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# **RUSSIAN INFORMATION CAMPAIGN AGAINST GEORGIA: AFTER THE WAR IN AUGUST 2008: GOALS, NARRATIVES AND ACTORS**

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## **Abstract**

The article aims to reveal the main components of Russia's information campaign against Georgia after the end of the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008 in the context of the use of "soft power". The article shows the growing influence of the available means and instruments of Russia's "soft power", the main ones being non-governmental organizations and groups that promote the ideas of Eurasianism, hold joint Russian-Georgian events and meetings, and, as a result, promote anti-Western sentiment in Georgia. The main goal of Russia's "soft power" in Georgia is to create a friendly and positive image of Russia and to convince society of the only correct pro-Russian course of Georgia. The main research methods are: system-structural, generalization, historical-genetic, chronological and structural-functional analysis. Chronological framework of the study - 2008-2015. The results of the study can form a theoretical basis for the formation and implementation of various methods of counteracting the information and psychological influence of the Russian Federation in the post-Soviet space.

**Key words:** *Russian-Georgian War in August 2008, Information Warfare, Post-Soviet Space, "Soft Power", Hybrid War*

## INTRODUCTION

Russia's main goal is to dominate in the South Caucasus region and strengthen Russian sphere of influence, which is defined as post-and neo-imperialism. The Russian Federation builds relations with the neighbors, as with the former colonies, without considering them as fully sovereign states. To achieve the goals, Russia uses separatism and irredentist claims in neighboring states to blackmail and, if necessary, to dismember them. Russia uses the concept of a strong state as an instrument of foreign policy towards Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine. After the end of the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008, the main tool for achieving Russia's neo-imperial goals in Georgia was the use of Russia's interpretation of Joseph Nye's concept of "soft power", which is largely based on lies and misinformation.

"Soft power" is a set of diplomatic, economic, political, military, legal, cultural instruments of non-violent influence on the situation in foreign countries in the interests of national security of one's own state. It includes international cooperation in various fields (political, military, economic, cultural, etc.); providing free assistance to other countries with attention to certain areas of economic policy; participation in post-conflict (post-crisis) recovery in other countries; the use of information technology to manage large masses of people around the world (in particular, the widespread introduction of social networks); introduction of educational programs and internship programs for representatives of foreign countries, the most promising in professional and social terms, in their country. The forces and means of "soft power" are aimed at attracting other countries to their culture, way of life, political ideals and programs - as opposed to "hard power", which is based on the use of coercive measures of military and economic force to force other actors in international politics to behave. Joseph Nye junior, a professor at the John F. Kennedy Harvard Institute of Public Administration, first formulated these concepts. "Soft power" can be possessed not only by states, but also by