Geneva talks are held in which talks were held on the agreement on the non-use of force and international security arrangements provided by the three Co-Chairs³²⁶⁰.

December 5, 2009: Lavrov states that the continued armament of Georgia was “a serious problem” and stated following a NATO-Russia Council meeting: “We have paid special attention to those risks, which are related with continued supplies of arms to Georgia. We hope that the alliance-member states made necessary conclusions from last year’s August events[...]This is a serious problem. Weapons continue to be supplied in Georgia. According to some estimations Georgia’s pre-war military potential is already restored[...]And mainly offensive weapons are being delivered to Georgia. I hope everyone understands how risky it is to arm this regime. We have discussed it in details within the NATO-Russia Council.”³²⁶¹. The day before Saakashvili stated that Georgian armed forces “should be permanently on high readiness.” And that: “The enemy is constantly considering new provocations and attacks. The Georgian state’s major goal should be liberation of our occupied territories. All of our actions should be directed towards achieving this goal through peaceful means. But we should also be ready to repel enemy’s new attacks,”³²⁶².

December 9, 2009: Medvedev states that he would not have any contact with Saakashvili and “with some others in leadership” stating: “I have numerously said that I am not going to have contacts with the current President and some others in [the Georgian] leadership; our ways have parted and our assessments of developments are absolutely different; I think that President Saakashvili bears direct legal responsibility for the committed crime, but it does not mean that we should postpone all other relations for a later time[...]The possibility of conducting direct flights, and opening the Upper Larsi checkpoint – it is a normal topic for discussion and solution. In general I cannot see any specific obstacles here, because it, first of all, concerns the interests of simple people, who always kept and are still keeping ties with each other despite[...]severe confrontation between our states over some issues on the international arena”³²⁶³.

December 15, 2009: Saakashvili’s spokesperson states that there will be no “trade-off” with South Ossetia over the release of detained people with Manana Manjgaladze, the Georgian President’s spokesperson, stating:

“The President believes that any trade-off with the occupying regime is inadmissible. Mikheil Saakashvili is grateful to European officials for their efforts and calls on them to keep away from trading of human beings, which is pushed for by the occupying regime,”³²⁶⁴. South Ossetia calls for an “all for all exchange” of detainees³²⁶⁵.

December 24, 2009: Lavrov states that Georgia’s “current leadership represents threat for the regional peace and security.” And that the threat “has once already grown into war against South Ossetia, against the Russian peacekeepers, against the Russian Federation[...]So we are doing everything in order to prevent its [last year’s war] reoccurrence and we hope that those who continue rebuilding the Georgian army,

³²⁵⁹ “Geneva, One Year Later: Which Peace for Georgia?” *Old Civil*, October 15, 2009,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=21574>

³²⁶⁰ “OSCE Chairmanship says Geneva Discussions vital for stability” *OSCE*, November 12, 2009,

<https://www.osce.org/cio/51563>

³²⁶¹ “Lavrov: Georgia Armament Serious Problem” *Old Civil*, December 5, 2009,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=21754>

³²⁶² Ibid

³²⁶³ “Medvedev on Ties with Georgia” *Old Civil*, December 9, 2009, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=21766>

³²⁶⁴ “Saakashvili: No Trade-Off with Occupying Regime” *Old Civil*, December 15, 2009,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=21786>

³²⁶⁵ Ibid

understand what they are doing and they will restrain Georgia from new adventures,”³²⁶⁶. He also stated that the security of Abkhazia and South Ossetia was “reliably protected” after Russia and the entities signed comprehensive agreements on friendship and cooperation³²⁶⁷.

December 25, 2009: Georgia lays out a draft strategy paper for dealing with Abkhazia and South Ossetia which is against the “isolation of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia” and aims at fostering ties between the communities “separated by dividing lines,”³²⁶⁸. The strategy states that its goals will be sought only by peaceful and diplomatic efforts and “rules out conflict resolution by military means.”³²⁶⁹. The strategy has been discussed between academics and government officials but is yet to be endorsed by the government³²⁷⁰.

2010

January 1, 2010: In his new years address Saakashvili stated: “If we want free children of Georgia to be born on our soil – like it was for thousands of years – we should be ready for holding a hoe in one hand and a weapon in another[...]In one hand we should be holding hoe, computer, book and other tools, which are required for building of 21st and 22nd century, modern country[...]But, on the other hand, in order to protect the country’s future and to protect what we are building, we should always be ready for struggle and for protection of the country[...]These days we had a chance to again see on TV screens our enemy’s mad and at the same time very confused face. He can not understand why it was not possible to kneel down Georgia despite of so many tricks and provocations. He fails to understand that although it is possible to kneel down a separate Georgian, but it is impossible to ever kneel down the entire Georgian society[...]A secret, a recipe of our survival is very simple – our strength is in our unity[...]in the unity of all ethnic groups and all the citizens of Georgian, regardless of their origins and religious beliefs.”³²⁷¹.

January 6, 2010: The EUMM calls on the sides to address the issue of IDP’s following the arrest of a South Ossetian citizens and other cases of detentions at the administrative boundary line, which “raises wider issues concerning freedom of movement, security, and detainees.”³²⁷².

January 9, 2010: South Ossetia states that it will not take part in meetings with Georgian representatives under the IPRM framework as it stated: “The South Ossetian side has warned for multiple times during the Geneva discussions, that we would not participate in these meetings [in frames of IPRM] unless we receive information about the missing South Ossetian citizens,”³²⁷³.

January 21, 2010: The ninth Geneva talks are held in which Russia continued to push for a non-use of force treaty³²⁷⁴. Russia also stated that another issues was the need “to resolve the problem related with

³²⁶⁶ “Lavrov: Georgia’s Leadership Threat to Regional Security” *Old Civil*, December 24, 2009,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=21829>

³²⁶⁷ Ibid

³²⁶⁸ “Tbilisi Unveils Draft of its S.Ossetia, Abkhaz Strategy” *Old Civil*, December 25, 2009,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=21830>

³²⁶⁹ Ibid

³²⁷⁰ Ibid

³²⁷¹ “Saakashvili Delivers New Year Address” *Old Civil*, January 1, 2010,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=21852>

³²⁷² “EUMM Calls for Talks on Detained Persons” *Old Civil*, January 6, 2010,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=21860>

³²⁷³ “Tskhinvali Rejects Meeting on Detained Persons” *Old Civil*, January 9, 2010,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=21867>

³²⁷⁴ “Russian MFA on its Priorities for Geneva Talks” *Old Civil*, January 21, 2010,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=21910>

Georgia's re-armament[...]Under conditions of continued bellicose rhetoric from Tbilisi, ongoing calls from the Georgian authorities for restoration of Georgia's territorial integrity at any price and build-up of Georgian armed presence and maneuvers in the vicinity of Abkhaz and South Ossetian borders, the issue of granting Sokhumi and Tskhinvali firm security guarantees gains more significance,"³²⁷⁵

February 2, 2010: Lavrov states that the pace of international recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia is "normal" and stated that this process: "is faster than the pace of recognition of Soviet Russia was[...]I am sure, as the process of stabilization in Trans-Caucasus becomes free of ideology and momentum of the past and as the reality, which won't disappear anywhere, are recognized by everyone and as the statehood of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are steadily strengthened, this process [of international recognition] will proceed faster"³²⁷⁶.

February 4, 2010: South Ossetian locals warns the US of not supplying Georgia with weapons stating that these could be used against civilians³²⁷⁷. About 340 locals signed the petition which stated: "The citizens of South Ossetia fear that President Saakashvili, in light of his past recklessness and erratic behavior, will again use any military weapons and training against us."³²⁷⁸.

February 19, 2010: The leader of South Ossetia announces that the citizens of South Ossetia will soon be issued with new internal passports, travel documents, birth certificates, diplomas, and other documents, which are designed to replace the Georgian documents³²⁷⁹. In an announcement it was also stated that South Ossetians will be able to travel to Russia using only internal identification cards³²⁸⁰.

March 30, 2010: The tenth round of Geneva talk is held where the co-mediators, Antti Turunen of the UN, Pierre Morel of the EU and Bolat Nurgaliyev, the special envoy of the Kazakh OSCE chairmanship, stated: "Against the background of a relatively calm and stable general situation, it was noted that tensions continue to exist[...]It was highlighted that provocative actions and rhetorics are not helpful for the ongoing efforts to stabilize the situation on the ground and should therefore be avoided,"³²⁸¹. Talks also continued on the different draft proposals related to the non-use of force and international security arrangements³²⁸².

May 26, 2010: Saakashvili states on the eve of Georgia's Independence Day that he was in a "combative mood." Stating: "Of course I fully realize that 20% of our territory is occupied and that up to 500,000 compatriots are not able to go back to thier homes[...]But I also know that Georgia has survived... but we still face huge struggle for unification, for making our achievements irreversible[...]Sooner or later Russia will follow the path of modernization and it will happen sooner than many can imagine - I am sure about it[...]We should keep following our path of development - economic development, strengthening of our state institutions and of democracy and we should wait for the time, when even more modernized and developed Georgia becomes a desired partner of modernized Russia[...]More concessions you make, more it [Russia] wants - that's the principle based on which the leadership of this country acts[...]Show me at least one example when laying down before Russia turned out to be successful[...]I would have been the

³²⁷⁵ Ibid

³²⁷⁶ "Lavrov: Pace of S.Ossetia, Abkhazia Recognition Normal" *Old Civil*, February 2, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=21939>

³²⁷⁷ Ellen Barry "South Ossetians warn against rearming Georgia" *The New York Times*, February 4, 2010, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/05/world/europe/05russia.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FSouth%20Ossetia&mtref=undefined&gwh=6276AED3FE32D75AC41E829179E355DC&gwt=pay&assetType=REGIWALL>

³²⁷⁸ Ibid

³²⁷⁹ "South Ossetia To Introduce New Passports" *RadioFreeEurope*, February 19, 2010, https://www.rferl.org/a/South_Ossetia_To_Introduce_New_Passports/1963218.html

³²⁸⁰ Ibid

³²⁸¹ "Tenth Round of Geneva Talks" *Old Civil*, March 30, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22135>

³²⁸² Ibid

first to follow that example[...]Putin once called a Prime Minister of one country and told: 'I will cut relations with you if you appoint that man as Finance Minister, because that's friend of Saakashvili'. That person was appointed anyway. Putin also told a leader of one of the Arab countries not to meet me. Not only he met me, but also told me that he would visit Georgia 'because we do not obey such a dictate'"³²⁸³.

June 4, 2010: Ukraine's President Victor Yanukovich states that recognition of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Kosovo as independent states is "a violation of international laws and norms," and further stated: "I have never recognized Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Kosovo as independent states[...]There are international norms and laws which prohibit infringement of territorial integrity of any state. We have no right to welcome those processes in the world, where violation of territorial integrity of a country is taking place."³²⁸⁴

June 9, 2010: Putin states that there is no need to use French warships, which it plans to buy, against Georgia, with him stating: "I hope events will never again lead to military conflict between Russia and Georgia, never. We have been doing everything previously and are intending to do everything for preventing reoccurrence of this tragedy. Modern offensive systems make it possible to carry out any military operation deep into the entire territory of Georgia from the Russian territory and no Mistral is needed for that[...][Mistral] is an offensive weapon. Has France such helicopter carriers [Mistrals] in its armament? Yes, it has. Whom is France going to attack? No one. Why do people automatically assume that Russia will of course have to use this to attack someone? If you mean – and let's put it bluntly – for example, our Georgian neighbors[...]Georgia has a huge land border with Russia. As a result of a criminal action, which was launched by President Saakashvili two years ago, people have died. And Russia had to defend the lives of its peacekeepers and citizens of South Ossetia. And, as it is known, Russia had, I want to stress it, to use its armed forces for defensive purposes[...]We have stopped [Russian army's advance] 20-15 kilometers from Tbilisi, and not because we could not enter Tbilisi, but because we did not want it. We did not want any hostilities at all. Just that is why our peacekeepers were staying there"³²⁸⁵. Meanwhile, the 11 round of Geneva talks are held where Abkhazia and South Ossetia walked-out stating that their "opinions are ignored"³²⁸⁶. Disagreements particularly pertained to a draft document called "agreed undertakings" which deals with issues such as rehabilitation and damaged facilities³²⁸⁷. Georgia stated that: "due to the unconstructive position of the Russian Federation and its proxy regimes, participants were unable to finalize first reading of the 'Agreed Undertakings' [...]It is especially unfortunate that such a demarche happened on the issues, which are of direct relevance to the well-being and future of the victims of ethnic cleansing,"³²⁸⁸

June 11, 2010: Lavrov states that the recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia is irreversible. As he further stated: "When the purpose of the operation aimed at suppressing the aggression was fulfilled and the Russian President ordered to suspend a military operation, the Medvedev-Sarkozy plan was agreed, which laid the foundation for future actions. Its sixth point contained a provision on the need to launch international discussions over defining the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and ensuring their security. We have undersigned it. So, on August 12, 2008 the Russian President agreed that the status of these regions needed to be discussed on an international level[...]The document was agreed. French President Nicolas Sarkozy took it to Tbilisi. Then he called and said that Saakashvili was categorically against discussing the

³²⁸³ "Saakashvili on Ties with Russia, U.S., EU" *Old Civil*, May 26, 2010,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22337>

³²⁸⁴ "Yanukovich: Recognition of Abkhazia, S. Ossetia Breach of International Norms" *Old Civil*, June 4, 2010,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22391>

³²⁸⁵ "Putin: No Need to Use Mistral Against Georgia" *Old Civil*, June 9, 2010,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22405>

³²⁸⁶ "Tense Talks in Eleventh Round of Geneva Discussions" *Old Civil*, June 9, 2010,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22404>

³²⁸⁷ Ibid

³²⁸⁸ Ibid

status of these republics and that for him the status was in itself already obvious and this phrase should be removed [from the six-point agreement]. We agreed [to remove it][...]By the way, Saakashvili was also manipulating with other parts of the Medvedev-Sarkozy plan. Six points were preceded by a preamble, which said: the Presidents of Russian Federation and France approve the underwritten principles and call on the sides to fulfill them. In the document, which Saakashvili finally agreed to sign, he not only removed the phrase about the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but he also edited out the preamble and is now saying that the document calls, including on Russia, to stop doing various things. The preamble was unambiguously saying that the two Presidents were calling on the sides to do this and that. That is why it is called the Medvedev-Sarkozy plan[...]By that time discussions on the status have been thwarted and revanchist statements, like the war is not yet over, were heard from Tbilisi , so by the end of August [2008] it was decided that there was no other way to provide the security and survival of Abkhazians and South Ossetians, rather than to recognize their independence[...]Currently Russian troops are stationed in both South Ossetia and Abkhazia are stationed there based on agreements between Russia and two states recognized by it. Russia has fulfilled the Medvedev-Sarkozy plan in this part[...]By the way, those people, who say that we should return to the pre-August 8 line, forget that before August 8, 2008 our troops were stationed deep into the Georgia territory, because the peacekeepers were deployed not only in South Ossetia, which was then a part of Georgia, but also beyond its limits. The same situation was respect of Abkhazia. Therefore, if they call on us to move beyond South Ossetia and Abkhazia and to locate on the line, where the security was provided by our peacekeepers before August 8, 2008, I would be glad if we were told about it directly,”³²⁸⁹.

June 29, 2010: Saakashvili again speaks of the importance of referring to Abkhazia and South Ossetia as “occupied regions”³²⁹⁰. “You are well aware that the term ‘occupation’ has been used very rarely in the course of 20th century[...]This term means that occupation will end sooner or later. It means giving a temporary status to presence of [occupying force] on those territories; it means that those people [Russian forces] are there illegally; it means that property transactions are illegal[...]For example, I want tell some imprudent Russians: you are illegally buying houses [in Abkhazia] in illegally occupied territory of Georgia, as it is recognized by the international community and Russian forces there are occupants[...]The Russian people, which itself experienced Nazi occupation during the World War II, because of its leadership’s short-sighted and reckless policy now has to live in the country, which is occupant,”³²⁹¹. He also stated that Georgia was “fully ready to hold comprehensive talks with Russia without any pre-conditions on normalization of relations[...]This normalization means [talks] on return of 500,000 displaced persons back to their homes and restoration of their property rights, as well as on other issues related with bilateral relations, including political, economic, diplomatic and humanitarian aspects[...]We have no interest in having confrontation with Russia; we are ready to talk with the Russian leadership, which unlike the Georgian one is elected through violation of all the international norms and that’s observed by international organizations; despite of that it is the Russian leadership and we recognize it as partner in negotiations and we want to have talks with them providing that Georgia should be recognized as united, sovereign, independent state,”³²⁹².

July 3, 2010: Georgia approves an “Action plan for engagement” which lays out Georgia’s strategy for engagement with its “occupied territories”³²⁹³. The plan includes seven instruments: status-neutral liaison mechanism; neutral identification card and travel document; trust fund; joint investment fund; cooperation

³²⁸⁹ “Lavrov: Russia’s S.Ossetia, Abkhaz Decision Irreversible” *Old Civil*, June 11, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22413>

³²⁹⁰ “Saakashvili Stresses on Term Occupation, Speaks on Russia” *Old Civil*, June 29, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22466>

³²⁹¹ Ibid

³²⁹² Ibid

³²⁹³ “Tbilisi’s Action Plan for Engagement” *Old Civil*, July 7, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22493>

agency; financial institution and integrated social-economic zone³²⁹⁴ (see the reference for further elaboration of the steps).

July 5, 2010: Putin states, in connection to Clintons visit to Georgia that Georgia should negotiate directly with Abkhazia and South Ossetia instead of "seeking solution on the side" from the third parties³²⁹⁵. He also stated. "While some think that it [South Ossetia] is occupied, others think it is liberated,"³²⁹⁶. Georgia responded to Putin's remarks stating: "This kind of cynical remarks that Russia has nothing to do with it and that other players should resolve the situation between each other is simply a cheap attempt to avoid responsibility[...]The Georgian government and large part of the Georgian society is willing and is ready to cooperate with Russia, but the cooperation means mutual respect. As soon as Russia lives up to Georgia's free choice and Georgia's sovereignty, it will become very easy to establish civilized relations with Russia."³²⁹⁷. On US engagement Georgia also stated: "We should not have an illusion that it will bring immediate results; there is no reason to expect any fundamental change in Russia's stance towards its neighbors and towards the European security. But in the process, which should lead us step-by-step to this result, engagement of the United States is very important,"³²⁹⁸.

July 7, 2010: Russia criticizes Hillary Clinton for using the word "occupation" when referring to Abkhazia and South Ossetia³²⁹⁹. Russia stated that its military was invited to deploy troops in the areas, which are considers sovereign countries: "Therefore, Secretary Clinton's use of the term 'occupation' has no basis[...]There is not a single Russian serviceman on Georgian territory."³³⁰⁰.

July 27, 2010: The 12 Geneva talks are held with Georgia stating: "We do not expect that substantial steps forward will be made during this round of talks, especially against the negative and unconstructive background created by Russia and its proxies – Tskhinvali and Sokhumi,"³³⁰¹. Russia stated that the "major task of Geneva discussions remains elaboration of a legally binding agreement on non-use of force"³³⁰². Russia allegedly refuses to be a part of the agreement as it claims it is not a conflict party³³⁰³. Georgia on the other hand states that no additional treaty is required, as non-use of force commitment is already part of August 12, 2008 six-point ceasefire agreement³³⁰⁴. It is however ready to sign a new agreement but only with Russia and not with Russia's "puppet regimes"³³⁰⁵.

August 5, 2010: Medvedev states that normal relations with Georgia is impossible as long as Saakashvili remains in power³³⁰⁶. As he stated: "But it does not mean that such [normal] relations cannot be restored if other people come to power in Georgia. I am sure that it will happen – sooner or later, Georgian people will

³²⁹⁴ Ibid

³²⁹⁵ "Putin on Clinton Georgia Visit" *Old Civil*, July 5, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22487>

³²⁹⁶ Ibid

³²⁹⁷ "Georgian Deputy FM on Putin's Cynical Remarks" *Old Civil*, July 6, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22489>

³²⁹⁸ Ibid

³²⁹⁹ Ellen Barry "Russia: Government criticizes Clinton" *The New York Times*, July 7, 2010,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/08/world/europe/08briefs-Russia.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FSouth%20Ossetia&mtref=undefined&gwh=DE267DED6145329DB04498BBF42DD212&gwt=pay&assetType=REGIWALL>

³³⁰⁰ Ibid

³³⁰¹ "Twelfth Round of Geneva Talks" *Old Civil*, July 26, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22547>

³³⁰² Ibid

³³⁰³ Ibid

³³⁰⁴ Ibid

³³⁰⁵ Ibid

³³⁰⁶ "Medvedev Speaks of Relations with Georgia" *Old Civil*, August 5, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22572>

make their choice and those friendly, century-old relations, which link Russian and Georgian peoples, will be restored completely and we will be able to develop contacts between our countries in the spheres of economy, cultural-humanitarian cooperation and other fields[...]We have a good interaction with the EU countries and other states[...]We have differences over certain issues, but to say it bluntly, during private conversations, practically all those people, with whom I have discussed this issue, recognize both the fact of aggression and the rightfulness of such response [by Russia],”³³⁰⁷.

August 7, 2010: Saakashvili states that Georgia’s struggle for complete liberation continues and stated that Russia’s aggression against Georgia started much earlier than in 2008 and that: “And this aggression has not slowed down till now and it is not over yet. Our struggle will continue unless last occupant leaves the Georgian land, unless justice is restored towards hundreds of thousands of our citizens of various ethnicities, who were forced to leave their homes,”³³⁰⁸. He also stated that in 2008, Georgians had to defend “dignity, freedom and its future” with arms in their hands and that “Each of us is obliged to carry out this struggle on daily basis to honor memory of those fallen [in the August war]; to carry out this struggle within the country to further develop it and throughout the world to defend our positions everywhere[...]It is a historic task of our generation to accomplish this struggle and to liberate Georgia; we will accomplish this struggle and completely liberate our country,”³³⁰⁹. Meanwhile, Georgian State Minister for Reintegration, Temur Iakobashvili, stated that the most important achievement on diplomatic front since the August war had been international community’s refusal to follow Russia’s suit in recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia: “It is obvious now that [Tbilisi’s] counter efforts turned out to be more effective: if previously it was about recognition of these territories as independent states, now it is about recognition of these [regions] as occupied territories[...]I think it’s a complete failure of the Russian diplomacy and a real chance for us to return back these territories, to reintegrate them into the Georgian jurisdiction and to return those people back to Georgia[...]The war has demonstrated something that was not clearly evident before – our main problem is not relations with Abkhazians and Ossetians[...]Our major problem is Georgian-Russian relations. Russia is using separatists and separatism against the Georgian statehood,”³³¹⁰.

August 13, 2010: Medvedev meets with Eduard Kokoity in Sochi where he states: “Last two years have showed that Russia's decision to protect population of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and to recognize these states' independence were necessary. This [decision] gave possibility to these people to develop instead of being exterminated as a result of genocide,”³³¹¹.

August 25, 2010: Georgia’s Foreign Minister, Grigol Vashadze, states that Russia has also enhanced its air-defense system in South Ossetia: “Russia has deployed S-300 in occupied Abkhazia and Russia has stuffed its military base in Gyumri [Armenia] with S-300 systems. Though it [Russia] has not announced it publicly yet, be sure that Russia has definitely deployed S-300 in the Tskhinvali region as well[...]Russia has actually created a triangle over South Caucasus and its bordering regions, which, as they think, will be needed for them for confrontation with NATO or Turkey”³³¹² Russia denied the allegation on South Ossetia but states that it had deployed S-300 air-defense system in Abkhazia in autumn 2008³³¹³.

³³⁰⁷ Ibid

³³⁰⁸ “Saakashvili: Struggle for Liberation Continues” *Old Civil*, August 7, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22578>

³³⁰⁹ Ibid

³³¹⁰ Ibid

³³¹¹ “Medvedev Meets Kokoity” *Old Civil*, August 13, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22596>

³³¹² “Georgian FM: Russia has S-300 in S.Ossetia Too” *Old Civil*, August 25, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22620>

³³¹³ Ibid

September 4, 2010: Saakashvili states that Georgia has "an ideological confrontation" with Russia, as Georgia represents "a major competitor" to Russia in terms of model of development stating: "It is an objective reality, that Georgia has become Russia's major competitor in the post-Soviet space in terms of model of development; the major competitor in the sphere of ideology. [It happened] not because we wanted that - we are not obsessed by megalomania - it just happened so. We only had a very humble task - to do something in Georgia, that would have been different from what we had previously and to have a normal live[...]But as it turned out, it came into direct conflict with what is a well-rooted way of life in the entire post-Soviet space and which, first of all, is a heritage of Russia's imperial space."³³¹⁴. He also stated that Russia was "in the mode of imitating" Georgia: "But their attempt to imitate [Georgia] will fail, because when they speak about modernization[...]it is impossible to build modern, 21st century society in the feudal country"³³¹⁵.

September 8, 2010: The UNGA passes a Georgia sponsored resolution which reiterates the right of all displaced people to return to Abkhazia and South Ossetia³³¹⁶. Grigol Vashadze, the Georgian foreign minister, stated: "This trend will continue because of a simple reason – the international community has ruled a verdict on the occupying power's actions in the occupied territories, including in respect of ethnic cleansing; there is a good wording in the resolution 'forced demographic changes', which is a synonym of ethnic cleansing"³³¹⁷. Russia stated that the resolution had no humanitarian aims and its motivations were exclusively political and based on short-term calculations by Georgia³³¹⁸. To the resolution, Saakashvili stated that Russia "waged diplomatic war" against it to the extent that "Putin made Medvedev to call twice to several countries' leaders" to lobby against the resolution³³¹⁹. As he further stated: "There was blackmailing of various countries and there were attempts to bribe some countries – they [Russia] may even bribed some countries, I do not know that and I can't claim that, but the result [of voting] is that Russia has lost support of several important states and Georgia has gained several new supporters. Actually it is struggle between good and evil. Russia is against of the resolution, which says that people should return to their houses, where they were born[...]Russia is on the side of evil. Just look through the list of those countries, which support Russia and everything will become clear. The good has won a little, but important victory[...]We will continue our struggle, it was a small diplomatic victory and the eventual victory will be when occupying force leaves our territory; but before that eventual victory, we face many small diplomatic battles"³³²⁰. Russia's foreign ministry stated that the resolution was "counterproductive" and that it "is fraught with complicating situation in the region and may hit Geneva discussions, which are already ongoing in an uneasy" conditions³³²¹. The ministry also stated: "Against the background of Georgia's persistent refusal to sign with the Abkhaz and South Ossetian sides legally binding agreement on non-use of force, it looks like a pure demagogy [the resolution's] call on participants of Geneva discussions 'to intensify their efforts to establish a durable peace, to commit to enhanced confidence-building measures',"³³²².

September 29, 2010: Georgia states that Russian troops in South Ossetia are conducting "border demarcation" stating: "Russian occupational forces started to seize additional territory and move forward

³³¹⁴ "Saakashvili: 'Georgia is Russia's Major Ideological Competitor'" *Old Civil*, September 4, 2010,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22640>

³³¹⁵ Ibid

³³¹⁶ "UN General Assembly Passes Georgia IDP Resolution" *Old Civil*, September 8, 2010,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22649>

³³¹⁷ Ibid

³³¹⁸ Ibid

³³¹⁹ Ibid

³³²⁰ Ibid

³³²¹ "Russian MFA on UN General Assembly Resolution" *Old Civil*, September 9, 2010,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22653>

³³²² Ibid

the line of occupation in Shida Kartli region[...]Russian FSB [Federal Security Service] troops are conducting illegal 'border demarcation works' by putting steel poles in villages [of] Kvemo Nikozi, Zemo Nikozi, Ditsi, Arbo and Kordi."³³²³. According to Georgia's Interior Ministry 25 hectares of farmland is now occupied by the Russian troops in Kvemo Nikozi, south from Tskhinvali³³²⁴. Russia denied the allegation stating: "The Russian forces are not conducting any demarcation works on the South Ossetian border with Georgia,"³³²⁵.

September 30, 2010: Georgia towns down its accusations of Russian land grabbing now only stating the issue of border demarcation³³²⁶.

October 15, 2010: Russia announces that it will pull its troops out of Perevi, a small village outside breakaway South Ossetia's administrative borders³³²⁷. The announcement followed the thirteenth round of talks in Geneva³³²⁸. To the announcement, Russia stated: "This is an act of responsibility, an act of good will and at the same time a test for our Georgian partners in restraint[...]When our border guard troops pull back, the territory of South Ossetia will be fully defined and borders of the republic will be fully under the Russian border guard troops' control on the basis of bilateral agreement [between Tskhinvali and Moscow] and at the same time no one will be able to reprove border guard troops for presence somewhere on the Georgian territory"³³²⁹. Georgia's Deputy Foreign Minister, Giga Bokeria, stated that: "de-occupation of any territory or a village is a positive development," but also stated: "They [Russia] will try to 'sell' this move as a constructive step, but I want to emphasize, that it is only a slightest part of those commitments, which they have undertaken" under the August 12, 2008 ceasefire agreement³³³⁰.

October 18, 2010: Russian troops withdraw from Perevi³³³¹.

October 20, 2010: Russia states that with the withdrawal of Russian troops from Perevi the issue of "alleged non-compliance" with EU-mediated ceasefire agreement by Moscow had been "definitively closed."³³³². As further stated: "We hope that this move of the Russian side, aimed at reducing tensions on the borders of Georgia and South Ossetia, will receive adequate and constructive response from the Georgian side and the international community,"³³³³.

October 21, 2010: South Ossetia states that the withdrawal of Russian troops from Perevi was "premature" as the construction of an alternative road linking nearby South Ossetian village with the rest of region is

³³²³ "Tbilisi Says Russian Troops Seize Farmlands Adjacent to S.Ossetia" *Old Civil*, September 29, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22709>

³³²⁴ Ibid

³³²⁵ "Russian Troops in Tskhinvali Deny Seizing Farmlands" *Old Civil*, September 29, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22710>

³³²⁶ "Tbilisi Tones Down Farmland Grab Accusation" *Old Civil*, September 30, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22711>

³³²⁷ "Mediators Say Russia Pledged to Withdraw from Perevi" *Old Civil*, October 15, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22753>

³³²⁸ Ibid

³³²⁹ "Karasin: Russian Troops will Withdraw from Perevi in Nearest Future" *Old Civil*, October 15, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22754>

³³³⁰ Ibid

³³³¹ "Russian Soldiers Withdraw from Perevi" *Old Civil*, October 18, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22765>

³³³² "Georgia Slams Moscow's Cynical Stance on Six-Point Agreement" *Old Civil*, October 20, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22769>

³³³³ Ibid

not yet completed³³³⁴. South Ossetia stated: "Construction of the road, linking the South Ossetian village of Sinagur with Karzman, should have been completed in 2008. We have been assured that residents of Karzman would have been under the South Ossetian authorities' control, but the road is not yet built. I was categorically against of this move [removal of Russian checkpoint from Perevi]. Those structures are to be blamed, which were in charge of construction of the road. They have misinformed Moscow, as well as us"³³³⁵.

November 20, 2010: Medvedev states that during the Lisbon NATO summit Russia sought to make "a significant step forward" towards boosting cooperation but also stated: "One of the most serious differences probably is about our assessment of 2008 events – attitude towards what has happened in August, 2008, towards those geopolitical changes, which occurred at that time; in particular emergence of two new states – South Ossetia and Abkhazia. But we [Russia and NATO] have noted that this issue should not become a stumbling stone[...] We have agreed that [differences] should not disrupt our relations," he said. "On the contrary, we should work on finding ways out of these difficult situations. We should work on hearing each others' arguments."³³³⁶

November 23, 2010: Georgia makes a unilateral pledge of non-use of force with Saakashvili stating that Georgia was ready to make a "unilateral initiative to declare that Georgia will never use force to roll back the Russian occupation and to restore its control over the occupied areas."³³³⁷ To this Russia responded that the pledge would be "perceived seriously" only if it "is put on paper" and when "it becomes legally binding,"³³³⁸. Russia also stated: "Russia still believes that the road towards ensuring peace and security in Trans Caucasus lies through legally binding commitment on non-use of force between Tbilisi and Tskhinvali, as well as between Tbilisi and Sokhumi"³³³⁹. Russia also stated: "On the one hand, we would like to believe, that Saakashvili's remarks[...] reflect Tbilisi's realization of the fact – which has been persistently suggested for many years already by Russia and other members of the international community – that use of force is inadmissible and a crime[...] But the way in which this so called 'unilateral solemn pledge' is being delivered cannot but trigger our concern[...] Saakashvili still tries to convince the international community in the existence of some kind of conflict between Russia and Georgia, instead of speaking about many years of conflict between Tbilisi and peoples of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which as a result of another Georgian forceful adventure in August 2008 ended up with eventual self-determination of these peoples[...] We all remember 'a peace-loving' televised address by Saakashvili on August 7, 2008, just couple of hours before barbarous overnight shelling of Tskhinvali,"³³⁴⁰.

December 1, 2010: Sergey Lavrov states that Russia would not support the final declaration of the OSCE Astana summit if it contained a wording – "conflict in Georgia", as it would amount to referring Abkhazia and South Ossetia as parts of Georgia: "In the final declaration, we are ready to actively and in details support Geneva Discussions. But we can not agree with [the wording] that these Discussions are dedicated to 'conflict in Georgia', as it is offered by some of our western partners"³³⁴¹

³³³⁴ "Tskhinvali Says Perevi Withdrawal was 'Premature'" *Old Civil*, October 21, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22772>

³³³⁵ Ibid

³³³⁶ "Medvedev: Georgia 'Probably Most Serious' Disagreement with NATO" *Old Civil*, November 20, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22871>

³³³⁷ "Georgia Makes 'Unilateral Pledge' of Non-Use of Force" *Old Civil*, November 23, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22880>

³³³⁸ "Moscow Responds to Saakashvili's Non-Use of Force Pledge" *Old Civil*, November 24, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22891>

³³³⁹ Ibid

³³⁴⁰ Ibid

³³⁴¹ "Lavrov on Moscow's Georgia-Related Position at OSCE Summit" *Old Civil*, December 1, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22914>

December 6, 2010: Abkhazia and South Ossetia state that they are ready to commit themselves not to use force with Kokoity stating: “I, as the head of the Republic of South Ossetia, officially announce: our state will not use force against Georgia, its population, territories, armed forces,”³³⁴². Russia stated that: "an exceptionally important step has been taken towards sustainable peace and security in Transcaucasia." And that "We believe, that it opens up the prospect of solving the key issue of the Geneva Discussions on Stability and Security in Transcaucasia – full-fledged legal enshrinement of a regime of non-use of force between Tbilisi and Tskhinval and between Tbilisi and Sukhum”³³⁴³.

December 17, 2010: The 14 round of Geneva talks are held where Russia states that Georgia’s “unconstructive” position made it impossible to make further progress on non-use of force issue: “Non-use of force in Transcaucasia was the central part of the discussions. The November 23 statement by the Georgian President, as well as the December 6 statements by Presidents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia about renouncing use of force created new atmosphere and had a real impact on strengthening stability in the region[...]Further progress on this very important direction for the security of all three states was hindered by unconstructive position of the Georgian representatives, who were actually ignoring statements made by their neighbors [reference made on Abkhazia and South Ossetia]. Reluctance of Tbilisi towards developing good neighborly relations with Abkhazia and South Ossetia became obvious once again,”³³⁴⁴. During the talks Russia has refused to sign such an agreement as it states that it is not a conflict party, but rather it states it is a mediator – a statement Georgia calls cynical: "We've heard such a cynical statements [from Russian negotiators] like as if there is no conflict between Russia and Georgia whatsoever[...]We said that when we hear statements of this kind from the Russian Federation it is a matter of concern for everyone and reaction to this kind of statements should be firmer and more clear-cut, but unfortunately, we think, that there was no such reaction.”³³⁴⁵

2011

January 10, 2011: The 16 round of Geneva talks are held in which Russia states that the talks clearly demonstrated “increasing aggressiveness of the Georgian delegation[...]They tried to write off all the failures of Tbilisi’s leadership in domestic and international affairs to Russia’s intrigues. The Georgian side has arbitrarily accused Russian special services of organizing some kind of ‘terrorist acts’ on the territory of Georgia”³³⁴⁶. Georgia claims that it has prevented two terrorist attacks in June last year allegedly plotted by Russian security officers stationed in South Ossetia and Abkhazia³³⁴⁷. Georgia also stated that it would consider walking out of talks if “Russia continues state-sponsored terror campaign against Georgia”³³⁴⁸.

January 24, 2011: An unnamed source from Russia’s Southern Military District states that tactical-operational missile unit with Tochka-U rockets have been deployed in the Russian military base in South Ossetia with the source stating: “the Georgian special services have been informed about the presence of

³³⁴² “Bagapsh, Kokoity Ready for Non-Use of Force Pledge” *Old Civil*, December 6, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22930>

³³⁴³ “Moscow Hails Tskhinvali, Sokhumi for Non-Use of Force Pledges” *Old Civil*, December 8, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22939>

³³⁴⁴ “Russian MFA: Tbilisi 'Unconstructive' at Geneva Talks” *Old Civil*, December 17, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22971>

³³⁴⁵ “Tbilisi 'Disappointed' with 14th Round of Geneva Talks” *Old Civil*, December 17, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22968>

³³⁴⁶ “Russian MFA on 16th Round of Geneva Talks” *Old Civil*, June 10, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=23601>

³³⁴⁷ Ibid

³³⁴⁸ Ibid

the rockets in South Ossetia, which are capable to effectively repel any aggression from Tbilisi.”³³⁴⁹. Georgia later responded that the deployment “points clearly to the Russian Federation's plans to launch open military aggression against Georgia[...]The deployment of the Tactical Operational Missile Complex "Tochka - U" and the artillery battalion equipped with Smerch multiple-launch rocket systems poses a direct and overt threat to the peaceful population and territory of Georgia. By taking such actions Russia follows through with its aggressive policy directed towards the destruction of the Georgian statehood and elimination of the peaceful population of Georgia, as well as towards causing large-scale instability in the Caucasus and throughout the Black Sea Region”³³⁵⁰.

January 25, 2011: In televised interview Saakashvili states: “War is not yet over[...]If we are consolidated and[...]if we continue development we will definitely win this war.”³³⁵¹. He also stated that it was an achievement that the term “occupation” in reference to Abkhazia and South Ossetia was establishing on the international arena further stating that “Occupation always ends with de-occupation,”³³⁵². South Ossetia responded stating: “The statements of this kind are an open call for the preparation of a new military aggression against Abkhazia and South Ossetia[...]However, insistent reiteration of a thesis about 'occupied territories' by the President of Georgia, his threats and insulting tone, actually, rule out an opportunity of resumption of a political dialogue with him,”³³⁵³.

January 27, 2011: Saakashvili states to the Independent that Monday's suicide bombing at a Moscow airport was "payback" for Russia's policies in the North Caucasus further stating: "I discussed this personally with Vladimir Putin a while ago. I said to him that the payback for his country for supporting separatists would be that violence would come back to hit them as well[...]Putin said, 'No, if anyone tries anything against us, we shall crush them like cockroaches,' while jabbing and twisting his thumb on the table in front him.”³³⁵⁴. Saakashvili also stated that "Russia has a political mentality which is on the level of a reptile, like a crocodile ready to swallow you up”³³⁵⁵.

February 2, 2011: Russia states that Saakashvili’s recent remarks about Russia cast doubt over his sincerity of non-use of force pledge and make it difficult to continue serious discussions on confidence-building measures³³⁵⁶. In a televised Q/A Saakashvili stated that he would use a term “enemy” while referring to Russia and added that he was looking forward to the time when he would no longer use this term in reference to Russia: “You know there is a principle of boomerang and you know a great tragedy happened yesterday in Moscow [terrorist act in Domodedovo airport]; there is no justification for terrorism” Saakashvili said. He also said that Russia had “a political mentality, which is on the level of reptile; like a crocodile ready to swallow you up.”³³⁵⁷. Russia responded: “It has been confirmed, that the Georgian authorities insistently continue line of further deterioration of relations with Russia. At the same time concerns of the Abkhaz and South Ossetian sides about their security in the face of direct threat from the Georgian side are

³³⁴⁹ “Reports: Russia Deploys Tochka-U Rockets in S.Ossetia” *Old Civil*, January 24, 2011,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=23077>

³³⁵⁰ “Tbilisi Condemns Deployment of Tochka-U in S.Ossetia” *Old Civil*, January 24, 2011,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=23078>

³³⁵¹ “Sokhumi, Tskhinvali Concerned over Saakashvili’s Remarks” *Old Civil*, January 26, 2011,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=23085>

³³⁵² Ibid

³³⁵³ Ibid

³³⁵⁴ Shaun Walker “Georgian President warns against violence in the region after Moscow attack” *Independent*, January 27, 2011, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/georgian-president-warns-against-violence-in-the-region-after-moscow-attack-2195551.html>

³³⁵⁵ Ibid

³³⁵⁶ “Moscow Slams Saakashvili’s Remarks on Russia” *Old Civil*, February 2, 2011,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=23104>

³³⁵⁷ Ibid

justified[...]After this kind of remarks by the Georgian President it is difficult to continue serious discussions on the issues related with confidence building and return of refugees, as it is envisaged by the agenda of the Geneva Discussions on Trans-Caucasus. Real stance of Tbilisi is not in line with the solemn pledge [on non-use of force] made before the international audience in Strasbourg [at the European Parliament] and in other Western cities. With the efforts of the Georgian leadership Geneva [discussions] are again being thrown back. With this in mind, it is clear that issue of providing firm security to Abkhazia and South Ossetia and providing them with guarantees of non-use of force from Georgia remain major priorities for the Geneva Discussions. We will take it into consideration in the process of preparation of 15th round of [Geneva talks] scheduled for March 4. We hope that the international community and first and foremost UN, OSCE and EU, as co-chairs of the Geneva meetings, will give adequate assessment to the existing situation and will support the Russian Federation's efforts directed towards strengthening still fragile security and stability in the region"³³⁵⁸.

February 27, 2011: Alexander Torshin, deputy speaker of Russia's upper house of the Parliament, Federal Council, blamed Georgia for ordering the attack against the Domodedovo airport in Moscow stating: "I am sure the terrorist act was organized from outside[...]I will say from where, although I understand that my words may trigger wave of anger and misunderstanding, but I think, it was Georgia and its ruling regime [who ordered the attack][...]Saakashvili is not hiding his animosity towards us. He has long turned anti-Russian attitudes into a competitive product, which he is selling. There is nothing else to sell; the Georgian wines are being sold poorly on the foreign markets[...]But there is a demand on Russophobia. The Saakashvili's regime had no need at all in Umarov to organize the terrorist act, because there is Ossetian traitor [Dimitri] Sanakoev [the head of Tbilisi-based provisional South Ossetian administration] and his network of agents,"³³⁵⁹

April 1, 2011: The International Court of Justice states that it cannot hear a complaint by Georgia that Russia committed human rights abuses in two breakaway provinces since it has no jurisdiction over the case³³⁶⁰.

April 25, 2011: Lavrov arrives in South Ossetia for a meeting with Kokoity where he states: "We expect, that the Georgian leadership will implicitly confirm its commitment not to use force against South Ossetia and Abkhazia[...]We will provide any assistance to South Ossetia in this regard and we will strongly insist that international discussions consider this task as a priority[...]We don't rule out military provocations from Georgia, because anything can be expected from the current regime in Tbilisi; so we will spare no efforts to reliably protect the South Ossetian border and to be ready if someone will again wish to commit the crime of August, 2008,"³³⁶¹.

May 24, 2011: The EUMM states that Georgian police forces have increased their presence in the areas adjacent to the breakaway South Ossetian administrative border with Georgia responding that it was nothing out of the ordinary³³⁶².

³³⁵⁸ Ibid

³³⁵⁹ "Senior Russian Senator: 'Georgia Ordered Domodedovo Bombing'" *Old Civil*, February 27, 2011, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=23189>

³³⁶⁰ "UN court rejects Georgia case against Russia" *Aljazeera*, April 1, 2011, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2011/04/2011411347650197.html>

³³⁶¹ "Lavrov, Kokoity Meet in Tskhinvali" *Old Civil*, April 25, 2011, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=23373>

³³⁶² "Police Enhance Security at S.Ossetia Administrative Border" *Old Civil*, May 24, 2011, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=23506>

July 13, 2011: The Geneva talks have been, according to Georgia, brought to a “dead-end” because of Russia’s “terror campaign” against Georgia³³⁶³. Georgia however states that despite the few results, Georgia was in favor of the continuation of the talks³³⁶⁴.

August 1, 2011: Russia opposed a US Senate resolution which used the word “occupation” to refer to South Ossetia and Abkhazia and stated: “The statement of the American senators about this testifies either to illiteracy of international law, or else complete disregard for the real facts[...]All this is convincing evidence that the given resolution is no less than an exercise in P.R., taken in order to return attention to the ‘Georgian question.’”³³⁶⁵

August 2, 2011: Putin states to a question about the unification of North and South Ossetia that the “Future will depend on the South Ossetian people themselves,”³³⁶⁶. He also stated: “In various periods of history the border between North Ossetia and South Ossetia was running differently. There was a period, when there was no border at all. The border emerged in frames of a uniform state, in frames of the Russian Empire. Simply it was easier to rule that way,”³³⁶⁷

August 8, 2011: The Kremlin announces that Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has sent two agreements (signed a year ago) for ratification at the state Duma on establishing military bases in the breakaway territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia³³⁶⁸. The agreements would allow Russia to keep 3,800 soldiers in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia with heavy weapons for 49 years without paying any lease and the agreement may automatically be prolonged for an indefinite period³³⁶⁹. Russia stated that the move to send the agreement for ratification was done to mark the anniversary of the conflict in Georgia³³⁷⁰. Meanwhile, Medvedev hinted at US involvement in Georgia's decision to attack South Ossetia: “The moment of truth for me, as I realised later while analysing those events in hindsight, came with the visit by secretary of state Condoleezza Rice[...]Following that visit, my Georgian colleague simply dropped all communication with us[...]It was apparent that he had new plans.”³³⁷¹. Georgia responded stating that Medvedev was using “Cold War rhetoric”, and accused Russia of “unsuccessful attempts to resurrect the Soviet empire”³³⁷².

August 15, 2011: South Ossetia is to hold a referendum on whether to make Russian, alongside Ossetian, the official language³³⁷³.

³³⁶³ “Georgian Chief Negotiator on Geneva Talks” *Old Civil*, July 13, 2011,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=23744>

³³⁶⁴ Ibid

³³⁶⁵ Ellen Barry “Russia replies sharply to U.S senates support of Georgia” *The New York Times*, August 1, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/02/world/europe/02russia.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FSouth%20Ossetia&mtref=undefined&gwh=A91606BA8F33BF872B5B01539970EB14&gwt=pay&assetType=REGIWALL>

³³⁶⁶ “Putin on ‘Two Ossetias’” *Old Civil*, August 2, 2011, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=23818>

³³⁶⁷ Ibid

³³⁶⁸ Jamestown Foundation “Moscow Believes It Has Successfully Isolated Georgia” *Refworld*, August 11, 2011,

<https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=4e4a01bf2&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

³³⁶⁹ Ibid

³³⁷⁰ Ibid

³³⁷¹ Shaun Walker “Medvedev reignites war of words over blame for Georgia conflict” *Independent*, August 8, 2011, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/medvedev-reignites-war-of-words-over-blame-for-georgia-conflict-2333619.html>

³³⁷² Ibid

³³⁷³ “Tskhinvali to Hold Referendum on Russian Language in November” *Old Civil*, August 15, 2011, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=23838>

August 23, 2011: Russia accuses Georgia of preparing “a large-scale provocation” on South Ossetia’s administrative border stating that Georgian authorities had planned an event dubbed as “peace march” during which about 3,000 Georgians, residents of Tserovani settlement for IDPs, as well as Chechen refugees living in Akhmeta district in eastern Georgia would march from the village of Odzisi to a checkpoint at Akhgori district on the South Ossetian administrative border³³⁷⁴. To this Russia stated: “Scenario of this event envisages an attempt of mass illegal penetration into the territory of South Ossetia under the slogan of return of refugees to their homes[...]This new irresponsible and provocative intention of Tbilisi is extremely dangerous[...]It is fraught with destabilization of already fragile situation in the region[...]We strongly warn the Georgian side against any attempts to carry out a new adventure in the region. We hope that the appropriate unambiguous signals towards Tbilisi will also come from other members of the international community”³³⁷⁵. To this Georgia responded: “We are already accustomed to hearing such outrageous and groundless accusations, and do not take them seriously. And neither does the international community, as the EUMM’s [EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia] reaction to this allegation proves,”³³⁷⁶. Georgia also stated further: “It is extremely alarming that Russia invents such false pretexts for further provocations and for the worsening of the already dire situation near Georgia’s occupied territories[...]Such Soviet-style propaganda aims at creating artificial tensions on the ground, and in doing so to prepare for possible future provocations[...]We will all keep a watchful eye on possible developments, as we can never be sure what aggressive intentions Russia may be hiding behind such statements”³³⁷⁷.

November 13, 2011: South Ossetia holds presidential election and language referendum³³⁷⁸

November 21, 2011: Medvedev states that NATO would have expanded had Russia not defended South Ossetia: “If you[...]had faltered back in 2008, the geopolitical situation would be different now[...]And a number of countries which (NATO) tried to deliberately drag into the alliance, would have most likely already been part of it now[...]We abandoned direct competition (with NATO), but[...]we now have different visions of the solutions of a number of security issues,”³³⁷⁹. He also stated that Russia would soon announce new measures as a response towards the US plans of establishing a missile defense in Europe³³⁸⁰.

November 28, 2011: Georgia states that South Ossetia’s presidential election was “an event planned by the Kremlin,” and further stating: “What is happening there is not considered as elections; that’s an event, which is planned by the Kremlin and which is led by the official Moscow and Moscow is responsible for its results[...]Events not agreed with Tbilisi are taking place in Georgia’s occupied territories. Unfortunately, human rights violations are also taking place and [Moscow], which is in charge of situation there, is responsible for that. We hope that the international community will react adequately. There was a very prompt and adequate reaction from the international community when the so called first round of [election on November 13] was condemned by the U.S., the European Union,”³³⁸¹

³³⁷⁴ “Moscow Accuses Tbilisi of Plotting 'Large-Scale Provocation” *Old Civil*, August 23, 2011, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=23859>

³³⁷⁵ Ibid

³³⁷⁶ “Tbilisi Says Russia Trying to Create 'Artificial Tension” *Old Civil*, August 24, 2011, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=23863>

³³⁷⁷ Ibid

³³⁷⁸ “S.Ossetian CEC: Presidential Elections Valid” *Old Civil*, November 13, 2011, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24136>

³³⁷⁹ “Russia says Georgia war stopped NATO expansion” *Reuters*, November 21, 2011, <https://www.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-60645720111121>

³³⁸⁰ Ibid

³³⁸¹ “Tbilisi Says S.Ossetia Polls 'Kremlin-Planned Event” *Old Civil*, November 28, 2011, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24196>

November 29, 2011: A court in South Ossetia annuls the outcome of the presidential election which saw victory to an opposition candidate³³⁸². The ruling followed a complaint submitted by candidate Anatoly Bibilov³³⁸³.

November 30, 2011: Russia states calls on political forces in South Ossetia “to respect” the ruling of the Supreme Court annulling Sunday’s presidential runoff results stating: “Moscow is closely following developments in friendly neighboring state[...]. We are interested in calm and stable situation to be maintained in the young republic and in the political processes to develop exclusively in legal framework. For that to happen it is necessary for all the public-political forces respect decisions taken by the supreme bodies of the government.”³³⁸⁴. The court decision and Russian statement led to protests outside Russia’s embassy in South Ossetia³³⁸⁵.

December 2, 2011: Protests continue in South Ossetia with opposition to Bibilov³³⁸⁶. The protesters have equally stated an intention of boycotting the Russian state Duma elections which Kokoity called a provocation³³⁸⁷.

December 5, 2011: Medvedev states to the situation in South Ossetia with the protests: “Situation in South Ossetia is developing in line with internal rules; I do not like it that they have quarreled there [in South Ossetia]. It, of course, happens, especially in small territorial entities. There are only several participants of this process, representing various clans, which periodically get into dispute[...]. They should themselves agree on how to rule their state – we have recognized South Ossetia as international-legal entity. Of course we are ready to help them in a form of presence of our mediators. Of course we will be doing that, but let them themselves agree and assume responsibility for the fate of this small, but proud people,”³³⁸⁸. He also stated that instead of “pointing the finger at Moscow, the both sides themselves should be taking responsible decisions”, otherwise “they will have problems”³³⁸⁹.

December 10, 2011: Kokoity quits as part of a deal with the opposition³³⁹⁰.

December 23, 2011: Georgia adopts a new national security concept with the main changes referring to Russia³³⁹¹. The strategy lists: Russian military “occupation of the Georgian territories” and “a risk of a new military aggression” by Russia, as well as “terrorist acts organized by Russia from the occupied territories” as the main challenges³³⁹².

2012

³³⁸² “Court in Tskhinvali Annuls Runoff Results” *Old Civil*, November 29, 2011,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24201>

³³⁸³ Ibid

³³⁸⁴ “Moscow Tells Political Forces in Tskhinvali to Respect Court's Ruling on Polls” *Old Civil*, November 30, 2011, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24206>

³³⁸⁵ Ibid

³³⁸⁶ “Protesters Keep All-Night Vigil in Tskhinvali” *Old Civil*, December 2, 2011,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24225>

³³⁸⁷ Ibid

³³⁸⁸ “Medvedev: 'Don't Like it that They've Quarreled in S.Ossetia'” *Old Civil*, December 5, 2011,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24235>

³³⁸⁹ Ibid

³³⁹⁰ “Kokoity Quits” *Old Civil*, December 10, 2011, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24256>

³³⁹¹ “Georgia's New National Security Concept” *Old Civil*, December 23, 2011,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24299>

³³⁹² Ibid

January 21, 2012: Alla Jioyeva, whose victory in the South Ossetian presidential elections last year was annulled states that the repeat election set in March is illegal and that she would not run³³⁹³.

January 25, 2012: Georgia accuses Russia of trying to “to kill” Geneva talks, stating: “Unfortunately Geneva talks are stalled in both working groups, because our Russian partners are explicitly refusing to discuss security arrangements in the first working group and they are explicitly refusing to discuss voluntary, dignified and safe return of IDPs and refugees in the second one,”³³⁹⁴.

January 30, 2012: Alla Jioyeva, states that she will inaugurate herself as new leader of the region at a ceremony on February 10³³⁹⁵. She also stated: “Mediators, who have arrived from Moscow, in particular Sergey Vinokurov, to put it bluntly, have bamboozled us[...]I have shown a very serious political shortsightedness and today I repent before those radical groups [within her supporters], who at the time claimed that we should have stood firm to the end[...]I am telling you with absolute sincerity, that I could have never imagined that such a senior level official [referring to Vinokurov], under whose mediation this agreement was signed, would have simply exploited our tiredness [after two weeks of street protest rallies] and would have made us sign an agreement which was disadvantageous for us. But even this disadvantageous agreement was not implemented,”³³⁹⁶

February 6, 2012: Medvedev state that Saakashvili, whom he called “insane”, was well aware that the Russian military bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia were capable of “inflicting incommensurable damage to any invader.” And that “[Military bases] are now in such a condition that they are capable to protect these two small states and correspondingly the Russian interests too in the most powerful way. The weaponry, which is in place [on those bases], is enough to inflict incommensurable damage to any invader and they understand it, even insane Saakashvili understands it,”³³⁹⁷ He also stated: “As far as militarization of Saakashvili’s regime is concerned, I have to say the following[...]To say the truth, this militarization has not been stopped even after the so called five-day war [in August, 2008]. Furthermore, we had information, that supply of various types of weapons continued through the U.S. administration and some other countries, by the way, including our close neighbors, immediately after [the war][...]That’s way we had to reinforce military bases, which are located on the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. They [the military bases] are now in such a condition that they are capable to protect these two small states.”³³⁹⁸. Meanwhile, in South Ossetia, Anatoly Bibilov, states that he would not run in the repeat election on March 25 either³³⁹⁹.

February 9, 2012: Alla Jioyeva is hospitalized after law enforcement agencies raided her office in Tskhinvali. Law enforcement officers allegedly arrived at Jioyeva's office after she had refused to appear before investigators for "a questioning as a witness" into the case related to "unrests" outside government building in Tskhinvali³⁴⁰⁰. According to the chief prosecutor's office Jioyeva fell ill while "talking" with law enforcement officer³⁴⁰¹. According to the same source she was immediately hospitalized and diagnosed

³³⁹³ “Jioyeva Says Repeat Election 'Illegal'” *Old Civil*, January 21, 2012,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24370>

³³⁹⁴ “Georgian FM: Geneva Talks Stalled” *Old Civil*, January 25, 2012, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24380>

³³⁹⁵ “Jioyeva Sets Self-Inauguration Date” *Old Civil*, January 30, 2012, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24394>

³³⁹⁶ Ibid

³³⁹⁷ “Medvedev on Georgia's 'Militarization'” *Old Civil*, February 6, 2012,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24419>

³³⁹⁸ Ibid

³³⁹⁹ “Bibilov Says will not Run in Repeat Poll” *Old Civil*, February 6, 2012,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24417>

³⁴⁰⁰ “Jioyeva Hospitalized after Authorities 'Raid' Her Office” *Old Civil*, February 9, 2012,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24428>

³⁴⁰¹ Ibid

with "hypertensive crisis", a highly elevated blood pressure that may lead to a stroke³⁴⁰². Acting leader in South Ossetia, Vadim Brovtsev, states that Jioyeva's intention to inaugurate herself on February 10 was "actually a call for forceful seizure of power" and that he "assume[s] full responsibility to prevent coup[...]Violation of laws will be eradicated in the most decisive way. Additional measures will be undertaken to protect law and order and constitutional rights of citizens,"³⁴⁰³.

February 15, 2012: Russian military base in breakaway South Ossetia is creating a new battalion to recruit specifically local residents with the battalion called "Ossetian battalion"³⁴⁰⁴. Georgia stated that it was part of ongoing "militarization" of Georgia's occupied territories by Russia: "Georgia's occupied territories have actually turned into large military bases and their inhabitants are either employed in the Russian military bases themselves or are serving with the Russian occupation troops[...]Additional financial and material resources are being allocated for the strengthening of the Russian occupation troops against a background of daily accidents in military (including nuclear) facilities [in Russia], which poses a real threat to the Russian population as well as to the population of neighbouring countries and indeed to the world as a whole"³⁴⁰⁵.

March 3, 2012: Georgia proposes visa-free travel for Russian citizens which Russia pledged to reciprocate by removing the visa requirement for Georgians if Tbilisi can ensure "the safety of Russians visiting Georgia."³⁴⁰⁶ A statement by the Russian foreign ministry also stated that Russia is interested in "strengthening ties between the peoples of Russia and Georgia"³⁴⁰⁷. Saakashvili however stated that in order to restore diplomatic ties, Russia must first recognize that Abkhazia and South Ossetia are part of Georgia³⁴⁰⁸.

March 4, 2012: Russia holds presidential elections in which the inhabitants of South Ossetia who have a Russian passport participated³⁴⁰⁹. Putin wins the election³⁴¹⁰.

March 5, 2012: Following his election, Putin states that Russia will not reverse its policy on South Ossetia and Abkhazia³⁴¹¹. Saakashvili stated to the Russian presidential election that: "With their current course, with their current policy, whatever elections they hold or stage, in case of the present authorities, they have no future because they are building the past. They are building the past not only by having restored the Soviet anthem or by trying to create or restore a Soviet empire, or by having the slogans of the Eurasian Union [Russia's President-elect Vladimir Putin's proposal to bring former Soviet states into new union built

³⁴⁰² Ibid

³⁴⁰³ Ibid

³⁴⁰⁴ "Ossetian Battalion' Planned Within Russian Troops in S.Ossetia" *Old Civil*, February 15, 2012, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24448>

³⁴⁰⁵ Ibid

³⁴⁰⁶ "Saakashvili Rejects Russian Diplomatic Offer, Cites Sovereignty Issue" *RadioFreeEurope*, March 3, 2012, https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia_president_rejects_russia_diplomatic_offer/24503515.html

³⁴⁰⁷ Ibid

³⁴⁰⁸ Ibid

³⁴⁰⁹ "Georgia's Breakaway Regions Vote in Russia's Presidential Election" *Old Civil*, March 4, 2012, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24515>

³⁴¹⁰ Kathy Lally and Will Englund "Putin wins election as Russian president; opponents claim widespread fraud" *The Washington Post*, March 4, 2012 https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/russians-voting--and-watching/2012/03/04/gIQA3j6CqR_story.html?noredirect=on

³⁴¹¹ "Putin Says No Turning Back on Abkhazia, S.Ossetia" *Old Civil*, March 5, 2012, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24516>

on an existing Customs Union with Belarus and Kazakhstan]. They are mentally taking their country back to the past. We are building the future and it means that we will definitely achieve everything,”³⁴¹².

March 25, 2012: South Ossetia holds presidential elections³⁴¹³

April 9, 2012: Leonid Tibilov, a former head of South Ossetia's KGB is declared the winner of the presidential election with just over 54 percent of the vote³⁴¹⁴

April 12, 2012: Russia recommends its citizens “to refrain from traveling” to Georgia because of “absence of security” for the Russian citizens³⁴¹⁵. This comes following the criminal persecution of three citizens of Russia for violating Georgia’s law on occupied territories³⁴¹⁶. Russia has previously called on Georgia to lift the law³⁴¹⁷.

August 8, 2012: Putin states that Russia had worked out a plan in 2006 for dealing with a potential conflict in Georgia as he stated: "The plan [for potential armed conflict with Georgia] was prepared by the General Staff at the end of 2006 or at the beginning of 2007 and I approved it"³⁴¹⁸. He also stated that part of the plan included training local groups in South Ossetia to help Russian troops in the event that open hostilities broke out with Georgia³⁴¹⁹.

August 15, 2012: Georgia accuses South Ossetia of intentionally tearing down Georgian villages in South Ossetia³⁴²⁰. According to Refworld, Leonid Tibilov allegedly stated that the villages would be stripped of their names as “the settlements will not exist.”³⁴²¹. Georgia’s Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Kapanadze criticized South Ossetia and Russia for what he called a "continuation of the ethnic cleansing." ³⁴²².

April 26, 2012: Saakashvili states that he is ready to resign if Russia withdraws its troops from Abkhazia and South Ossetia and he also accused Russia of trying to replace the government in Tbilisi with one that would "legitimize" what he called the "occupation" of Abkhazia and South Ossetia³⁴²³.

³⁴¹² “Saakashvili: 'Russia has no Future Under Current Leadership'” *Old Civil*, March 5, 2012,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24520>

³⁴¹³ “Breakaway Georgia region South Ossetia votes for president” *Reuters*, March 25, 2012,

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-georgia-southossetia-election/breakaway-georgia-region-south-ossetia-votes-for-president-idUSBRE82O09M20120325>

³⁴¹⁴ “Former KGB Chief Declared Winner of South Ossetian Presidential Election” *RadioFreeEurope*, April 9, 2012,

https://www.rferl.org/a/former_kgb_chief_declared_winner_of_south_ossetia_presidential_election/24541906.html

³⁴¹⁵ “Russia Warns Against Travel to Georgia” *Old Civil*, April 12, 2012,

<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24657>

³⁴¹⁶ Ibid

³⁴¹⁷ Ibid

³⁴¹⁸ Radio Free Europe “Russian generals accuse Medvedev of hesitation in Russia-Georgia war” *Refworld*, August

8, 2012, [https://www.refworld.org/cgi-](https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=5029153533&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO)

[bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=5029153533&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO](https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=5029153533&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO)

³⁴¹⁹ Ibid

³⁴²⁰ Radio Free Europe “Breakaway South Ossetia plans 'to demolish Georgian villages'” *Refworld*, August 15,

2012, [https://www.refworld.org/cgi-](https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=503b348f36&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO)

[bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=503b348f36&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO](https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=503b348f36&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO)

³⁴²¹ Ibid

³⁴²² Ibid

³⁴²³ “Georgia's Saakashvili 'Ready To Quit' If Russia Withdraws Troops” *RadioFreeEurope*, April 26, 2012,

https://www.rferl.org/a/saakashvili_ready_to_quit/24561634.html

June 19, 2012: Georgia's Ministry of Education states that it is ready to provide free university education to all residents of Georgia's two separatist regions who have obtained "status-neutral" documents³⁴²⁴. The status-neutral internal and travel documents for the residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia were announced earlier this year, in accordance with the state strategy on what it calls its "occupied territories."³⁴²⁵ Officials in South Ossetia and Abkhazia however condemned Georgia's new "status-neutral" documents after U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said in Tbilisi recently that U.S. authorities would recognize the new documents³⁴²⁶.

July 16, 2012: Georgia states that Russia is engaged in "intensive militarization" in the breakaway regions³⁴²⁷. Georgia amongst other points to a recent visit by the head of Russian ground forces General Vladimir Chirkin to the areas³⁴²⁸. In a statement, Georgia stated that Russia "has nothing to offer the Caucasus except criminal, mafia-style rule and militarization."³⁴²⁹

August 26, 2012: Abkhazia and South Ossetia mark their Independence Day³⁴³⁰. It was the fourth year since Russia's recognition of the entities³⁴³¹. In South Ossetia, Tibilov handed out awards to "citizens who made contributions to the establishment and strengthening of sovereignty" and talked of the areas "unbroken spirit" and called its people citizens of a "heroic nation."³⁴³²

August 28, 2012: Gunfire is exchanged between Georgian security forces and Islamic group along the Russian border at the Georgia Lopota mountain gorge, close to Russia's Dagestan³⁴³³. The Islamic group allegedly took hostages and the incident led to the death of three Georgian forces and 11 militants³⁴³⁴. To the incident, Saakashvili stated that "instability in a neighboring country will never affect[...]Another attempt to export a new wave of tension and instability into Georgia from our northern neighbor will be stopped at the very beginning."³⁴³⁵

September 18, 2012: Russia holds a military exercise near the area where Russia entered into Georgia in 2008³⁴³⁶. To the soldiers, Putin stated: "You are all educated people, you see what is happening in the world. You see unfortunately that the use of force is increasing in international affairs[...]That all speaks to the fact that we should keep our powder dry and that Russia's defenses must improve,"³⁴³⁷. The exercise will involve 8000 security personnel³⁴³⁸

³⁴²⁴ "Georgia To Provide Separatist Regions' Residents With Free Education" *RadioFreeEurope*, June 19, 2012, <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-offers-breakaway-regions-free-education/24619248.html>

³⁴²⁵ Ibid

³⁴²⁶ Ibid

³⁴²⁷ "Georgia Complains Of Russian 'Militarization' In Abkhazia, South Ossetia" *RadioFreeEurope*, July 16, 2012, <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-complains-about-russian-militarization-in-abkhazia-south-ossetia/24647127.html>

³⁴²⁸ Ibid

³⁴²⁹ Ibid

³⁴³⁰ "Georgia's Breakaway Republics Mark Independence Day" *RadioFreeEurope*, August 26, 2012, <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-abkhazia-south-ossetia/24688360.html>

³⁴³¹ Ibid

³⁴³² Ibid

³⁴³³ "Georgian army operation on Russian border leaves 14 dead" *BBC*, August 29, 2012, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-19414138>

³⁴³⁴ Ibid

³⁴³⁵ "As Hostage Crisis Unfolds, Saakashvili Pledges To Maintain Georgian Stability" *RadioFreeEurope*, August 29, 2012, <https://www.rferl.org/a/saakashvili-pledges-to-protect-georgia-from-instability/24692321.html>

³⁴³⁶ Thomas Grove "Putin watches war games, tells soldiers to boost Russian defense" *Reuters*, September 18, 2012, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-putin-wargames/putin-watches-war-games-tells-soldiers-to-boost-russian-defense-idUSBRE88G1FL20120917>

³⁴³⁷ Ibid

³⁴³⁸ Ibid

September 22, 2012: During a Geneva talk on the security and human rights repercussions of the August 2008 war, South Ossetian representatives accused Georgia of engaging in a new military buildup which they fear signaled a new attack against the entity³⁴³⁹. The EUMM stated that it had not observed such activity but that it had observed a concentration of Russian forces along the administrative line³⁴⁴⁰. Georgia expressed its concern about the Russian troops and asked for the international community to convey to Russia that such an “aggressive posture” was unacceptable³⁴⁴¹. The EU’s special representative for Georgia, met with Leonid Tibilov who stated that he had: “very serious information about Georgia's current intentions. Specifically, the Georgian Defense Ministry is building fortifications on the territory that borders on [South Ossetia's] Leningori raion. Stores for firearms are being created in all Georgian border villages.”³⁴⁴². Georgia also referred to the Kavkaz-2012 war games which took place on its northern borders with Russia as an attempt by Russia to destabilize the situation in Georgia in the run up to the parliamentary elections in October³⁴⁴³. Russia stated that “in order to preclude additional tensions in relations with some of our neighbors,” no units from the Russian military bases in Armenia, Abkhazia, or South Ossetia would participate in the maneuvers³⁴⁴⁴.

October 2, 2012: Saakashvili admits defeat following parliamentary election stating that opposition leader Bidzina Ivanishvili will form a new government³⁴⁴⁵. Russia applauded the new government with Putin’s spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, stating: “We are definitely looking forward for a fresh, new non-hostile, sober leadership in Georgia[...]If they have more political wisdom under a new leadership, then lots and lots of new roads can be opened for the country.”³⁴⁴⁶.

October 26, 2012: Georgia's new foreign minister, Maia Panjikidze, stated that the new government will continue the policy of refraining from formal diplomatic relations with Moscow until Russia ends its “occupation” of two breakaway Georgian regions³⁴⁴⁷. As she stated: “Twenty percent of Georgian territory is occupied by Russia, and Russia is the country that is occupying Georgia[...]It opened two embassies in Tskhinvali and Sukhumi, and as long as what I have said remains a fact, diplomatic relations with Russia will not be restored. Despite the fact that we don't have diplomatic relations, it's possible to have a dialogue, just as the former government was able to work with Russia in different spheres.”³⁴⁴⁸.

October 31, 2012: The parliament of South Ossetia has adopted a law on Ossetian surnames³⁴⁴⁹. The law introduced a mechanism for creating traditional Ossetian surnames for those wishing to do so with traditional Ossetian surnames which end on “-ty,” “-ti,” and “-on.” being able to now replace the Georgian endings “-shvili” and “-dze” and the Russian endings “-ov” and “-ova.”³⁴⁵⁰.

³⁴³⁹ “Georgia, South Ossetia Both Claim Preparations For New Hostilities” *RadioFreeEurope*, September 22, 2012, <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-south-ossetia-trade-accusations-of-preparing-for-war/24716583.html>

³⁴⁴⁰ Ibid

³⁴⁴¹ Ibid

³⁴⁴² Ibid

³⁴⁴³ Ibid

³⁴⁴⁴ Ibid

³⁴⁴⁵ Luke Harding and Miriam Elder “Georgia's president Saakashvili concedes election defeat” *The Guardian*, October 2, 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/oct/02/georgia-president-saakashvili-election-defeat>

³⁴⁴⁶ Ibid

³⁴⁴⁷ “Tbilisi Says No Diplomatic Ties With Russia While It Occupies Georgian Territory” *RadioFreeEurope*, October 26, 2012, <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-foreign-minister-russia-occupies-territory-no-diplomatic-relations/24752066.html>

³⁴⁴⁸ Ibid

³⁴⁴⁹ “South Ossetia Adopts Law On Surnames” *RadioFreeEurope*, October 31, 2012, <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-breakaway-south-ossetia-adopts-law-on-surnames/24756760.html>

³⁴⁵⁰ Ibid

November 2, 2012: The new Georgian prime minister's envoy to Russia says that talks with Moscow should be held in a new format stating that "a new, independent format for Moscow-Tbilisi talks" should be adopted "to discuss a broader range of issues: security, regional issues, the economy and trade ties."³⁴⁵¹. The new prime minister stated that it was up to Russia to accept the new format, which could include talks on Georgia's breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia³⁴⁵².

December 12, 2012: The 22 round of Geneva talks are held with a new team of negotiators from Georgia³⁴⁵³. Disagreement continue particularly over humanitarian issues³⁴⁵⁴.

2013

February 2, 2013: Georgia's Foreign Minister Maia Panjikidze states that Russia's occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia is a threat to regional and European stability and also stated that Georgia attached "great importance to the return of the [OSCE] mission."³⁴⁵⁵.

February 5, 2013: Georgia's Prime Minister criticizes Saakashvili and states that he intends to establish relations with Russia³⁴⁵⁶. He amongst other noted: "We control the situation, and nobody in Georgia will be able to stir it up again. Believe me, Saakashvili's era is over in Georgia, the era of lies is over in Georgia[...]And I ask you very much to calm down and restore our mental balance[...]We have every opportunity to settle relations with our big neighbor. It will not happen quickly, I have to say it again. We are aware of it, as it was clear in the past as well, but we should try our utmost to do it as quickly as possible[...]Our hope is growing that we will be able to restore both our territorial integrity and friendly relations with Russia[...]As for those big steps forward, which you all expect regarding changes in the situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the change in the attitude of the Abkhaz and Ossetian population [toward us], this will take more time, but a good beginning makes a good ending"³⁴⁵⁷.

February 25, 2013: A second meeting on the normalization of Russia-Georgia relations is expected to be held in Prague on March 1 which will focus on, according to Georgia, the restoration of "economic, transport, humanitarian, and cultural ties."³⁴⁵⁸ The first meeting was held in December³⁴⁵⁹.

March 2, 2013: Georgian and Russian officials state that Russia is considering easing visa rule for Georgian citizens with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin stating: "Recently, we have expanded the possibilities for different categories of Georgian citizens to visit the Russian Federation[...]We shall try to figure out how else we can ease the regime."³⁴⁶⁰

³⁴⁵¹ "Georgian Envoy Wants New Format For Russia Talks" *RadioFreeEurope*, November 2, 2012, <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgian-envoy-wants-new-format-for-russia-talks/24759183.html>

³⁴⁵² Ibid

³⁴⁵³ "Twenty Second Round of Geneva Talks" *Old Civil*, December 13, 2012, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=25542>

³⁴⁵⁴ Ibid

³⁴⁵⁵ Charles Recknagel "Georgia Calls Russia's Occupation A Threat To Stability" *RadioFreeEurope*, February 2, 2013, <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-russia-occupation-munich/24891359.html>

³⁴⁵⁶ "Georgian PM Criticizes Saakashvili, Pledges To Restore Russian Relations" *RadioFreeEurope*, February 5, 2013, <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-ivanishvili/24893497.html>

³⁴⁵⁷ Ibid

³⁴⁵⁸ "Second Meeting On Georgia-Russia Relations To Be Held In Prague" *RadioFreeEurope*, February 25, 2013, <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-russia-prague-meeting/24912115.html>

³⁴⁵⁹ Ibid

³⁴⁶⁰ "Officials Say Moscow Could Ease Visa Rules For Georgians" *RadioFreeEurope*, March 2, 2013, <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-russia-visa-negotiations/24917108.html>

March 8, 2013: The Georgian parliament adopts a resolution which reconfirms its European and Euro-Atlantic course stating that Georgia should not have "diplomatic relations or be in a military, political, customs alliance" with a state that recognizes the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia³⁴⁶¹.

March 22, 2013: A 12-day joint Georgian-U.S. military exercises is undertaken at Georgia's Vaziani military base³⁴⁶². Russia criticized the exercise stating that it was "actually a cause for concern." And also accused Georgia of "refusing to come to terms with the new political realities"³⁴⁶³. It also added that any foreign military support for Georgia "will further complicate the prospects for improving peace and security in the region."³⁴⁶⁴.

April, 2013: Georgia's chief prosecutor sets up a working group to investigate the legal basis for the conflict with Russia with the Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili indicating that the investigation could lead to legal proceedings against Saakashvili: "I think that the cause of this war must be investigated[...]There are a lot of questions about it."³⁴⁶⁵. Ivanishvili accused Saakashvili and its government of "inadequate" actions before Russian troops ever entered South Ossetia and stated: "I think it was unjustified for military units to act and launch operations before the Russians crossed the border"³⁴⁶⁶. Saakashvili's government has insisted that the decision to send in troops was provoked by South Ossetian attacks and by the covert arrival of Russian forces³⁴⁶⁷. Saakashvili responded to the comment by the Prime Minister by warning him to not spread: "the lie that Georgia started the war"³⁴⁶⁸.

April 1, 2013: Russia condemns Georgia's statement in which it expressed "grave concern" over Russia's snap military exercises in the Black Sea, stating: "Georgian side's 'grave concern' about the exercises has a far-fetched nature. It is especially obvious against the background of a quite adequate reaction from rest of the international community[...]I think it is yet another unconvincing attempt to conceal actual state of affairs – Georgia, which launched military conflict in the Caucasus in 2008, continues evading entering into a binding agreement on security guarantees with South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which have been targets of Tbilisi's threats and aggressive actions for many years[...]Inflating publicly Russian threat for the purpose of covering up its own confrontational policies is not a new trick employed by the Georgian side. It is quite enough to recall a months-long hype about last year's scheduled Russian exercises [Kavkaz-2012], which as if were posing 'a deadly threat to Georgia'. The fact that Tbilisi continues applying such formulaic propaganda stunts, to say it directly, fits badly with the statements about having an aspiration to normalize ties with Russia,"³⁴⁶⁹. Georgia stated previously in the end of March that it was "alarmed by the unexpected, provocative activity of the Russian troops", involving snap military drills in the Black Sea, and said that this action "runs contrary to the interests of stability and predictability in the European neighborhood."³⁴⁷⁰

³⁴⁶¹ "Georgian Lawmakers Adopt Resolution Reaffirming Western Course" *RadioFreeEurope*, March 8, 2013, <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgian-foreign-policy/24923035.html>

³⁴⁶² "Kremlin Criticizes Georgian-U.S. Military Exercises" *RadioFreeEurope*, March 22, 2013, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-georgia-military-exercises/24935976.html>

³⁴⁶³ Ibid

³⁴⁶⁴ Ibid

³⁴⁶⁵ Institute for War and Peace Reporting "Five Years on, Georgia to Probe Facts of 2008 War" *Refworld*, August 7, 2013, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=5204caf74&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

³⁴⁶⁶ Ibid

³⁴⁶⁷ Ibid

³⁴⁶⁸ Ibid

³⁴⁶⁹ "Moscow Slams Tbilisi's Reaction to Black Sea Drills" *Old Civil*, April 1, 2013, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=25910>

³⁴⁷⁰ Ibid

April 11, 2013: Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov welcomed the pragmatism of Georgian Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili's government and said Moscow is ready to expand ties with Tbilisi³⁴⁷¹. He however also stated that Russia will not revise the recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia stating: "There will be no Russian politician to say we should go back to what it was[...]That can't be, no matter what you think about it."³⁴⁷²

April 27, 2013: Irakli Alasania, Georgian defense minister, states in an interview: "We don't have any illusion that Russia will change its policy toward Georgia on its territorial integrity or our aspirations to join NATO. But we want to get breathing space by calming the rhetoric so we can develop ourselves. We want to tone down the rhetoric so we can have a workable relationship on trade, so we can develop our institutions and our economy and give ourselves more space to deal with the Abkhaz and the Ossetians. This is the idea. We call it a realistic approach to Russia"³⁴⁷³.

May 31, 2013: Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili states that a dispute about Georgia's administrative boundary with South Ossetia will be discussed at Russian-Georgian talks scheduled for June 5³⁴⁷⁴. He also stated that a recent dispute over the installation of a fence was "misunderstanding rather than policy," and that "we have to be patient, everything will be clarified."³⁴⁷⁵ He also noted that there was no need "to go into hysteria" and that the breakaway regions "will be returned in several years."³⁴⁷⁶

June 5, 2013: Georgian PM's special representative for relations with Russia, Zurab Abashidze, meets with Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister, Grigory Karasin for the third meeting trade, economy, humanitarian and cultural aspects of bilateral relations³⁴⁷⁷. To this Russia stated: "In overall the constructive and friendly atmosphere [in bilateral meetings] allowed to move forward on number of practical issues,"³⁴⁷⁸

August 8, 2013: Georgia marks the anniversary of conflict in 2008³⁴⁷⁹. South Ossetia meanwhile urged Georgia to sign an agreement on the nonuse of force "to ease tensions in the border territories and create prerequisites for building trust between the two countries."³⁴⁸⁰ Medvedev in a speech stated: "I think our armed forces and our whole country did a noble deed[...] [We] showed firmness defending the lives of our people, essentially saving a people from annihilation, and creating conditions for ensuring a peaceful path for the development of South Ossetia and Abkhazia."³⁴⁸¹ Georgian Defense Minister Irakli Alasania, stated: "It's been five years since the conflict, but the wounds are still very sore for all of us -- for Georgians but I think for Ossetians too[...] In fact, it was certainly possible to avoid that conflict, which had been brewing for several years. However, considering the deployment of Russian troops in the North Caucasus in the

³⁴⁷¹ "Lavrov Says Recognition Of Breakaway Georgian Regions Irreversible" *RadioFreeEurope*, April 11, 2013, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-georgia-abkhazia-south-ossetia/24954479.html>

³⁴⁷² Ibid

³⁴⁷³ "Georgian Defense Minister Irakli Alasania: 'We Need To Outsmart Russia'" *RadioFreeEurope*, April 27, 2013, <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-alasania-russia-interview/24970223.html>

³⁴⁷⁴ "Georgian PM Says To Discuss Boundary Issue With Moscow" *RadioFreeEurope*, May 31, 2013, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ivanishvili-georgia-russia-border-breakaway-ossetia/25002971.html>

³⁴⁷⁵ Ibid

³⁴⁷⁶ Ibid

³⁴⁷⁷ "Meeting of Georgian, Russian Negotiators in Prague" *Old Civil*, June 6, 2013, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=26152>

³⁴⁷⁸ Ibid

³⁴⁷⁹ "Georgia-Russia War Commemorated" *RadioFreeEurope*, August 8, 2013, <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgian-russian-war-commemorated/25069993.html>

³⁴⁸⁰ Ibid

³⁴⁸¹ Ibid

months prior [to the armed conflict] and the processes that had taken place in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region [South Ossetia], I think it was already too late to influence those processes."³⁴⁸².

In an interview, Saakashvili claims that Georgia was ready to trade NATO membership for Russian assistance with the breakaway regions³⁴⁸³. As he stated: "We told [Putin] that we were ready to say 'no' to NATO," but "Putin did not even think for a minute" about the proposal³⁴⁸⁴. As he further stated: "[Putin] smiled and said, 'We do not exchange your territories for your geopolitical orientation[...]. And it meant 'we will chop off your territories anyway.'"³⁴⁸⁵. According to Saakashvili, from Russia's point of view, the war in 2008 could only have been prevented if Georgia had "become a failed state."³⁴⁸⁶. He also stated that reestablishing friendly relations with Russia was impossible as Georgia would never give up its territories, which he described as "occupied by Russia."³⁴⁸⁷. Dmitri Medvedev also appeared on television the day prior to Saakashvili stating that he stood by his decision to send troops to South Ossetia: "I tell you this: I made this decision, and I believe it was the only right thing to do in that particular situation[...]. There are no conditions for reconsidering this decision. That would be a bad mistake[...]. If there's a state which is a member of another military-political alliance whose nuclear missiles are aimed at targets located on Russian territory, we cannot welcome this," ... "This is our national approach[...]. You [Georgia] have got yours. Our national approach is as follows: Russia is a very large country with a huge nuclear arsenal – we cannot ignore this."³⁴⁸⁸.

August 9, 2013: Georgian Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili states that Georgia is ready for "direct dialogue with our Ossetian and Abkhazian brothers" and that Georgia should have the strength "to forgive" but also to admit its "own mistakes."³⁴⁸⁹.

September 13, 2013: Georgia's Foreign Ministry protests Russia's plan to sign a treaty delineating its border with Georgia's breakaway region of South Ossetia³⁴⁹⁰.

September 17, 2013: Russian forces in South Ossetia allegedly renewed erecting fences and barbed wire in the Georgian village of Ditsi, which is located on the southern edge of the Russian-occupied Georgian region³⁴⁹¹. The occupation line was allegedly moved hundreds of feet deeper into Georgian-controlled territories, cutting off the village residents' access to a local cemetery and an irrigation reservoir³⁴⁹². The forces allegedly resumed the activity on September 22³⁴⁹³.

³⁴⁸² Ibid

³⁴⁸³ Radio Free Europe "Saakashvili: Georgia was ready to trade NATO for breakaway regions" *Refworld*, August 8, 2013, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=521f4621b&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

³⁴⁸⁴ Ibid

³⁴⁸⁵ Ibid

³⁴⁸⁶ Ibid

³⁴⁸⁷ Ibid

³⁴⁸⁸ Ibid

³⁴⁸⁹ "Georgian PM For 'Direct Dialogue' With Breakaway Regions" *RadioFreeEurope*, August 9, 2013, <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-ivanishvili-breakaway-dialogue/25070822.html>

³⁴⁹⁰ "Georgia Protests Russian Border Treaty With South Ossetia" *RadioFreeEurope*, September 13, 2013, <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-protest-russia-ossetia/25105021.html>

³⁴⁹¹ Jamestown Foundation "Russia Gradually Expands Its Occupation Zone in Georgia" *Refworld*, September 23, 2013, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=5243f3a44&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

³⁴⁹² Ibid

³⁴⁹³ Ibid

September 24, 2013: Protestors have clashed in the Georgian capital of Tblisi. Whereas some of them argued for the re-establishment of ties with Russia others rejected this³⁴⁹⁴.

October 1, 2013: Georgia seeks to rally international support against what they claim to be creeping borderization, where the territory of South Ossetia is expanding with the help of Russian troops³⁴⁹⁵. At the UNGA, Saakashvili stated: "The annexation of Georgian lands by Russian troops continues[...]Despite the friendly statements made by the new Georgian government in recent weeks and months, the Russian military keeps advancing its positions, dividing communities with new barbed wire and threatening our economy."³⁴⁹⁶. The Georgian foreign ministry also condemned Russia stating: "The foreign ministry appeals to our partner countries and to international organisations to take effective and appropriate steps to end the illegal activities of the Russian occupying power."³⁴⁹⁷. The borderization issue has sparked concerns in Georgia that Russia and South Ossetia will take over land where the Baku-Supsa oil pipe runs, which serves as important revenue source for Georgia³⁴⁹⁸. To this Saakashvili also noted: "The Russian military keeps[...]moving towards the vital Baku-Supsa pipeline, approaching ever closer to this important route and thus placing in question the very sustainability of our country"³⁴⁹⁹.

October 14, 2013: Russia lifts restrictions on Georgian fruit import after a seven-year ban³⁵⁰⁰.

October 27, 2013: Georgia holds presidential elections³⁵⁰¹. Giorgi Margvelashvili, the candidate of the ruling Georgian Dream coalition, wins with 62% of the votes³⁵⁰².

November 6, 2013: Georgia accuses Russia of erected borders between South Ossetia and Georgia³⁵⁰³. The borders are allegedly positioned in accordance to a map from 1921 causing Russia to grab extra land³⁵⁰⁴. Russia however stated that South Ossetia was merely establishing its true borders by using Soviet maps³⁵⁰⁵. Georgia states that the border issue is used by Russia to pressure Georgia on an EU trade agreement and states that the fences are separating families and homes, as stated by Ketevan Tsikhlevashvili, Georgia's deputy minister for reintegration: "The fences are separating people's houses from their land, they're separating family members, in some cases they've gone right through people's homes,"³⁵⁰⁶.

³⁴⁹⁴ "Protesters clash over Russia in Tblisi, Georgia" *Euronews*, September 24, 2013, <https://www.euronews.com/2013/09/24/protesters-clash-over-russia-in-tblisi-georgia>

³⁴⁹⁵ Institute for War and Peace Reporting "Unfriendly Advances in Georgia" *Refworld*, October 1, 2013, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=524ff3874&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

³⁴⁹⁶ Ibid

³⁴⁹⁷ Ibid

³⁴⁹⁸ Ibid

³⁴⁹⁹ Ibid

³⁵⁰⁰ "Russian Imports Of Georgian Fruit Resume After Seven Years" *RadioFreeEurope*, October 14, 2013, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-georgia-fruit-imports/25136096.html>

³⁵⁰¹ Associated Press "Georgia goes to the polls for presidential election" *The Guardian*, October 27, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/27/georgia-presidential-election-mikhail-saakashvili>

³⁵⁰² "OSCE Praises Georgia Vote; Margvelashvili Declared Runaway Victor" *RadioFreeEurope*, October 28, 2013, <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-election-osce-margvelashvili/25150602.html>

³⁵⁰³ "Tbilisi nervously eyes Russia's border barricade of South Ossetia" *Financial Times*, November 6, 2013, <https://www.ft.com/content/b04900fe-4609-11e3-9487-00144feabdc0>

³⁵⁰⁴ Ibid

³⁵⁰⁵ Ibid

³⁵⁰⁶ Ibid

November 17, 2013: Giorgi Margvelashvili is sworn in as the new president of Georgia³⁵⁰⁷. In his speech he stated: "Despite the difficult situation we are facing today and in parallel with integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures, we reiterate our commitment to further dialogue with Russia and building confidence to solve the problems that exist today[...]This dialogue will be built upon unequivocal respect for Georgia's national interests, i.e. respect for our internationally recognized borders and the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty[...]Our offer to our compatriots living in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region is as follows: let us build a successful democratic country together, a country that will guarantee the welfare of all citizens, preservation of their ethnic and cultural identity, and respect for their political rights[...]As president of Georgia, the ruling party and I assume responsibility for implementing this policy."³⁵⁰⁸

November 26, 2013: Russian troops install a boundary marker in Gogeti village near Georgia's border with South Ossetia, which Georgia expresses its concern about³⁵⁰⁹.

2014

January 8, 2014: A political party in South Ossetia "The Yedinaya Osetiya" (One Ossetia) not registered in the parliament and headed by Anatoly Bibilov, asks Tibilov to schedule a referendum, held alongside parliamentary elections in June, on the unification between North and South Ossetia inside Russia³⁵¹⁰.

January 16, 2014: Georgia's Prime Minister states that he expects provocations from Russia ahead of Georgia's signing of the EU's Association Agreement³⁵¹¹.

March 27, 2014: The 27 round of Geneva talks are held where discussions amongst other revolved around "the resumption of installation of fences and other obstacles along the administrative boundary lines, as well as alleged airspace violations"³⁵¹². Georgian chief negotiator, stated that Russia's recent moves in Ukraine demonstrated once again the need for Moscow to reciprocate to Tbilisi's unilateral non-use of force pledge made in 2010: "Today when we are witnessing growing assertiveness of Russia in its efforts to prevent neighboring countries from realizing their free foreign policy choice through violating their territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-use of force[...]commitment from the Russian side constitutes to a minimal mechanism preventing further aggression,"³⁵¹³

May 12, 2014: Five Georgian citizens were released from South Ossetia³⁵¹⁴. They stated that they had to pay \$60 as a fine for "illegally crossing the administrative boundary" with South Ossetia³⁵¹⁵. According to

³⁵⁰⁷ "Margvelashvili Sworn In As Georgia's New President" *RadioFreeEurope*, November 17, 2013, <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-president-inauguration/25170650.html>

³⁵⁰⁸ Ibid

³⁵⁰⁹ "Tbilisi Concerned By South Ossetia Boundary Marker" *RadioFreeEurope*, November 26, 2013, <https://www.rferl.org/a/25180491.html>

³⁵¹⁰ "South Ossetian Opposition Calls For Referendum On Unification" *RadioFreeEurope*, January 8, 2014, <https://www.rferl.org/a/south-ossetia-unification/25224202.html>

³⁵¹¹ "Georgian PM Wary Of Russian 'Provocations'" *RadioFreeEurope*, January 16, 2014, <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-wary-russia-provocations/25232271.html>

³⁵¹² "Twenty Seventh Round of Geneva Talks" *Old Civil*, March 27, 2014, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=27080>

³⁵¹³ Ibid

³⁵¹⁴ Radio Free Europe "South Ossetian authorities release five Georgians" *Refworld*, May 12, 2014, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=53a138baa&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

³⁵¹⁵ Ibid

RFE/RL's Georgian Service, Russian troops patrolling the boundary have arrested 18 Georgians in the villages near to the boundary in the last two weeks and 13 Georgian nationals remain in custody³⁵¹⁶.

May 2014: Russian journalists report finding South Ossetians fighting in the separatist areas in Ukraine and in May a South Ossetian official allegedly announced a sign-up campaign in Tskhinvali for volunteers to go to Ukraine³⁵¹⁷. South Ossetia however denied the presence of any South Ossetians in "any of the hot spots on the planet"³⁵¹⁸. Tibilov later warned of the populist call for fighting in Ukraine which could be used by outsiders to accuse Russia of interfering in the internal affairs of Ukraine³⁵¹⁹.

June 3, 2014: South Ossetia's president, Leonid Tibilov, states that South Ossetia will, when the "appropriate time" comes "the divided South Ossetian people should be united" with North Ossetia. He also stated that: "integration is a serious preparatory stage in resolving the issue of accession to Russia."³⁵²⁰

June 8, 2014: South Ossetia holds parliamentary elections which are declared illegal by Georgia³⁵²¹. The vote was eventually won by the pro-Russian party Yedinaya Osetiya – or United Ossetia – with about 44% of the vote³⁵²². The party has called for a referendum on unification with Russia³⁵²³.

June 16, 2014: Georgia signs an Association Agreement with the EU³⁵²⁴.

July 9, 2014: In an interview Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili talks about the signing of the EU association agreement and the breakaway regions. Asked whether Georgia would leave South Ossetia and Abkhazia behind he stated: "Of course we are not leaving them behind. In my speech to the European Council, I sent a clear message to our brothers and sisters, Abkhazians and Ossetians, that we offer them to share with us this process. We offer Abkhazians and Ossetians to share with us all the benefits that the European AA will bring. They will be able, for example, to travel with Georgian passports, without visa, very soon[...]. Here is my vision: when our brothers and sisters, Ossetians and Abkhazians will see those big changes in our country, in Georgia; developing infrastructure, agriculture, educational programmes, improved healthcare and social conditions – they will also want to one day join and reconcile."³⁵²⁵

July 18, 2014: A court in South Ossetia has sentenced a Georgian national to 10 years and two months in jail for espionage and illegal weapons possession³⁵²⁶. The man allegedly provided information to the Georgian secret service³⁵²⁷.

³⁵¹⁶ Ibid

³⁵¹⁷ Jamestown Foundation "Caucasians Have Mixed Attitudes Toward Volunteers Fighting in Eastern Ukraine" *Refworld*, June 9, 2014, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/539ebe2d4.html>

³⁵¹⁸ Ibid

³⁵¹⁹ Ibid

³⁵²⁰ Radio Free Europe "South Ossetian leader wants to join Russia" *Refworld*, June 3, 2014, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=53b280753a7&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

³⁵²¹ Ibid

³⁵²² Ibid

³⁵²³ Ibid

³⁵²⁴ "EU/Georgia Association Agreement" *EEAS*, September 13, 2016, https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia_en/9740/EU/Georgia%20Association%20Agreement

³⁵²⁵ "Georgian PM hails 'European dream'" *Euronews*, September 7, 2014, <https://www.euronews.com/2014/07/09/georgian-pm-hails-european-dream>

³⁵²⁶ Radio Free Europe "South Ossetia jails Georgian for spying" *Refworld*, July 18, 2014, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=54003df15&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

³⁵²⁷ Ibid

November 4, 2014: South Ossetia allegedly tightens restrictions on freedom of movement for ethnic Georgians with South Ossetia announcing that as of January 1, 2015, the existing permits necessary for local Georgians to travel to Tbilisi-controlled proper will be replaced by South Ossetian "passports."³⁵²⁸ In order to obtain such passports Georgians must renounce their Georgian citizenship and refugee status³⁵²⁹. South Ossetia also warned that those who did not renounce their citizenship would have to abandon their homes in Akhagori³⁵³⁰. The Akhagori District is mainly populated by ethnic Georgians and it came under the full control of the separatist authorities after 2008³⁵³¹.

November 5, 2014: The tunnel connecting South Ossetia and Russia is reopened following reconstruction³⁵³². South Ossetia's president, Leonid Tibilov stated that tunnel "will strengthen South Ossetia's relations with its strategic partner, Russia." And called it "a road of life."³⁵³³ The Russian Transport Ministry has said the reconstruction, which started in 2010, had cost Moscow more than \$400 million³⁵³⁴.

November 15, 2014: Demonstrations in Tbilisi erupts with protesters protesting against Russia's support for Abkhazia and South Ossetia³⁵³⁵. The protesters also showed support for Ukraine over the annexation of Crimea³⁵³⁶. The latest proposed treaty between Russia and Abkhazia, which would create a "common defense infrastructure" and combined armed forces is one of the issues being protested³⁵³⁷.

December 11, 2014: Tibilov addresses the volunteers from South Ossetia who participated in the military actions in Donbass saying that it is time for them to return: "At present, our friends in the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and Lugansk People's Republic (LPR) are shifting to formation of the state power institutions, a new stage of their development. Your mission is nearing completion[...]As the Supreme Commander I have not ordered to send you to Novorossiia. You left your peaceful life for justice by your own volition. But as the head of the state, I urge your today to return to your motherland"³⁵³⁸. Meanwhile the 30 round of Geneva talks are held in which the sides amongst other discussed a treaty on "alliance and strategic partnership" between Russia and the breakaway regions³⁵³⁹

2015

January, 2015: In its first quarterly report on the human rights situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Georgia states: "As a result of military aggression, creeping annexation and occupation policy, well-planned

³⁵²⁸ Radio Free Europe "South Ossetia said to tighten restrictions on ethnic Georgians" *Refworld*, November 4, 2014, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=548ea82c15&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

³⁵²⁹ Ibid

³⁵³⁰ Ibid

³⁵³¹ Ibid

³⁵³² Ibid

³⁵³³ Radio Free Europe "Tunnel connecting South Ossetia with Russia reopens" *Refworld*, November 5, 2014, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=548ea83b15&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

³⁵³⁴ Ibid

³⁵³⁵ "Georgians demonstrate against Russia - and own government" *DW*, November 15, 2014, <https://www.dw.com/en/georgians-demonstrate-against-russia-and-own-government/a-18067398>

³⁵³⁶ Ibid

³⁵³⁷ Ibid

³⁵³⁸ "President of South Ossetia: Our volunteers have fulfilled their task in Novorossiia", *Eurasia Daily*, December 11, 2014, <https://eadaily.com/en/news/2014/12/11/president-of-south-ossetia-our-volunteers-have-fulfilled-their-task-in-novorossiia>

³⁵³⁹ "Thirtieth Round of Geneva Talks" *Old Civil*, December 11, 2014, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=27899>

and systematically implemented by the Russian Federation regarding the territory of Georgia, between 1991 and 2015 several hundreds of thousands of persons were expelled from their homes to become IDPs and refugees and they have been deprived of their internationally recognized right to a voluntary, safe and dignified return to places of their permanent residence.¹ Currently, the territories of two regions of Georgia – Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali Region, Georgia are occupied by the Russian Federation. The Russian Federation as the occupying power, exercises effective control over these territories. The occupation of regions of Georgia by the Russian Federation has been recognized by the international community. It should be noted with particular emphasis, that recently the Russian Federation signed the so called “Treaty on Alliance and Strategic Partnership” with its occupation regime in Sokhumi and the so called “Treaty on Alliance and Integration” with its occupation regime in Tskhinvali: thus going well beyond its military occupation and laying ground for annexation of Georgian territories”³⁵⁴⁰

January 28, 2015: The Luhansk People’s Republic recognize the independence of South Ossetia with the head of the republic stating: “Ossetia has already recognized the independence of the LPR. We are making a return move and suggesting to recognize the Republic of South Ossetia as a sovereign country, as well as to establish diplomatic relations with it,”³⁵⁴¹.

January 29, 2015: Georgian Foreign Minister Tamar Beruchashvili warns that Russia could annex the South Ossetia as it did with Crimea³⁵⁴². In an interview she stated: "the next move is on [South] Ossetia; there are signals that the Crimea-like scenario could be repeated and South Ossetia could be annexed.". She also stated that South Ossetia could hold a similar referendum as in Crimea as a show of support from the local population, and stated: "That can be well organized, it's not a problem for Russia,"³⁵⁴³. South Ossetia’s president, Leonid Tibilov, has stated that Russia and South Ossetia would sign an agreement in the coming months aimed at strengthening ties³⁵⁴⁴. To this, Georgia’s Foreign Minister stated that the substance of that agreement would involve "more integration" with Russia and would provide, as she further stated: "a new opportunity of absorbing these territories in the military, economic, social orbit of Russia[...]. There will be Russian pensions for the residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia."³⁵⁴⁵. She also stated that Russia’s support for South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Moldova's breakaway Transdniestrian region "are components of one big strategy of Russia”³⁵⁴⁶

January 30, 2015: The Georgian First Deputy Foreign Minister meets the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia where it is stated: “The Georgian side once again expressed concern over the so called draft "treaty on alliance and integration" between the Russian Federation and the Tskhinvali occupation regime and underlined that this step, following the so called "treaty on alliance and strategic partnership signed with the Sokhumi regime, will be assessed as a factual annexation of Georgian

³⁵⁴⁰ “First Quarterly Report (January-March 2015) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia” Georgia Ministry of Foreign Affairs Report (2015), http://www.mfa.gov.ge/getattachment/Occupied-Territories/%E1%83%A7%E1%83%9D%E1%83%95%E1%83%94%E1%83%9A%E1%83%99%E1%83%95%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%A2%E1%83%90%E1%83%9A%E1%83%A3%E1%83%A0%E1%83%98-%E1%83%90%E1%83%9C%E1%83%92%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%98%E1%83%A8%E1%83%94%E1%83%91%E1%83%98/First_MFA_report.pdf.aspx

³⁵⁴¹ “Parliament of Lugansk People’s Republic recognizes independence of South Ossetia” Eurasia Daily, January 28, 2015, <https://easdaily.com/en/news/2015/01/28/parliament-of-lugansk-peoples-republic-recognizes-independence-of-south-ossetia>

³⁵⁴² Radio Free Europe “Georgian FM says South Ossetia could be annexed like Crimea” Refworld, January 29, 2015, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=54e1a47015&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

³⁵⁴³ Ibid

³⁵⁴⁴ Ibid

³⁵⁴⁵ Ibid

³⁵⁴⁶ Ibid

territories. It was also underscored that signing of the so-called "treaty" will hamper the progress on concrete issues within the Geneva International Discussions and will have a negative impact on the security situation in Georgia and the wider region, thus once again demonstrating the urgent necessity of international security arrangements on the ground."³⁵⁴⁷

February 18, 2015: Russia and South Ossetia sign an Agreement on the State Border between South Ossetia and Russia, which formalizes relations between the two³⁵⁴⁸. As a response to this the South Ossetian embassy in Russia stated: "The major goal of the document is to grant an international and legal status to the South Ossetia – Russia border as well as create conditions for enhancing the friendly and good-neighbored relations between South Ossetia and Russia,"³⁵⁴⁹. In addition, Russia's foreign minister stated that the agreement dismissed Georgia's claims of Russian intentions of: "annexation" and "accession." "Such a document is of cornerstone importance in the inter-state relations between neighboring countries. We hope that this will dispel insinuations disseminated by the Georgian side that an alleged 'annexation', 'merger', 'accession of South Ossetia' is being prepared. The aim of such speculations is to discredit Russian policy in the South Caucasus and to distort the essence of its cooperation with young republics. Russia's relations with South Ossetia and Abkhazia will continue developing on an equitable and mutually respectful basis,"³⁵⁵⁰. Georgia criticized the agreement stating that it was: "yet another action directed against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia."³⁵⁵¹. The statement from Georgia also noted that Russia "vainly attempts to conceal the de facto annexation" of South Ossetia and Abkhazia³⁵⁵².

March 12, 2015: Russia holds military exercises in Crimea, Abkhazia and South Ossetia³⁵⁵³.

March 18, 2015: Russia and South Ossetia sign a "Treaty on Alliance and Integration" which will amongst other: "establish a common defense and security space, allow free movement across the Russia-South Ossetia border, integrate their customs services, develop cooperation between their interior ministries, and simplify the procedures for obtaining Russian citizenship"³⁵⁵⁴. Putin stated that the agreement would strengthen their partnership and the leader of South Ossetia stated: "We know that the Russian Federation is our people and republic's only guarantor, and I am particularly happy that this event is taking place today, on what is such a symbolic date in the Russian people's life. It was exactly a year ago that the agreement was signed by which the people of Crimea and Sevastopol, having expressed their free will, found their

³⁵⁴⁷ "The Georgian First Deputy Foreign Minister met the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia" *Georgia Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, January 30, 2015, <http://www.mfa.gov.ge/News/%E1%83%A1%E1%83%90%E1%83%92%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%94%E1%83%9D-%E1%83%A1%E1%83%90%E1%83%A5%E1%83%9B%E1%83%94%E1%83%97%E1%83%90-%E1%83%9B%E1%83%98%E1%83%9C%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1%E1%83%A2%E1%83%A0%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1-%E1%83%9E%E1%83%98%E1%83%A0%E1%83%95%E1%83%94%E1%83%9A%E1%83%98-%E1%83%9B%E1%83%9D%E1%83%90%E1%83%93%E1%83%92%E1%83%98%E1%83%9A%E1%83%94%E1%83%A1%E1%83%90%E1%83%9B%E1%83%AE%E1%83%A0%E1%83%94%E1%83%97.aspx>

³⁵⁴⁸ "Russia and South Ossetia agree on state border" *Eurasia Daily*, February 18, 2015, <https://eadaily.com/en/news/2015/02/18/russia-and-south-ossetia-agree-on-state-border>

³⁵⁴⁹ Ibid

³⁵⁵⁰ Ibid

³⁵⁵¹ Radio Free Europe "Georgia: Tbilisi condemns Russia-South Ossetia border deal" *Refworld*, February 19, 2015, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=550940d7c&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

³⁵⁵² Ibid

³⁵⁵³ "Russia holds military drills in Crimea, Georgian breakaway regions: RIA" *Reuters*, March 12, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-russia-drills/russia-holds-military-drills-in-crimea-georgian-breakaway-regions-ria-idUSKBN0M810720150312>

³⁵⁵⁴ "Russia and South Ossetia sign Treaty on Alliance and Integration" *Eurasia Daily*, March 18, 2015, <https://eadaily.com/en/news/2015/03/18/russia-and-south-ossetia-sign-treaty-on-alliance-and-integration>

Motherland. We welcomed that decision right from the first. South Ossetia welcomes all of Russia's political decisions and we always stand at your side"³⁵⁵⁵.

March 19, 2015: The 31 round of Geneva talks are held in which the EU, UN and OSCE envoys states that the signing of an "integration" treaty between Russia and South Ossetia on the same day created "a difficult climate" in the discussions³⁵⁵⁶. Georgia expressed its concern over the Agreement of Alliance and Integration signed between South Ossetia and Russia with President of Georgia Giorgi Margvelashvili stating: "We are extremely outraged over signing the so-called 'Treaty on the Alliance and Integration' between the Russian Federation and the occupational regime of Tskhinvali. This step, taken against territorial integrity of the sovereign state, further aggravates the occurred situation after occupation and leads to the annexation,"³⁵⁵⁷ Leonid Tibilov states it is "no secret" the idea of joining Russia "exists among our people," but added there are "many concerns" and he will not now "try to implement" the idea³⁵⁵⁸. He also stated that South Ossetia will "make steps appropriate not only for [itself] but also for Russia."³⁵⁵⁹.

May 12, 2015: The Donetsk People's Republic recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia³⁵⁶⁰

May 18, 2015: According to South Ossetia the development of state border infrastructure in the area has assisted in diffusing tensions and decreasing incidents³⁵⁶¹. South Ossetia's statement comes as a response to a statement of the Council of Europe, which states that the treaties between South Ossetia and Russia violates international law and the territorial integrity of Georgia³⁵⁶². South Ossetia further stated: "To develop, the Republic of South like any other country needs reliable security. The agreement between South Ossetia and Russia pursued security goals. As threats from Georgia grow, the Republic of South Ossetia sees extensive cooperation and coordinated actions with the Russian Federation as the only way to develop its defense security[...]To contribute to the peace in the region, they should show Tbilisi the only right way – to accept the reality and sign a legally binding document on the non-use of force and launch a direct, constructive dialogue with the authorities of the South Ossetia"³⁵⁶³.

July 2, 2015: Geneva talks are held once again where Russia raised the issue of Georgia's NATO integration stating that it posed "security threat to the South Caucasus" and hence is in conflict with the provisions of the August 2008 ceasefire agreement³⁵⁶⁴. Russia noted that "regular military exercises on the

³⁵⁵⁵ Ibid

³⁵⁵⁶ "Thirty-First Round of Geneva Talks" *Old Civil*, March 19, 2015, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=28146>

³⁵⁵⁷ "Georgia extremely concerned over treaty between Russia and South Ossetia" *Eurasia Daily*, March 19, 2015, <https://eadaily.com/en/news/2015/03/19/georgia-extremely-concerned-over-treaty-between-russia-and-south-ossetia>

³⁵⁵⁸ Radio Free Europe "South Ossetian leader says won't join Russia - for now" *Refworld*, March 19, 2015, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=552f9d8215&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

³⁵⁵⁹ Ibid

³⁵⁶⁰ "Donetsk People's Republic recognizes independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia" *Eurasia Daily*, May 12, 2015, <https://eadaily.com/en/news/2015/05/12/donetsk-peoples-republic-recognizes-independence-of-abkhazia-and-south-ossetia>

³⁵⁶¹ "South Ossetia: West should not support Georgia's claims for territories of other countries" *Eurasia Daily*, May 18, 2015, <https://eadaily.com/en/news/2015/05/18/south-ossetia-west-should-not-support-georgias-claims-for-territories-of-other-countries>

³⁵⁶² Ibid

³⁵⁶³ Ibid

³⁵⁶⁴ "At Geneva Talks Russia Says Georgia's NATO Integration Poses Security Threat to Region" *Old Civil*, July 2, 2015, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=28403>

Georgian territory with the recent one held with the participation of the American troops and military hardware in an immediate proximity from the South Ossetian border” is of “particular concern”³⁵⁶⁵.

July 22, 2015: Russian Foreign Ministry denies the Georgian accusations that it has violated Georgia’s territory by placing border markers on the edge of South Ossetia³⁵⁶⁶. Georgia’s Foreign Ministry stated previously that part of the Baku-Supsa oil pipeline was now in territory occupied by Russia³⁵⁶⁷.

August 19, 2015: Georgia’s President Giorgi Margvelashvili condemns Russia’s military exercises in Abkhazia and South Ossetia stating that: “it is unacceptable to carry out military maneuvers on occupied Georgian territory.”³⁵⁶⁸

August 25, 2015: Dr Evgeny Buzhinsky, former Russian ministry of defence’s liaison with Nato states that “Russian military planners believe Georgian leaders would take Nato membership as a green light to retake the Moscow-backed enclaves of South Ossetia and Abkhazia by force, leading to a potentially more deadly re-run of that conflict”³⁵⁶⁹. As he stated: “If Georgia joined Nato tomorrow, in two days they would attack Abkhazia. We would respond, as we are obliged to by our agreements with Abkhazia. Then Nato would have to decide what to do[...]I hope someone is thinking about that.”³⁵⁷⁰.

August 27, 2015: Vladislav Surkov congratulates President of South Ossetia Leonid Tibilov on the Day of Recognition of the State Independence of the South Ossetia Republic and states: “South Ossetia has passed a serious path of post-war restoration, social and economic development, and state building. I am sure that with implementation of the Alliance and Integration Treaty, the partnership relations of our countries will attain a new quality. The Russian Federation will keep supporting and assisting South Ossetia,”³⁵⁷¹.

October 20, 2015: The leader of South Ossetia has proposed a referendum on whether the separatist area should join Russia, with South Ossetia stating that “reunification” with Russia is an ancient dream³⁵⁷². The leader of the area also stated: “The political reality is that we have to make a historic choice to be reunited with brotherly Russia[...]to ensure the security and prosperity of our country and our people”³⁵⁷³. Russian state дума deputy Leonid Slutsky stated: “In principle we understand Mr Tibilov’s motivation, but I wouldn’t make any guesses before the referendum takes place[...]Next we must put our heads together to discuss whether this is necessary. We have to understand that the response from the international community will be absolutely explosive.”³⁵⁷⁴.

³⁵⁶⁵ Ibid

³⁵⁶⁶ “Russia denies it violates Georgian sovereignty with border markers” *Reuters*, July 22, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/russia-georgia-border/russia-denies-it-violates-georgian-sovereignty-with-border-markers-idUSL5N10244R20150722>

³⁵⁶⁷ Ibid

³⁵⁶⁸ Radio Free Europe “Georgia criticizes Russian military exercises in Abkhazia, South Ossetia” *Refworld*, August 19, 2015, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=55ee96ea16&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

³⁵⁶⁹ Roland Oliphant “Russia 'would boost military presence' in response to Georgia Nato membership” *The Telegraph*, August 28, 2015, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/georgia/11831356/Russia-would-boost-military-presence-in-response-to-Georgia-Nato-membership.html>

³⁵⁷⁰ Ibid

³⁵⁷¹ “Surkov: Russia will keep supporting South Ossetia” *Eurasia Daily*, August 27, 2015, <https://easaily.com/en/news/2015/08/27/surkov-russia-will-keep-supporting-south-ossetia>

³⁵⁷² Nadia Beard “South Ossetia: Separatist leader Leonid Tibilov plans referendum on 'reunification' with Russia” *Independent*, October 20, 2015, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/south-ossetia-separatist-leader-leonid-tibilov-plans-referendum-on-reunification-with-russia-a6701121.html>

³⁵⁷³ Ibid

³⁵⁷⁴ Ibid

December 10, 2015: Georgia states that Russia has violated its airspace with a military helicopter and that the violation threatens regional stability³⁵⁷⁵. Russia denies the allegation stating: “During recent days over the territory adjoining the Georgian border, Russian military helicopters haven’t made any flights,”³⁵⁷⁶.

December 30, 2015: Tibilov states that the referendum should take place "long before" the presidential elections due in April 2017³⁵⁷⁷. He also proposed renaming the region “The republic of South Ossetia – Alania” with reference to the Alan people, whom the South Ossetians and North Ossetians consider their forefathers³⁵⁷⁸.

2016

January 27, 2016: The ICC authorizes an investigation into possible war crimes committed in 2008, stating that it has "a reasonable basis to believe" that crimes against humanity and war crimes were committed³⁵⁷⁹. The prosecutor stated that there was evidence of the killing of peacekeepers on both sides as well as there were indications that South Ossetian forces had killed Georgian civilians³⁵⁸⁰. Georgia welcomed the investigation stating that it would give Georgia an opportunity to prove that Russia and its proxy separatist forces in South Ossetia "committed ethnic cleansing of Georgians" and were responsible for killing Georgian prisoners of war³⁵⁸¹.

March 21, 2016: Russia warns that the “sharply intensified anti-Russian” rhetoric by Georgia is damaging ongoing “normalization” of bilateral ties and is also having adverse effect on the Geneva international discussions³⁵⁸².

April 11, 2016: Leonid Tibilov states that South Ossetia is planning to hold a referendum about whether to join the Russian Federation³⁵⁸³. Whereas the first referendum in 1992 asked whether South Ossetia wanted to join Russia (allegedly 99% voted yes) the referendum in 2006 asked whether South Ossetia wanted independence from Georgia (again an overwhelming agreement) this referendum will ask whether South Ossetia should join Russia³⁵⁸⁴.

April 15, 2016: South Ossetia’s leader Tibilov states that they did not expect Russia to respond to the South Ossetian request for unification due to the current geopolitical context, as he stated: “At the present time,

³⁵⁷⁵ “Georgia accuses Russia of violating its airspace” *Reuters*, December 10, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-georgia-russia/georgia-accuses-russia-of-violating-its-airspace-idUSKBN0TT1VO20151210>

³⁵⁷⁶ Ibid

³⁵⁷⁷ Liz Fuller “De Facto President Proposes Renaming Republic Of South Ossetia” *RadioFreeEurope*, December 30, 2015, <https://www.rferl.org/a/caucusus-report-south-ossetia-namechange/27458314.html>

³⁵⁷⁸ Ibid

³⁵⁷⁹ “ICC authorises Russia-Georgia war crimes investigation” *BBC*, January 27, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35422437>

³⁵⁸⁰ Ibid

³⁵⁸¹ Radio Free Europe “Georgia welcomes ICC probe of 2008 war with Russia” *Refworld*, January 28, 2016, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=56c42971c&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

³⁵⁸² “Moscow Again Warns Tbilisi Against Anti-Russian Rhetoric” *Old Civil*, March 21, 2016, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=29056>

³⁵⁸³ Jamestown Foundation “Is Russia Preparing the Annexation of South Ossetia?” *Refworld*, April 15, 2016, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=5724db8b4&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

³⁵⁸⁴ Ibid

based on the situation in the world, we would not want to expose our Russian strategic partner to serious political risks[...]. I am 100 percent sure that our people will say “yes”. And, of course, with our constitution amended, we can safely turn to Russia’s senior management. Let’s wait for the moment when “the stars align”, so we can begin to implement the referendum’s results”³⁵⁸⁵. During the “direct line with Vladimir Putin”, Putin stated that Russia could not interfere with the initiatives taken by South Ossetia: “We haven’t discussed this topic [on accession to the Russian Federation] with the president of South Ossetia in detail. He told me his thoughts on the issue, he said that the people of South Ossetia wanted to hold such a referendum and I think we can’t oppose it. We’re not being held back by anything, except the very interests of the South Ossetian people. However, we don’t know yet what will be used as a basis for the referendum or how the questions will be formulated. We will continue our considerations on this issue based on that”³⁵⁸⁶. He however also stated that South Ossetia – Russia relations were not based on unification talks, stating: “We’re not considering our relations with South Ossetia in such a context[...]. I believe that it was a cardinal strategic error on behalf of the former president of Georgia, who initiated the famous armed action, which was fully unjustified, and as a result he lost this territory.”³⁵⁸⁷

May 6, 2016: A scheduled military exercise by Georgia and the US is condemned by Russia who states that it was a provocative step which could destabilize the region³⁵⁸⁸.

May 12, 2016: Georgians living in regions adjoining the breakaway territory of South Ossetia are again unable to pay their traditional Easter visit to the graves of loved ones buried across the administrative border³⁵⁸⁹. South Ossetian residents can use their Russian passports to visit cemeteries in Georgia and access education or medical treatment across the administrative border³⁵⁹⁰. However, residents living on the other side of the border have to apply for access, which is usually denied³⁵⁹¹. A local Georgian, who has repeatedly appealed to the Russian border guards but were turned away stated: "What kind of Christians are they? They could allow us to go at least for one day. After all, the cemetery is right here[...]. My parents are buried there, our church is there, but they do not allow us [to go there]." ³⁵⁹². Georgian citizens who cross the border on purpose or by accident is often seized by Russian border guards and charged with breaching the border³⁵⁹³. As stated by Ani Mirotadze, a lawmaker from the ruling Georgian Dream coalition: "It is part of their (Russian side) agenda to occupy Georgia[...]. They are not satisfied with what is happening on our territory, and they want to have a certain influence in Georgia. We use all communications to avoid provocations and to not give Russia the opportunity again to draw us into a bloody conflict, which is most likely what they wish." ³⁵⁹⁴.

³⁵⁸⁵ “Putin gives yellow light to South Ossetian unification project” *DFWatch*, Retrieved on December 6, 2019, <https://dfwatch.net/putin-gives-yellow-light-to-south-ossetian-unification-project-41836>

³⁵⁸⁶ Ibid

³⁵⁸⁷ Ibid

³⁵⁸⁸ “Russia says U.S.-Georgian military exercises could destabilize Caucasus” *Reuters*, May 6, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-georgia-military/russia-says-u-s-georgian-military-exercises-could-destabilize-caucasus-idUSKCN0XX1X5>

³⁵⁸⁹ Institute for War and Peace Reporting “Georgians Long to Visit South Ossetia” *Refworld*, May 12, 2016, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=573eb0534&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

³⁵⁹⁰ Ibid

³⁵⁹¹ Ibid

³⁵⁹² Ibid

³⁵⁹³ Ibid

³⁵⁹⁴ Ibid

June 6, 2016: Georgia states that Russia’s creeping annexation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia goes unnoticed as focus is turned towards Ukraine³⁵⁹⁵. Georgia’s deputy foreign minister states: “They are doing it more smoothly [than in Crimea], and that makes it more difficult for us to alert the international community and to introduce preventative measures[...]What happened in Crimea was broadcast live. But the international press is not interested if there is no shooting, killing, bombing. Thankfully there is no open war but there is no peace either.”³⁵⁹⁶

September 26, 2016: Russia concludes a military exercise in South Ossetia, which included 4000 troops³⁵⁹⁷.

2017

January 24, 2017: Zakharia Kutsnashvili, MP from the Georgian Dream-Democratic party (Georgia’s ruling party) suggests including a note in the constitution saying that Abkhazia and South Ossetia will have a special status as part of the united Georgia, as he stated: “Since it is important to restore the territorial integrity of Georgia through peaceful means, it would be right and timely to provide a special status to our Abkhazian and Ossetian brothers. If our friends accept the special status, which will take time, probably, we should define that special status at a negotiating table[...]We must make a brave step and get that message across Abkhazia and South Ossetia offering them a special status as part of the united Georgian state”³⁵⁹⁸.

February 6, 2017: According to Georgia, South Ossetia has illegally sentenced a Georgian man to 20 years in prison for illegal border crossing and participation in the 2008 conflict³⁵⁹⁹.

February 22, 2017: At the Munich Security Conference, Lavrov states that Russia “is pleased that relations have begun to normalize,” but added that the visa-free movement “is a quite difficult” issue: “It is associated not only with the absence of diplomatic relations[...]This is also connected with the necessity to ensure security in the circumstances, when not only Central Asia, but also the Trans Caucasus, regions of the South Caucasus are becoming routes, which insurgents, extremists, terrorists and drug traffickers are actively trying to use”³⁶⁰⁰. He also stated that Georgia and Russia “can talk about further facilitation of the visa requirements,” only when the Russian and Georgian law enforcement agencies “establish full cooperation” and when “all of these risks can be prevented on both sides as much as possible.”³⁶⁰¹

³⁵⁹⁵ Ruadhán Mac Cormaic “Georgia fears ‘another Crimea’ inside its borders” *Irish Times*, June 6, 2016, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/georgia-fears-another-crimea-inside-its-borders-1.2673707>

³⁵⁹⁶ Ibid

³⁵⁹⁷ “Russia Concludes Drills Involving Some 4,000 Troops in South Ossetia” *Sputnik*, September 26, 2016, <https://sputniknews.com/military/201609261045695859-russia-south-ossetia-drills/>

³⁵⁹⁸ “Georgian constitution may suggest special status to Abkhazia, South Ossetia” *Eurasia Daily*, January 24, 2017, <https://eadaily.com/en/news/2017/01/24/constitution-of-georgia-may-suggest-special-status-to-abkhazia-and-south-os>

³⁵⁹⁹ Radio Free Europe “Tbilisi blasts South Ossetia for jailing Georgian man” *Refworld*, February 6, 2017, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=5975a4f26&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

³⁶⁰⁰ “Georgian Diplomats Comment Lavrov’s Munich Statements” *Old Civil*, February 22, 2017, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=29876>

³⁶⁰¹ Ibid

March 15, 2017: Putin has ordered the Russian military to incorporate armed forces from South Ossetia into its structure³⁶⁰². Georgia condemned the act stating: "Any agreement between the Russian Federation and de-facto leadership (of South Ossetia) is illegitimate.. "Such steps are not aimed at protecting peace and are impeding peaceful process, which is necessary for the conflict resolution."³⁶⁰³.

March 24, 2017: South Ossetia announces that it will hold a referendum on the unification with Russia following its presidential elections on April 9³⁶⁰⁴. As South Ossetia's Parliamentary speaker stated: "The will of the people of South Ossetia to join Russia is not a secret. There is an agreement with the president of the republic [Leonid Tibilov] that the referendum must be held after the elections in 2017,"³⁶⁰⁵.

March 25, 2017: Russia condemns Georgia for "the cascade of provocative statements and actions in the last few days" and accused Georgia of wanting to disrupt the upcoming round of the Geneva International Discussions³⁶⁰⁶. Russia stated "During the 34th regular session of the UN Human Rights Council, Georgia submitted a draft resolution, that was clearly politicized and aimed against Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia. Foreign envoys have made new "pilgrimages" to the state border with South Ossetia, which Georgia continues to call an administrative boundary line[...].The propaganda campaign[...]can be triggered by anything: Abkhazia's lawful decision to revise the number of checkpoints on its border with Georgia, a bilateral agreement allowing the South Ossetian citizens to serve in the Russian army under individual contracts and a hoax on the alleged deployment of extra S-300 division in Abkhazia, as well as a totally fictional story on the Russian military convoy running through Georgia to Armenia."³⁶⁰⁷. Russia added that Georgia's "political show" serves to create "confrontational and hysterical atmosphere" ahead of the Geneva International Discussions and is designed to "sabotage" the event: "We would like to underline that the Russian delegation is going to Switzerland with the intention to hold a calm and productive discussion on the pressing issues of security and stability in the South Caucasus. We call on the Georgian partners, all other participants in the Geneva discussions, to follow suit,"³⁶⁰⁸.

April 6, 2017: The Ukrainian delegation to the United Nations took the initiative to discuss the situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and invited the members of the Security Council to express their countries' positions on the process of "absorption" of the Abkhazian and South Ossetian armed formations by the Russian army³⁶⁰⁹. As Volodymyr Yelchenko, the permanent representative of Ukraine to the UN stated: "Russia violates the Ceasefire Agreement of August 12, 2008. We urge the Russian Federation to withdraw its troops from the occupied territories and to create conditions for the involvement of international security mechanisms and restoration of territorial integrity of Georgia,"³⁶¹⁰ He also stated that "the history of the annexation of Crimea cannot be left without attention and adequate responses"³⁶¹¹. Russia blocked the

³⁶⁰² Lucy Pasha-Robinson "Vladimir Putin expands Russian army by absorbing Georgian rebels" *Independent*, March 15, 2017, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/vladimir-putin-russia-army-expansion-georgia-rebels-a7631236.html>

³⁶⁰³ Ibid

³⁶⁰⁴ "South Ossetia to Hold Referendum on Joining Russia After April 9 Election" *Sputnik*, March 24, 2017, <https://sputniknews.com/politics/201703241051918796-south-ossetia-russia-referendum/>

³⁶⁰⁵ Ibid

³⁶⁰⁶ "Moscow Accuses Tbilisi of Wanting to Sabotage Geneva Talks" *Old Civil*, March 25, 2017, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=29964>

³⁶⁰⁷ Ibid

³⁶⁰⁸ Ibid

³⁶⁰⁹ Jamestown Foundation "Ukraine Invites Georgia to Act Together Against Russian Occupation" *Refworld*, April 6, 2017, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=58ee26424&skip=0&query=South%20Ossetia&coi=GEO>

³⁶¹⁰ Ibid

³⁶¹¹ Ibid

discussion put forward by Ukraine³⁶¹². Russia stated that Georgia: "was trying to take advantage of the fact, that Ukraine had the status of a temporary member of the UN Security Council." And the representative of the Russian Federation to the UN, Peter Ilichev, stated that compared to the situation in Syria: "it was not worth distracting the attention of the UNSC to the situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia" as there was no conflict and Georgia should recognize the "new realities."³⁶¹³ Russia's acting permanent representative also stated: "If Georgia and its protectors try to discuss the issues of security without the participation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the Geneva talks may even be closed."³⁶¹⁴

April 12, 2017: South Ossetia holds presidential elections which sees the removal of Leonid Tibilov and the inauguration of Anatoly Bibilov³⁶¹⁵. During his election campaign Bibilov supported the unification with Russia, stating that he had a 5-step plan aimed at this³⁶¹⁶. Following his victory, Bibilov re-stated the need for unification with Russia's North Ossetia: "This is a strategic goal after all[...]In just three years, it will be 100 years since the Ossetian people were split. This is very important and we will be doing so in contact with our counterparts in Russia."³⁶¹⁷ On the same day of the election, voters also voted in a referendum on renaming South Ossetia "South Ossetia - Alania" a move which was previously done also in North Ossetia, which now refers to itself as North Ossetia – Alania³⁶¹⁸.

April 23, 2017: Bibilov is inaugurated with Putin's adviser Vladislav Surkov attending and speaking at the ceremony³⁶¹⁹. Surkov praised Bibilov for his: "firm position on the maximum possible integration with Russia", and stated that both pursued the objective: "to establish a common economic, legal, cultural space that would unite our peoples."³⁶²⁰ Bibilov on the other hand confirmed that he was going to continue with the "course of integration into the Russian Federation."³⁶²¹ The leader of the Luhansk People's Republic also attended the ceremony where he thanked South Ossetians for recognizing LNR independence and for sending "volunteers" to fight against Ukraine in the Donbass region³⁶²². He also praised the volunteers saying they "fought honestly, risking their lives." And added that the presence of volunteers from "all regions and republics of Russia" in Donbass confirmed the existence of the "strong and powerful Russia, the united Russian world."³⁶²³ Representatives from Donetsk, Transnistria and Nagorno-Karabakh also attended³⁶²⁴.

May 15, 2017: Russia approves pension payment for Russian citizens in South Ossetia³⁶²⁵

³⁶¹² Ibid

³⁶¹³ Ibid

³⁶¹⁴ Ibid

³⁶¹⁵ Irina Kelekhsayeva and Joshua Kucera "South Ossetia: Voters Opt Against the Kremlin Favorite" *Eurasia Net*, April 12, 2017, <https://eurasianet.org/south-ossetia-voters-opt-against-the-kremlin-favorite>

³⁶¹⁶ Ibid

³⁶¹⁷ Ibid

³⁶¹⁸ Ibid

³⁶¹⁹ "South Ossetia's New Leader Inaugurated" *Old Civil*, April 23, 2017, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=30045>

³⁶²⁰ Ibid

³⁶²¹ Ibid

³⁶²² Ibid

³⁶²³ Ibid

³⁶²⁴ Ibid

³⁶²⁵ "Russia Approves Pension Payments for Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia" *Old Civil*, May 15, 2017, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=30098>

June 8, 2017: Georgia and Ukraine’s defense ministers meet and spoke of military-political cooperation and joint participation in upcoming multilateral military exercises scheduled to be held in both countries³⁶²⁶.

June 23, 2017: The 40th round of the Geneva talks is held where Georgia stated that it had brought up the “stage-by-stage integration” of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in “Russia’s military, political, economic and humanitarian space,” including “the so-called referendum in Tskhinvali Region and signing of the so-called agreement on integration of the local armed groups into the military forces of the Russian Federation.”³⁶²⁷. During the talks, Georgia also accused Russia violating the 2008 “ceasefire agreement” in relation to the removal of the Russian troops from the two regions³⁶²⁸. South Ossetia and Abkhazia jointly condemned the UN General Assembly resolution on the refugees and demanded “legally binding agreement on non-use of force, and in due course – peace treaty between Georgia from the one side and republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia from the other.”³⁶²⁹

July 10, 2017: The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly’s Political Affairs and Security Committee resolution on peace and prosperity in the OSCE region voiced regret over “the lack of progress towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Georgia based on the norms and principles of international law,” and expressed concern “over the humanitarian and security situation in occupied Abkhazia, Georgia, and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia.”³⁶³⁰. A resolution from the OSCE PA called for “the full implementation” of the EU-brokered Six-Point Ceasefire Agreement of August 12, 2008, “which ended the conflicts in Abkhazia, Georgia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia,” as well as for “the free access of humanitarian aid” into the regions. It also stated: “Russia should implement the EU-brokered Six-Point Ceasefire Agreement of 12 August 2008 which ended the conflicts in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia and refrain from using and withdraw its military forces in order to create conditions for a peaceful resolution of the conflict,” and that “parliamentary diplomacy should enhance confidence-building between both sides and create an atmosphere of co-operation and mutual trust[...]. However, we reject the holding of parliamentary elections in Abkhazia and the approval of a military deal between South Ossetia and the Russian Federation. Unilateral decisions such as holding Presidential elections in South Ossetia and changing the name of the region, as well as the opening of a Russian Embassy in Abkhazia, undermine the peace process on the territory of Georgia,”³⁶³¹.

July 11, 2017: According to local media in Georgia, Russia has quietly moved one of its borders further into Georgian territory³⁶³². Georgia called the move illegal and stated: "This is a continuation of the illegal process of the so-called borderisation, which not only violates the fundamental rights of local residents but directly damages the security situation,"³⁶³³. Georgia also stated that the act was an act of “creeping occupation” which has: "in progress since the Russia-Georgia 2008 war,"³⁶³⁴.

³⁶²⁶ “Ukraine, Georgia Defense Ministers Reiterate Support, Plan Joint Activities” *Old Civil*, June 8, 2017, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=30168>

³⁶²⁷ “40th round of Geneva International Discussions” *Old Civil*, June 23, 2017, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=30215>

³⁶²⁸ Ibid

³⁶²⁹ Ibid

³⁶³⁰ “Georgia in the OSCE PA’s Minsk Declaration” *Old Civil*, July 10, 2017, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=30250>

³⁶³¹ Ibid

³⁶³² Lucy Pasha-Robinson “Russia quietly moves border hundreds of yards into occupied Georgia” *Independent*, July 11, 2017, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/politics/russia-georgia-border-south-ossetia-move-hundreds-yards-occupied-nato-putin-west-ukraine-a7835756.html>

³⁶³³ Ibid

³⁶³⁴ Ibid

July 20, 2017: Ukraine and Georgia meet where they pledge strategic partnership³⁶³⁵. Poroshenko stated: “We have similar problems – Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia; Crimea and certain districts of Donbas in Ukraine: thus, we must intensify cooperation in the UN, first of all in the Security Council,”³⁶³⁶. Georgia replied: “Today you are on the battlefield and you can see well what we, the Georgians, have gone through in the 1990s and in 2008[...]These challenges are triggered by our neighbor, the Russian Federation’s policy of the spheres of privileged interests, which leads only to destabilization, human tragedy and parting of peoples”³⁶³⁷

July 30, 2017: Georgia and troops from United States, Britain, Germany, Turkey, Ukraine, Slovenia and Armenia hold military exercises in Georgia with Georgia’s Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili stating that: “These exercises will help Georgia to get closer to NATO standards and to strengthen stability in the whole region,”³⁶³⁸.

September 26, 2017: Russia states that NATO activities in Georgia pose “a serious threat” of destabilization in the South Caucasus and to the security of the Russian Federation³⁶³⁹. It stated: “The Alliance’s military infrastructure is expanding in Georgia, military exercises are held regularly, with their scale increasing every year, and NATO standards for the armed forces and their management are being introduced,” this posed “serious threat of destabilization in the South Caucasus and to the security of the Russian Federation, the Republic of Abkhazia and the Republic of South Ossetia.”³⁶⁴⁰.

October 12, 2017: The 41st round of Geneva talks is held where according to Georgia the main subject of this round of GID was “the continuing ethnic cleansing towards the Georgians still remaining in the occupied regions of Georgia, and Russia’s destructive actions.”³⁶⁴¹. Russia however pointed to its concern regarding “further deepening of the cooperation between Tbilisi and NATO,” saying it was seen as “a real threat for the regional security.”³⁶⁴²

November 15, 2017: Putin meets with South Ossetian leader Anatoly Bibilov in Moscow where they discussed “the current state of bilateral cooperation,” including “the multifaceted efforts in implementing the Treaty of Alliance and Integration,”³⁶⁴³. Before the meeting Putin stated: “We are aware of what was happening ten years ago, back in 2008[...]The situation has undoubtedly stabilized since then. Russia is doing a lot to ensure sustainable security, including the military security and border security of South Ossetia.”³⁶⁴⁴

³⁶³⁵ “Ukraine, Georgia Pledge Strategic Partnership” *Old Civil*, July 20, 2017, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=30283>

³⁶³⁶ Ibid

³⁶³⁷ Ibid

³⁶³⁸ Margarita Antidze “Georgia begins U.S.-led military exercise a day before Vice President Pence visit” *Reuters*, July 30, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-georgia-exercises/georgia-begins-u-s-led-military-exercise-a-day-before-vice-president-pence-visit-idUSKBN1AF0G6>

³⁶³⁹ “Russian Diplomat: NATO Activities in Georgia Serious Threat to Russian Security” *Old Civil*, September 26, 2017, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=30471>

³⁶⁴⁰ Ibid

³⁶⁴¹ “41st Round of Geneva International Discussions” *Old Civil*, October 12, 2017, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=30516>

³⁶⁴² Ibid

³⁶⁴³ “Putin Meets South Ossetian Leader in Moscow” *Old Civil*, November 15, 2017, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=30635>

³⁶⁴⁴ Ibid

November 26, 2017: Georgia and South Ossetia swap prisoners³⁶⁴⁵.

December 14, 2017: The 42nd round of Geneva talks are held where Georgia pointed to the “the severe consequences of the ethnic discrimination against the Georgians remaining in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions, and the issue of non-use of force and establishment of the international security mechanisms[...]Russia’s non-compliance with the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008,” and how Russian militarization of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions contributed to destabilization of the situation on the ground³⁶⁴⁶. Russia on the other hand stated that: “harmfulness of the U.S. State Department decision to allow the sale of the Javelin anti-armor missile systems to Georgia,” saying that “this largest military deal between Washington and Tbilisi since 2008 is, in fact, pushing Georgia into new dangerous adventures.”³⁶⁴⁷

December 27, 2017: Russia states that it is carefully monitoring the militarization of Georgia stating: “We are carefully observing the process of [Georgia’s militarization by western nations] and are adjusting the security assistance to Abkhazia and South Ossetia accordingly[...]We are not afraid of Tbilisi, but we are seriously concerned about the actions of its Western allies,”³⁶⁴⁸

2018

January 28, 2018: Customs points are opened in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which Georgia called: "an illegal step towards the actual annexation of these regions by the Russian Federation."³⁶⁴⁹. Georgia also stated that Russia intends to: "integrate Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region (South Ossetia) into Russia’s single customs territory,"³⁶⁵⁰. The customs point in South Ossetia was agreed to at a government meeting in South Ossetia in December 2017³⁶⁵¹.

February 26, 2018: Three Georgian men are detained in South Ossetia³⁶⁵². One of the men dies while in detention. The EU states that the death is a “source of grave concern”. The EU also stated: “These latest developments underline the need for additional measures to ensure transparency and improve confidence”³⁶⁵³

³⁶⁴⁵ “South Ossetia in three-way prisoner swap with Tbilisi” *Aljazeera*, November 26, 2017, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/11/south-ossetia-prisoner-swap-tbilisi-171126145536626.html>

³⁶⁴⁶ “42nd Round of Geneva International Discussions” *Old Civil*, December 14, 2017, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=30729>

³⁶⁴⁷ Ibid

³⁶⁴⁸ “Russian Diplomat: Moscow carefully observing militarization of Georgia” *Old Civil*, December 27, 2017, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=30763>

³⁶⁴⁹ “Georgian foreign ministry: Russia integrates Abkhazia and South Ossetia” *Eurasia Daily*, January 28, 2018, <https://eadaily.com/en/news/2018/01/28/georgian-foreign-ministry-russia-integrates-abkhazia-and-south-ossetia>

³⁶⁵⁰ Ibid

³⁶⁵¹ Ibid

³⁶⁵² “EU Calls Developments In South Ossetia 'Source Of Grave Concern'” *RadioFreeEurope*, February 26, 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/eu-south-ossetia-grave-concern-georgia/29063391.html>

³⁶⁵³ Ibid

March 12, 2018: South Ossetia releases two Georgians who were detained on February 22 for participating in genocide in 2008³⁶⁵⁴. They were initially three, but the third man allegedly fell down a flight of stairs and suffered heart failure³⁶⁵⁵. South Ossetia refused handing over the body³⁶⁵⁶.

March 16, 2018: Georgia publicly appeals to Russia for the reestablishment of diplomatic ties with Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili stating the wish to embark on “sensible, if small” steps towards better relations³⁶⁵⁷. Russia welcomed the initiative but also stated that: “Russia[...]is ready to go as far as Tbilisi is.”³⁶⁵⁸

March 18, 2018: Presidential elections are held in Russia in which Putin wins with 76%³⁶⁵⁹. According to local reports, he secured over 90% of the votes in South Ossetia and Abkhazia³⁶⁶⁰. Polls were opened for those holding Russian citizenship and the troops stationed there³⁶⁶¹. Georgia condemned the polls stating that is was: “a clear demonstration of the ongoing occupation” of its territories, and “a yet another step towards their factual annexation by the Russian Federation.”³⁶⁶²

March 22, 2018: Georgia states that the negotiations on a joint non-use of force statement is not over stating: “We will continue working with our partners so that we adopt a statement that will serve our objectives and interests, and that will be aimed at ensuring that Russia fulfils the obligations undertaken by the [August 12, 2008] ceasefire agreement,”³⁶⁶³

March 29, 2018: The 43rd round of Geneva talks are held where focus amongst other was on the death of a Georgian citizen in South Ossetia³⁶⁶⁴. Georgia amongst other stated that the “torture and murder” of Archil Tatumashvili was a result of the “inaction of the Russian Federation and its occupation regimes” and the cases of Giga Otkhoshoria and Davit Basharuli “encouraged violence against ethnic Georgians.”: “The Georgian side laid full responsibility on the Russian Federation on the matter, as the country exercising effective control in the occupied regions,”³⁶⁶⁵. Russia on the other hand stated that Georgia: “turned the meeting into a publicity event, contrary to Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili’s reassuring statement of March 9 on his country’s resolve to make progress at the talks in Geneva.”³⁶⁶⁶. It also stated that Georgia’s pedaling of “the alleged Russian occupation” and its attempts to “shift the blame for their own inability to normalize relations with Abkhazia and South Ossetia onto Russia,” were “futile.”: “Instead, Georgia should start thinking about ways to restore trust in relations with its neighbors, launch a direct

³⁶⁵⁴ Tamila Varshalomidze “South Ossetia releases two Georgian 'genocide' suspects” *Aljazeera*, March 12, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/03/south-ossetia-releases-georgian-genocide-suspects-180312075435836.html>

³⁶⁵⁵ Ibid

³⁶⁵⁶ Ibid

³⁶⁵⁷ Liz Fuller “Has Russia Called Georgia’s Bluff Over Stated Desire to Improve Relations?” *RadioFreeEurope*, March 16, 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/has-russia-called-georgia-bluff-over-better-relations/29104767.html>

³⁶⁵⁸ Ibid

³⁶⁵⁹ Andrew Roth “Vladimir Putin secures record win in Russian presidential election” *The Guardian*, March 19, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/19/vladimir-putin-secures-record-win-in-russian-presidential-election>

³⁶⁶⁰ “Putin Secures Over 90% of Votes in Abkhazia, S.Ossetia” *Old Civil*, March 20, 2018, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=30961>

³⁶⁶¹ Ibid

³⁶⁶² Ibid

³⁶⁶³ “Georgian MFA: Negotiations on Non-Use of Force Statement Not Over” *Old Civil*, March 22, 2018, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=30970>

³⁶⁶⁴ “43rd Round of Geneva International Discussions” *Old Civil*, March 29, 2018, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=30991>

³⁶⁶⁵ Ibid

³⁶⁶⁶ Ibid

dialogue with Abkhazia and South Ossetia based on mutual respect, stop encouraging other countries to deny visas to these republics' residents, abolish the Law on Occupied Territories, and stop hindering the republics' cultural and humanitarian events abroad,"³⁶⁶⁷. At the UN, Georgia's permanent representative to the United Nations (UN) Kakha Imnadze states at the UNSC: "The Russian occupation has turned Georgia's Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions into territories, where murder and torture are unaccounted for, as just recently witnessed by the brutal death of Georgian IDP/civilian Archil Tatumashvili"³⁶⁶⁸.

April 3, 2018: South Ossetia's representative to the Geneva International Discussions accuse the US of disrupting the joint non-use of force declaration³⁶⁶⁹. The dispute related to the wording in the declaration³⁶⁷⁰.

April 4, 2018: Georgia announces new peace initiative³⁶⁷¹. Called Step to a Better Future it has three points: facilitating trade across the dividing lines; enhancing educational opportunities in Georgia and abroad; and simplifying access to Georgia's EU integration benefits³⁶⁷². Georgia stated: "This is yet another statement of ours reaffirming that the government's peace policy will definitely continue, and which, despite many challenges, has remained our firm, consistent, and continuous choice,"³⁶⁷³.

April 5, 2018: The State Security Service of Georgia (SSG) issued its annual report for the year of 2017, which focuses on the threats facing the country's national security³⁶⁷⁴. The Russian occupation and the presence of its military forces in the occupied regions is the "primary threat" to Georgia with the report stating: "The presence of large Russian military forces in the occupied regions, increasing militarization of the occupied regions, and intensive military exercises amounts to a threat that harms the security environment not only of Georgia, but also of the entire South Caucasus region,"³⁶⁷⁵.

April 23, 2018: Russia's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova criticized Tbilisi's policies towards Abkhazia and South Ossetia stating: "We suggested the Georgian partners to discuss the issue with the South Ossetian side,"³⁶⁷⁶. She also stated that Georgia had been reluctant to accept "this logic[...]. They continue laying responsibility on Russia for their own inability, and unwillingness, to establish a respectful dialogue with the Abkhaz and the South Ossetians[...]. The residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia do not consider themselves and do not want to become citizens of Georgia, even in exchange for generous promises[...]. Recognition of this crucially important aspect gives us hope that over time, Tbilisi will fully recognize and accept the [new] political reality, that Georgia's neighbors are two independent nations - the Republic of Abkhazia and the Republic of South Ossetia; the sooner this is recognized in Tbilisi, the better for Georgia and for all countries in the region,"³⁶⁷⁷.

³⁶⁶⁷ Ibid

³⁶⁶⁸ "The Russian occupation has turned Georgia's Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions into territories, where murder and torture are unaccounted for" – Kakha Imnadze" *Georgia Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, March 29, 2018, <http://www.mfa.gov.ge/News/rusetis-okupaciam-saqartvelos-afkhazetisa-da-ckhin.aspx>

³⁶⁶⁹ "Tskhinvali Blames U.S. Diplomats for Disrupting Non-Use of Force Declaration" *Old Civil*, April 3, 2018, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=30999>

³⁶⁷⁰ Ibid

³⁶⁷¹ "Government Announces New Peace Initiative for Abkhazia, S.Ossetia Residents" *Old Civil*, April 4, 2018, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=31002>

³⁶⁷² Ibid

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³⁶⁷⁴ "Security Service Reports on External, Internal Threats" *Old Civil*, April 5, 2018, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=31009>

³⁶⁷⁵ Ibid

³⁶⁷⁶ "Russian Foreign Ministry Criticizes Tbilisi's Policy on Abkhazia, S.Ossetia" *Old Civil*, April 23, 2018, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=31037>

³⁶⁷⁷ Ibid

May 9, 2018: South Ossetia closes temporarily closes the crossing points in Georgia along the administrative boundary line³⁶⁷⁸. The closing coincides with Georgia's celebration of victory day and the US states that the closing restricts the "freedom of movement for residents living on both sides of the administrative boundary line"³⁶⁷⁹.

May 23, 2018: Georgia accuses Russia of war crimes, human rights violations and a "rampage" on its territory during the conflict in 2008³⁶⁸⁰. At the European court of Human Rights Georgia stated that Russian planes carried out more than 100 attacks on Georgian targets and that there was overwhelming proof that Russian bombs were dropped on civilian areas³⁶⁸¹. Georgia also stated that Russia's control over the territories was part of a plan "years in the making", and the goal was to "occupy as much territory as it could get away with"³⁶⁸². Georgia also stated that both before and after the ceasefire, Russian troops entered ethnic Georgian villages where they sealed off entrances and exits after which Ossetian forces and other irregular soldiers systematically burned down Georgian homes and entire villages as well as carried out summary executions and threatened individuals with death if they refused to leave³⁶⁸³.

May 26, 2018: South Ossetia and Abkhazia elaborate a joint security approach which states that Russia is responsible for the security of South Ossetia and that this cannot be changed with the South Ossetian president stating: "Today, Russia is a guarantor of South Ossetian security. Any talks about pullout of forces following some incomprehensible wishes of the United States or Georgia are out of agenda,"³⁶⁸⁴.

May 29, 2018: Syria recognizes Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states and Georgia responded by announcing that it would break diplomatic ties with Syria³⁶⁸⁵. Apart from Russia and Syria, the two areas are only recognized by Venezuela, Nicaragua, Vanuatu and Nauru³⁶⁸⁶. Georgia responded by stating: "By doing so, the Assad regime supported Russia's military aggression against Georgia, unlawful occupation of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region (South Ossetia), and the ethnic cleansing that has been taking place for years,"³⁶⁸⁷. Syria will as a result of the recognition set up embassies in the two areas³⁶⁸⁸.

June 13, 2018: The UNGA adopts a Georgian initiated resolution which "condemns the forced demographic changes in the occupied regions and underlines the importance of the inviolability of property rights. It also highlights the importance of humanitarian activities in the occupied regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinval"³⁶⁸⁹

³⁶⁷⁸ "US concerned over de facto South Ossetian authorities' decision to close so-called administrative boundary line" *Georgian Journal*, May 9, 2018, <https://www.georgianjournal.ge/politics/34474-us-concerned-over-de-facto-south-ossetian-authorities-decision-to-close-so-called-administrative-boundary-line.html>

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³⁶⁸⁴ "Pullout of Russian Forces Is Out of Agenda - South Ossetian President" *Sputnik*, May 26, 2018, <https://sputniknews.com/russia/201805261064835138-russia-forces-remain-south-ossetia/>

³⁶⁸⁵ "Syria recognises Russian-backed Georgia regions" *BBC*, May 29, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-44291091>

³⁶⁸⁶ Ibid

³⁶⁸⁷ Ibid

³⁶⁸⁸ Ibid

³⁶⁸⁹ "UN General Assembly adopts resolution initiated by Georgia" *Agenda*, June 13, 2018, <https://agenda.ge/en/news/2018/1271>

June 14, 2018: The European Parliament passes a resolution demanding that Russia reverse its "decision to recognize the so-called independence of the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia."³⁶⁹⁰. It also calls on Russia to "cease its occupation" of the two breakaway regions and "fully respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, as well as the inviolability of its internationally recognized borders, and that it stop the de facto integration of both regions into the Russian administration."³⁶⁹¹.

June 15, 2018: Russia holds military exercises in South Ossetia, which according to Georgian media includes more than 25,000 military personnel and around 500 units of military equipment³⁶⁹².

June 19, 2018: Geneva talks are held where Russia stated that the "only way to increase the productivity of the consultations is for the Georgian side to engage in a direct and respectful dialogue with the representatives of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and to abandon any confrontational rhetoric and behaviour at other international platforms[...]Unfortunately, this appeal was ignored by the Georgian side, which continued to bring up the absurd claims about "Russian occupation" of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and tried to politicise the tragic incidents that had resulted in the death of Georgian nationals Archil Tatumashvili, Giga Otkhozoria, and Davit Basharuli. The discussion of this matter took on an especially emotional character"³⁶⁹³. Georgia on the other hand stated: "Grave security, human rights and humanitarian situation in Georgia's occupied territories was extensively discussed. Special attention was paid to the ongoing military build-up and illegal military exercises in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions, as well as to the steps taken by the Russian Federation towards factual annexation of Georgia's occupied regions[...]Continuation of ethnic discrimination of Georgians in the occupied regions was a particular topic of discussions in both working groups. Representatives of Georgia assessed as a continuation of ethnic cleansing the forced registration of local Georgians residing in Abkhazia region as foreigners and restrictions of their fundamental rights, including property rights. The concern was expressed on grave consequences resulting from the prohibition of education in Georgian language in Gali and Akhlagori districts."³⁶⁹⁴.

June 21, 2018: Georgian Foreign Minister, David Zalkaliani, states: "We continue to work every day to ensure that our partners keep reaffirming the importance of the issues relating to Georgia on their bilateral agenda with Russia. Through the assistance of our partners we try to dispel the narrative being imposed on us that there is allegedly some new reality in Georgia. But there is no new reality whatsoever in Georgia. The reality is that Georgian territories are occupied and need to be de-occupied[...]We are against any kind of barriers and barbed wire fences hindering free movement of people. We support removal of these barriers, peace policy and the sharing of benefits with our fellow citizens living on the other side of the occupation line. I mean benefits, which Georgia's European integration, visa-free travel, and free trade relations with Europe bring about. It is the benefits, not Barriers and wire fences, we offer"³⁶⁹⁵.

³⁶⁹⁰ "EU Lawmakers Urge Russia To Reverse Recognition Of Abkhazia, South Ossetia Independence" *RadioFreeEurope*, June 14, 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/eu-lawmakers-urge-russia-to-reverse-recognition-of-abkhazia-south-ossetia-independence/29290370.html>

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³⁶⁹² Samantha Guthrie "Russian Military Exercises in Occupied South Ossetia" *Georgia Today*, June 15, 2018, <http://georgiatoday.ge/news/10801/Russian-Military-Exercises-in-Occupied-South-Ossetia>

³⁶⁹³ "Press release on consultations on security and stability in the South Caucasus" *Russia's Foreign Ministry*, June 20, 2018, https://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/foreign_policy/international_safety/conflicts/-/asset_publisher/xIEMTQ3OvzCA/content/id/3266713

³⁶⁹⁴ "Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on the 44th round of the Geneva International Discussions" *Georgia Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, June 20, 2018, [http://www.mfa.gov.ge/News/sagareo-saqmeta-saministros-ganckhadeba-jenevi-\(5\).aspx](http://www.mfa.gov.ge/News/sagareo-saqmeta-saministros-ganckhadeba-jenevi-(5).aspx)

³⁶⁹⁵ "There is no new reality whatsoever in Georgia. The reality is that Georgian territories are occupied and must be de-occupied – David Zalkaliani" *Georgia Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, June 21, 2018, <http://www.mfa.gov.ge/News/aravitari-akhali-realoba-ar-arsebobs,-realoba-aris.aspx>

June 28, 2018: Georgian Parliament Speaker Irakli Kobakhidze states that Russia continues to remain the biggest challenge for Georgia's national independence and further stated: "The human rights and security situation is worsening by the day in breakaway Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Every day people are kidnapped. We also see innocent people dying in these two occupied regions[...]The death of Tatumashvili clarified that the conflict in Georgia's breakaway regions is not frozen and that it brings death to Georgians,"³⁶⁹⁶

June 29, 2018: South Ossetia and Georgia launch a tit-for-tat blackmailing list of individuals they blame for crimes against them³⁶⁹⁷. South Ossetia launched the "Sanakoyev list" which includes "citizens of Georgia, the United States, Ukraine and other countries that are involved in the Ossetian genocide in South Ossetia"³⁶⁹⁸. Georgia launched the Otkhazia-Tatumashvili list which includes individuals who have violated the rights of Georgian citizens in Abkhazia and South Ossetia³⁶⁹⁹.

July 7, 2018: The head of the Russian delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA Pyotr Tolstoy, calls on the PA not to consider three draft resolutions at the annual session in Berlin, which are about human rights in Crimea, criticism of the Russian judicial system and the 10th anniversary of the events in South Ossetia in August 2008: "The Russian Federation suggests that this session should not consider these three resolutions so that their authors could come to the Russian Federation themselves and see with their own eyes the real state of affairs, in order not to put the Assembly in a situation when we pass the decisions which are evidently far from reality[...]Therefore, Russia's proposal is that these three resolutions should not be considered at this session but be postponed for a later date"³⁷⁰⁰.

August 7, 2018: Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev states that a NATO decision to admit Georgia could trigger "a terrible conflict" with him stating: "This [Georgia's entry to NATO] could provoke a terrible conflict. I don't understand what they are doing this for"³⁷⁰¹.

³⁶⁹⁶ Thea Morrison "Parliament Speaker: Russia the Biggest Challenge for Georgia's Independence" *Georgia Today*, June 28, 2018, <http://georgiatoday.ge/news/10980/Parliament-Speaker:-Russia-the-Biggest-Challenge-for-Georgia>

³⁶⁹⁷ Giorgi Lomsadze "Georgia, South Ossetia exchange Magnitsky-like lists" *Eurasia Net*, June 29, 2018, <https://eurasianet.org/georgia-south-ossetia-exchange-magnitsky-like-lists>

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Appendix 3: Bibliography - Ukraine Conflict Timeline

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62. "President: Given that Ukrainians are killed everyday, we urgently need UN peacekeepers" *UP*, May 8, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/prezident-v-umovah-koli-shodnya-ginut-ukrayinci-mi-potrebuye-47282>
63. "President: In January 2015, Russian regular troops carried out shelling of Mariupol" *UP*, May 8, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/glava-derzhavi-mariupol-u-sichni-2015-roku-obstrilyovali-kad-47294>
64. "President: Our military calendar should have nothing in common with the country-aggressor" *UP*, May 8, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/glava-derzhavi-u-nashomu-vijskovomu-kalendari-ne-maye-buti-n-47290>
65. "President: Russia wants to destabilize Ukraine and bring it back to the Soviet Union" *UP*, May 8, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/rosiya-pragne-destabilizuvati-ukrayinu-i-povernuti-yiyi-u-ra-47278>
66. "President: We want to build a new international security system that was ruined by the Russian aggressor" *UP*, May 8, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/mi-pragnemo-zbuduvati-novu-sistemu-mizhnarodnoyi-bezpeki-sho-47298>
67. "President: Four years ago, Ukraine almost lost all the Donbas, but due to a successful military operation, we liberated two thirds of our land" *UP*, May 9, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/prezident-chotiri-roki-nazad-ukrayina-majzhe-vtratila-ves-do-47346>

68. "President: Just as in World War II, when Ukraine was attacked from the west, 4 years ago the war came to us from the east" *UP*, May 9, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/glava-derzhavi-podibno-tomu-yak-u-drugij-svitovij-ukrayinu-a-47310>
69. "President: Russia celebrates the Victory Day in a militaristic passion, having bristled up against the whole world, and we, together with the whole Europe, commemorate the deceased" *UP*, May 9, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/prezident-rosiya-svyatkuye-den-peremogi-u-militarnomu-ugari-47326>
70. "President: There are still maniacs ready to put the world on the verge of the third world war, that is why we must be vigilant and responsible" *UP*, May 9, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/she-ne-perevelisya-maniyaki-gotovi-postaviti-svit-na-mezhu-v-47350>
71. "President: We do everything to convey an objective picture and prevent Russia from using the Nord Stream 2 as an element of hybrid aggression" *UP*, May 10, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/robimo-vse-shob-donesti-obyektivnu-kartinu-i-ne-dati-rosiyi-47362>
72. "President: Invaders will necessarily need the bridge when they will urgently leave Ukrainian Crimea" *UP*, May 15, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/kerchenskij-mist-znadobitsya-okupantam-koli-voni-budut-termi-47458>
73. "Our vyshyvanka unites the country - President during the flashmob on Vyshyvanka Day in Dnipro" *UP*, May 17, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/nasha-vishivanka-obyednuye-krayinu-prezident-pid-chas-fleshm-47498>
74. "President: After restoration of its sovereignty in Crimea, Ukraine will use the Kerch Strait Bridge for ties with the Kuban" *UP*, May 18, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/ukrayina-pislya-vidnovlennya-svogo-suverenitetu-v-krimu-viko-47522>
75. "President: Amendments to the Constitution concerning the Crimean Tatar people are necessary for Ukraine" *UP*, May 18, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/zmini-do-konstituciyi-stosovno-krimskotatarskogo-narodu-potr-47518>
76. "The bill on citizenship will be revised on the issue of Ukrainian collaborators in the occupied territories - President on the revocation of his bill" *UP*, May 18, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/zakonoproekt-pro-gromadyanstvo-bude-doopracovaniy-u-pitanni-47526>
77. "President: The pain of Crimean Tatars is the pain of all Ukrainians" *UP*, May 18, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/prezident-bil-krimskih-tatar-ce-bil-usih-ukrayinciv-47530>
78. "President signed a Decree on the final termination of Ukraine's participation in the statutory bodies of the CIS" *UP*, May 19, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/prezident-pidpisav-ukaz-pro-ostatochne-pripinennya-uchasti-u-47554>
79. "We all must move towards Europe every day - President congratulated Ukrainians on Europe Day" *UP*, May 19, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/mi-vsi-razom-mayemo-ruhatisya-v-yevropu-kozhnogo-dnya-prezid-47558>
80. "Ukraine has its own way to God and it is not through Moscow - President on giving the Tomos to the Ukrainian church" *UP*, May 20, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/ukrayina-maye-svij-shlyah-do-boga-i-vin-ne-chez-moskvu-pre-47566>
81. "President: Ukraine appreciates Estonia's support in our struggle for sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence" *UP*, May 22, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/ukrayina-cinuye-pidtrimku-estoniyi-u-nashij-borotbi-za-suver-47606>

82. "President: Joint group presented additional evidence that Russia had supplied the anti-aircraft complex, which shot down the MH17 aircraft" *UP*, May 24, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/spilna-grupa-predstavila-dodatkovi-dokazi-postachannya-z-rf-47686>
83. "President: Ukraine is in much better conditions than 4 years ago. And we keep moving forward" *UP*, May 25, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/prezident-ukrayina-sogodni-unezrivnyanno-krashomu-stani-niz-47762>
84. "President: We expect that the decision on the peacekeepers in the occupied part of the Donbas will be made in the nearest time" *UP*, May 29, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/prezident-ukrayini-rozrahovuyemo-sho-rishennya-shodomirotvo-47814>
85. "Every day, step by step, we are bringing the victory closer - President prays for peace in Ukraine together with the Ukrainian community of Spain" *UP*, June 3, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/kozhen-den-krok-za-krokom-mi-nablizhayemo-peremogu-prezident-47954>
86. "We are steadily moving to Europe - the President" *UP*, June 3, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/mi-vpevneni-ruhayemosya-u-yevropu-prezident-47962>
87. "The whole world is a playground for Russian policy of fake news - President in an interview with Spanish newspaper «El País»" *UP*, June 5, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/vesvit-ye-majdanchikom-dlya-rosijskoyi-politiki-falshivih-48002>
88. "Ukraine pays a very high price, protecting freedom and democracy in the world - the meeting of the President of Ukraine with the Crown Prince of the Principality of Liechtenstein" *UP*, June 6, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/ukrayina-platit-duzhe-visoku-cinu-zahishayuchisvobodu-demok-48018>
89. "Release of Ukrainian political prisoners to be priority issue of the Normandy format foreign ministers' meeting - President at the meeting with the Ukrainian hostages' families" *UP*, June 8, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/zvilnennya-ukrayinskih-politvyazniv-bude-odnim-z-prioritetiv-48062>
90. "President: Decentralization is one of the most efficient reforms in the state" *UP*, June 18, 2018, [reform-v-48226](https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/prezident-decentralizaciya-odna-z-najefektivnishihref=)
91. "The success of our diplomats is no less important than the success of our soldiers on the frontline - President to the graduates of the Institute of International Relations" *UP*, June 26, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/uspishi-nashih-diplomativ-ne-mensh-vazhlivi-niz-uspishi-nashi-48346>
92. "President: It is such festivals as "Paths of Friendship" that are a cultural connection and evidence of the return of Ukraine to Europe" *UP*, July 1, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/prezident-same-taki-festivali-yak-shlyahi-druzhbi-ce-kulturn-48422>

Appendix 7: Codebook - Thematic Analysis - Georgia

Name: Name of the theme

Description: Description of the theme

Sources: Number of texts - out of the 365 primary sources analysed³⁷⁰² - in which a theme has “occurred”

References: Total number of times a theme has been analysed within the primary source dataset

The themes are spoken by all conflict parties, unless otherwise is indicated.

Theme name	Description	Sources	References
Aggressive posturing	Referral to how the other is displaying aggressive behaviour in the conflict through either its behaviour (militarization) or rhetoric (anti-rhetoric) or both.	94	160
Belonging	Referral to how a physical place belongs to a group or how a group belongs to somewhere	48	79
Blame:	Referral to who is to blame for the onset of the conflict and its continuation		
They are to blame		22	37
We are wrongly blamed		18	20
Conflict behaviour:	Referral to how the conflict started and who initiated it		
They attacked South Ossetia (Russia and South Ossetia theme)		50	59
They attacked us		70	78
We acted in self-defence		11	12
Dialogue	Referral to how a group is for or against dialogue	43	81
Domestic crisis	Referral to how the situation is largely driven by internal chaos and how the other is trying to make noise to conceal internal problems.	18	21
Escalation	Referral to how the others are continuously escalating the situation	18	37
Ethnic Cleansing	Referral to how the situation is characterised by ethnic cleansing or genocide	71	119

³⁷⁰² Please refer to page 78 and onwards for a description of the primary sources

Theme name	Description	Sources	References
Ethnic co-existence:	Referral to whether it is possible or impossible for certain groups to co-exist		
Negative		11	11
Positive		16	17
Exclusion	Referral to how a group or leaders of a group are trying to exclude a group or members of a group	26	26
External interference and involvement:	Referral to how external involvement/assistant is positive or negative for resolving the conflict		
Negative		62	68
Positive		62	67
Facts and Lies:	Referral to how a group is either telling the truth or lying		
The other is lying	Referral to how the other is telling lies and how they rely on propaganda. Also, referral to how the other needs to wake up and act in accordance with reality	116	176
We are telling the truth	Referral to how one is telling the truth and how one acts in accordance with facts and the reality	36	38
Historical reference	Referral to how the behaviour of the other is comparable to past events and how the others are trying to repeat past events. But also, how current events are rooted in history	79	115
Intentions:	Referral to how the others have hostile intentions and how they themselves have peaceful intentions		
Hostile		90	115
Peaceful		79	95
Inter-group conflict	Referral to how the conflict is an inter-group conflict	61	81
Lawlessness	Referral to how the behaviour of the others is defined by thug-like behaviour. Also refers to how the territory controlled by the other is lawless and how one needs to regain control of it.	58	99

Theme name	Description	Sources	References
Leaders and civilians	Referral to how there is a need to separate leaders from civilians when making sense of the conflict	64	93
Liberation and Occupation	Referral to how the behaviour of the other is characterised by occupation/annexation whilst one's own behaviour is characterised as assistance/liberation.		
Assistance – Liberation		8	8
Occupation - Annexation		62	68
Legitimacy and Illegality	Referral to how one's own behaviour and claims are legitimate and how the behaviour and claims of the others are illegitimate.		
Justified actions	All actors refer to how their actions were and are justified. This justification is not necessarily rooted in law but rather in expressions of self-defence	16	24
The other is defying international law		70	78
We act in accordance with the law		56	60
Modernization:	Referral to how one's own behaviour and ambitions is driven by modernization and how relations with others will lead to development and modernization. Also refers to how the other bases its behaviour and understandings on the past.		
Our behaviour is guided by the future		37	40
Relations with actors will lead to modernization and development		32	34
Their behaviour is guided by the past		11	11
Personality	Referral to how one's own and the others personality is and how this came to be	70	113
Political will:	Referral to how a group has political will and how the other does not		

Theme name	Description	Sources	References
Negative		52	52
Positive		21	21
Provocations	Referral to how the behaviour and rhetoric of the other are unconstructive provocations	81	106
Proxy	Referral to how the other uses proxies to reach its goal	29	53
Regional threat	Referral to how the behaviour of the other is a regional threat	55	77
Resolution:	Referral to how the conflict should be resolved		
Accept the reality (Russia and South Ossetia theme)		16	16
Acknowledge Wrongdoing		19	23
Collaboration		11	11
Delimitation and demarcation of borderline		11	11
Dialogue between parties		18	21
Implementation of ceasefire, Medvedev Sarkozy plan (themes used by all conflict parties) and the creation of non-use of force agreement (Russia and South Ossetia theme)		49	52
Through the implementation or respect for international law		6	17
Reconciliation		4	4
Territorial retreat		8	8
Trust-building		16	18

Theme name	Description	Sources	References
Sabotage	Referral to how the other is trying to sabotage the peace process and the unity of the other	52	68
Security:	Referral to how the actions undertaken are either meant to ensure security or the protection of civilians or both		
Civilian protection	Referral to how the actions undertaken during 1992 and 2008 were meant to protect civilians. Also refers to how the general objective is to ensure civilian protection and security	40	73
State and de-facto state security	Referral to how one's behaviour is guided by the need to ensure state or de-facto state security	37	83
Survival	How one's actions and the assistance from others is meant to ensure survival of the state/entity and its people	11	16
Self-defence	Referral to how a group is merely reacting to the other's behaviour and that a group is reacting in self-defence	16	25
The nature of the situation:	Referral to how the situation is stable or unstable		
Stable		9	9
Unstable		19	23
Unity	Referral to how a group is unified and strong	28	54
Untrustworthy	Referral to how the other cannot be trusted	24	30
Will of the people	Referral to how the situation and the conflict is directed by the will of the people	44	58

Appendix 8: Codebook - Thematic Analysis - Ukraine

Name: Name of the theme

Description: Description of the theme

Sources: Number of texts – out of the 611 primary sources analysed³⁷⁰³ - in which a theme has “occurred”

References: Total number of times a theme has been analysed within the primary source dataset

The themes are spoken by all conflict parties, unless otherwise is indicated.

Name	Description	Sources	References
Annexation or occupation or aggression	Referral to how the situation and the behaviour of the other can be characterized as either an annexation, occupation, or aggression	111	199
Anti-Russian (DPR and Russia theme)	Referral to how the other and its behaviour is anti-Russian	61	77
Attack on civilians	Referral to how the other is deliberately attacking civilians and how one's own behaviour is guided by the need to protect these civilians	62	87
Belonging	Referral to how a physical place belongs to a group or how a group belongs somewhere	55	141
Blame	Referral to how the other is to blame for the conflict and its continuation	63	90
Coup (DPR and Russia theme)	Referral to how the situation was caused by a coup	21	41
Destruction	Referral to how the other is driven by destruction	35	42
Elitism	Referral to how the situation is the outcome of a small group of elites	11	12
Enemy	Referral to an out-group as an enemy	12	21
Enforced changes	Referral to how the other is trying to impose its changes upon the other	25	29
Ethnic cleansing	Referral to how the situation and the behaviour of the other should be defined as a crime against humanity/ethnic cleansing/genocide	28	34

³⁷⁰³ Please refer to page 78 and onwards for a description of the primary sources

Name	Description	Sources	References
Exclusion	Referral to how the other is trying to exclude members of an out-group or an entire out-group	101	130
External influence:	Referral to how external influence/assistance from others not involved in the conflict, is either negative or positive for the resolution of the conflict		
Negative		43	113
Positive		29	48
Future Victory	Referral to how the in-group will be victorious	24	29
History	Referral to how the situation is a replication of history or how the identity/interests of self and other can be explained by looking at history	86	140
Humanitarian Catastrophe	Referral to how the situation is defined by a humanitarian catastrophe	17	20
Illegality	Referral to how the others' behaviour is illegal	81	138
Inclusion	Referral to how an in-group is inclusive towards its members and/or members of out-groups	42	63
Intentions:	Referral to how behaviour is either driven by hostile intentions or peaceful intentions		
Hostile		81	162
Peaceful		33	65
Inter-group conflict (Ukraine and DPR theme)	Reference to how the conflict is an inter-group conflict/war between two distinct groups	62	107
Intra-group conflict (DPR and Russia theme)	References to how the conflict is an intra group conflict/civil war	50	77
Legality	Referral to how an in-group's behaviour is legal	10	30
Liberation	Referral how there is a need to liberate a group or certain group members	12	15
Nationalism	Referral to how the situation is defined by, as well as the other's behaviour is driven by, nationalism.	56	70

Name	Description	Sources	References
No political will	Referral to how the other has no political will to resolve the conflict	80	132
Peace and Democracy	Referral to how the in-group is driven by democracy, peace, and freedom	19	25
Personality	Referral to how the other's personality is and how this came to be	49	55
Positive political will	Referral to how a group has the political will to solve the conflict	28	39
Propaganda	Referral to how a group's behaviour and narrative is driven by lies and propaganda	86	135
Provocations	Referral to how a group is provoking another	32	53
Proxy	Referral to how a group uses proxies in order to ensure its goals	65	92
Regional or global threat	Referral to how the behaviour of the other is either a regional threat or a global threat	25	35
Resolution:	Referral to how the conflict should be resolved		
End Military Operations		16	21
External Pressure		29	29
Implement Ceasefire and Other Agreements		13	21
Negotiation		32	61
Peacekeeping		11	11
Sanctions		11	14
Rights	Referral how civilians' rights are violated and how there is a need to ensure these rights	86	120
Russification (Ukraine theme)	Referral to how is group is trying to Russify another group	12	12
Self-defence	Referral to how a group is merely defending itself against an enemy	26	56

Name	Description	Sources	References
Split the country in two	Referral to how the behaviour of the other is causing a conflict to split into two	20	21
State-building	Referral to how the state should be (re)built to end the conflict and ensure peaceful co-existence	21	61
Terrorists (Ukraine theme)	Referral to how a group is a terrorist group and how the situation is defined by terrorist attacks and other such methods	61	112
Truth	Referral to how a group knows the truth about the situation and the other	57	70
Unified and Strong	Referral to how a group is united and strong	52	83
Vulnerable Situation	Referral to how the situation is vulnerable and may escalate at any moment	14	15
Will of the People	Referral to how the leaders of a group, and a group per se, is driven by the will of the people	21	53

Appendix 9: Codebook - Frame analysis - Georgia

GFM/GP: Georgia's Foreign Ministry/Georgia's President

SO: South Ossetia

RFM/RP: Russia's Foreign Ministry/Russia's President

Frame	Description	Example
Situation-frames:		
The out-group instigated the conflict	Referral to how the conflict has not been instigated by the in-group. It is a conflict the out-group has initiated unilaterally and unprovoked	<i>"We are meeting to discuss the new situation in the world, created as a result of the Georgian aggression against South Ossetia.[...]Let us call a spade a spade: a real war occurred in the region where the aggression was launched, a war which claimed the lives of Russians, Ossetians and Georgians"</i> RP-6(5)
The conflict is a matter of ethnic cleansing/genocide	Referral to how the conflict is an example of ethnic cleansing/genocide.	<i>"Mr. Gamsakhurdia pursued a policy of ethnic cleansing, and in the person of Mr. Saakashvili, found a worthy successor"</i> RFM-78 (5)
The conflict is a matter of occupation/annexation	Referral to how the conflict should be understood as a situation where the out-group is trying to annex/occupy parts of the in-group's territory	<i>"Russia's policy vis-à-vis Georgia[...]illustrates that Moscow does not accept the independent choice of sovereign states and strives for the restoration of zones of influence in the region, including through the use of force, occupation, annexation and other aggressive acts"</i> GFM-3 (5)
The conflict is loaded with ideational threats/cover ups	Referral to how the conflict is not only fought through military use, but to a great extent using propaganda, which distorts the truth about the conflict and leads to distorted self/other understandings	<i>It is not clear, for how much longer will the occurrences of August 2008 and other fascist crimes of the Georgian leadership, that took place during the last</i>

Frame	Description	Example
		<p><i>twenty years, will be cover with mist. It is time to open eyes of Georgian people[...].on the ruinous inadequate policy of Georgian leadership towards people of South Ossetia. SO-25 (5)</i></p>
<p>The out-group must leave the in-group territory</p>	<p>Referral to how the conflict will only be solved if the out-group, and the agents who fight on its behalf, leave the in-group territory.</p>	<p><i>“This reality will be changed only when the occupation lines no longer exist on the territory of Georgia and when the occupant troops leave the country”GP-56 (5)</i></p>
<p>The out-group and in-group must be divided</p>	<p>Referral to how the conflict will only be solved if the out- and in-group is separated</p>	<p><i>“The leadership of Georgia for the last 20 years by its criminal actions the apogee of which became an aggression in august 2008 against South Ossetia[...].spelt the death of the issue of territorial integrity of Georgia within the framework of former Georgian SSR. As a consequence of such aggressive policy became creation of two new recognized democratic states” SO-11 (5)</i></p>
<p>Dialogue is need</p>	<p>Referral to how the conflict should be solved through dialogue and inclusion</p>	<p><i>“We have always said that the questions of status can be tackled only by the parties in conflict without the use of force or outside pressure. But you have to move from the simple to the complex[...].You have to start with confidence-building measures[...].People in such territories should not feel isolated” RFM-42 (5)</i></p>

Frame	Description	Example
Self-frames:		
The in-group has existed for a long time	Referral to how the in-group has existed for a long time and how it has continuously fought for its existence and interests in a consistent and united way	<i>“Georgia is the country of ancient civilization. This area was inhabited 1.7-1.8 million years ago[...] Georgian people always found the forces to release from the rule of foreign tribes. Many great Empires were ruined, but Georgia still stands on his feet and continued struggle for protection of its own interests” GP-68 (5)</i>
The in-group has been collectively mobilised	Referral to how the in-group acts in a unitary way and how they have been collectively mobilised in the conflict to fight a collective enemy	<i>“The repetitive massacres and ethnic cleanings of the Ossetian, organized by Georgian officials as well as attacks on South Ossetia and the August war of 2008, launched by Georgia can’t be forgotten, no matter how Georgian authorities seek for razing that from social memory.” SO-38 (5)</i>
The in-group is united	Referral to how the in-group is united, strong, and resilient.	<i>“The will of the Georgian people to determine own fate and future has not been changed either. Georgian people maintained this fate for centuries and it will continue in the future.” GP-66 (5)</i>
The in-group is committed to conflict agreements	Referral to how the in-group behaves in accordance with the conflict agreements made and how it continues to be committed to the agreements’ implementation	<i>“We do not attack anyone. On the contrary, in a number of cases we are protecting the lives and dignity of people, our citizens and foreign citizens, through our presence as peacekeepers in different countries” RP-4 (5)</i>

Frame	Description	Example
The in-group is motivated by truth	Referral to how the in-group is motivated by the pursuing of truth and how its actions is in accordance with what is happening on the ground	<i>“We try to dispel the narrative being imposed on us that there is allegedly some new reality in Georgia. But there is no new reality whatsoever in Georgia. The reality is that Georgian territories are occupied and need to be de-occupied”</i> GFM-53 (5)
Other-frames:		
The out-group leaders are distorting their out-group	Referral to how the out-group leaders are distorting the identity and interests of the out-group	<i>“We were not going to break off diplomatic relations, knowing full well that the regime of Mikhail Saakashvili does not personify the Georgian people, but is an anomaly which in general does not grow from within Georgian society but was brought there from outside”</i> RFM-71 (5)
The out-group behaves in the same way	Referral to how the out-group continues to behave in the same way	<i>“It should be noted that South Ossetia had been attacked by Georgia several times before August 2008. Genocide and total ethnic cleansing of the Ossetian organized by Georgian troops in 1920 resulted in thousands of causality”</i> SO-50 (5)
The out-group excludes others	Referral to how the out-group seeks to excludes others, particularly those who have another view of the out-group and the conflict	<i>“The purpose of this practice is obvious – Georgian authorities are trying by all means available to block[...]South Ossetia communication with the outside world”</i> RFM-72 (5)
The out-group lies	Referral to how the out-group continues to lie about the conflict and their role in it. Also, referral to how the	<i>“Saakashvili is still trying to convince the international community that there is a conflict between Russia and</i>

Frame	Description	Example
	out-group is seeking to distort self/other understandings.	<i>Georgia, while at issue is actually the long-running conflict between Tbilisi and the peoples of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which as a result of yet another military gamble by Georgia in August 2008". RFM-74 (5)</i>
The out-group wants control	Referral to how the out-group is driven by control and how it wants to (re)instate control over groups to pursue its interests	<i>They keep on fantasizing about their territorial claims in Tbilisi. It appears that one should use applied psychology to comment such statements as it is evident that being frustrated because of the impossibility of getting the desired, Georgian authorities are forced to use psychologically manipulative techniques. SO-51 (5)</i>
The out-group is disruptive	Referral to how the out-group is violating international law and/or how it is violating the conflict agreements/hindering any further agreements	<i>"The Russian Federation is seriously harming the Geneva International Discussions and is intentionally obstructing any potential progress in the peace process" GFM-28 (5)</i>

Appendix 10: Codebook - Frame Analysis - Ukraine

UFM/UP: Ukraine’s Foreign Ministry/Ukraine’s President

DPR: Donetsk People’s Republic

RFM/RP: Russia’s Foreign Ministry/Russia’s President

Frame	Description	Example
Situation-frames:		
The out-group instigated the conflict	Referral to how the conflict has not been instigated by the in-group. It is a conflict the out-group has initiated unilaterally and unprovoked	<i>“Russia planned military aggression against Ukraine in advance. Victory of revolution of dignity was only a convenient pretext”.</i> UFM-95 (6)
The out-group leadership is mobilising agents	Referral to how the out-group leadership is mobilising agents (who are not only out-group members) to fight in the conflict.	<i>“They [Russia] stick to the same routine as in Crimea. First, they recruit and arm professional military. Second, they deploy them on Ukrainian territory. Third, they hire local radicals to pose as the “pro-Russian forces””</i> UFM-11 (6)
The conflict is a matter of occupation/annexation/eradication	Referral to how the conflict should be understood as a situation where the out-group is trying to annex/occupy parts of the in-group’s territory and/or eradicate the out-group	<i>“The Kiev’s implementation of consistent policy of Russian culture’s eradication is bearing its poisonous fruits. Ideas for the creation of ghettos for Russian-speaking people are being developed and bills are being drafted for the forced ukrainization of the population”</i> DPR-61 (6)
The conflict is loaded with ideational threats/cover ups	Referral to how the conflict is not only fought through military use, but to a great extent using propaganda, which distorts the truth about the conflict and leads to distorted self/other understandings	<i>“We must do more to help our citizens resist Russian propaganda and disinformation – our citizens must now realise that Russia is a State that lies on an industrial scale”</i> UFM-79 (6)

Frame	Description	Example
The out-group must leave the in-group territory	Referral to how the conflict will only be solved if the out-group, and the agents who fight on its behalf, leave the in-group territory.	<i>“When can peace come? Only when Russian invaders leave the Ukrainian land and when the Ukrainian flag and the Ukrainian national emblem return to the Ukrainian Donbass”</i> UP-85 (6)
The out-group and in-group must be divided	Referral to how the conflict will only be solved if the out- and in-group is separated	<i>“As time has shown, as a rule, citizens of Ukraine fall under the repression of the neo-Nazi Kiev regime[...]Many former Ukrainian citizens were forced to leave Ukraine, and the Donbass and the Crimea did this together with their lands”.</i> DPR-124 (6)
Dialogue is need	Referral to how the conflict should be solved through dialogue and inclusion	<i>“The Geneva meeting was to send a clear signal to Kiev that the situation can be stabilised only through the launch of a comprehensive dialogue with regions, especially with those, where Russian-speaking population is prevailing and whose opinions should be heard by the central authorities”</i> RFM-40(6)
Self-frames:		
The in-group has been collectively mobilised	Referral to how the in-group acts in a unitary way and how they have been collectively mobilised in the conflict to fight a collective enemy	<i>“The Russian-speaking south of Ukraine quite naturally rejects the artificially imposed alien life rules”</i> DPR-86 (6)
The in-group is seeking freedom	Referral to how the in-group is pursuing freedom and a future in which they can decide for themselves	<i>“Ukraine is a territory of dignity and freedom[...]We became so owing to not one but two revolutions[...]It was an extremely tough challenge</i>

Frame	Description	Example
		<i>for Ukraine when the Ukrainians demonstrated their Europeanness, dignity, their desire for freedom”.</i> UFM-47(6)
The in-group is committed to conflict agreements	Referral to how the in-group behaves in accordance with the conflict agreements made and how it continues to be committed to the agreements’ implementation	<i>“Our invitation to international observers is another confirmation of Russia’ good will, because Russia uses all its efforts to assist the de-escalation of the internal Ukrainian crisis”</i> RFM-83 (6)
In-group violence is self-defence	Referral to how any violence committed by the in-group is either a response to the violence they face from the out-group, or is an act of self-defence which is necessitated by the conflict the out-group has out the in-group in.	<i>And now we, local residents who have defended our land, culture and history, have also occupied ourselves[...]</i> We, the representatives of the Donbass, perceive all these actions as preparation for military operations and the desire to seize the Donbass by force” DPR-97 (6)
The in-group is motivated by truth	Referral to how the in-group is motivated by the pursuing of truth and how its actions is in accordance with what is happening on the ground	<i>“The war will end with our victory[...]</i> Not only because we have the best Armed Forces[...]But also because the truth is with us and the Lord is with us, so we will surely win” UP-40(6)
The in-group is seeking to (re)establish their identity	Referral to how the in-group is seeking to (re)establish the true contours of their in-group identity. In the case of Russia this refers to how Russia is seeking to ensure the re-establishment of the true Ukraine group identity	<i>“The unity of the country is an absolute priority for everyone[...]</i> Fighting for our Ukrainian language means not only shouting the slogans and putting forward demands to the authorities[...]the main thing is to speak it. Even if you have been speaking Russian for a lifetime, switch to the Ukrainian language” UP-23 (6)

Frame	Description	Example
The in-group is seeking in-group unity	Referral to how the in-group is motivated to ensure a united in-group and a group with perfect manager-member relations. In the case of Russia this refers to how Russia tries to ensure unity in the Ukraine group.	<i>“Dialogue is a pivotal concept in modern Ukraine. Maidan started from a protest of citizens who wanted to be heard by the Government” UFM-16(6)</i>
Other-frames:		
The out-group leaders are distorting their out-group	Referral to how the out-group leaders are distorting the identity and interests of the out-group	<i>“It was thanks to work on changing the population’s consciousness the Kiev authorities managed to suppress protests in the southeast regions of Ukraine” DPR-182 (6)</i>
Agents are being manipulated	Referral to how out-group leaders are manipulating agents into fighting a conflict.	<i>This war has already recruited many different actors, who might not be even aware of their destructive roles. However, the evil behind this war is the same, and he resides in Kremlin” UP-8(6)</i>
The out-group behaves in the same way	Referral to how the out-group continues to behave in the same way.	<i>“Russian aggression against Georgia in 2008 became a litmus test for European security. It was a warning sign that was not heeded” UFM-58(6)</i>
The out-group lies	Referral to how the out-group continues to lie about the conflict and their role in it. Also, referral to how the out-group is seeking to distort self/other understandings.	<i>“It is not that easy to plant russophobia in the descendants of the Victory, the Russian-speaking population, and simply among the people with friendly and kindred ties. Fake news is short-lived, and the degree of hatred towards everything Russian related needs to be constantly promoted” DPR-188(6)</i>

Frame	Description	Example
The out-group wants control	Referral to how the out-group is driven by control and how it wants to (re)instate control over groups to pursue its interests	<p><i>“Refusing to see that something was badly wrong in the Ukrainian state and to start a dialogue, the government threatened to use military force and even sent tanks and aircraft against civilians” RP-3(6)</i></p>

Appendix 11: Nvivo files for Georgia and Ukraine

As mentioned in the method chapter, there is a tendency amongst the Ukraine and Georgia governments to delete the homepages of previous governments. The Georgia government has offered an archive of the Saakashvili administration (<http://www.saakashviliarchive.info/en/>) and I expect similar will occur for the Poroshenko administration. Nevertheless, should you be denied access to the online files listed in the primary data bibliographies, please consult the following Nvivo files where I have saved all data used for the analyses.

Access to the Nvivo files via Google Drive:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1SgyIG5NoqPFIFgObMsSPxKRwzBpgfeQG>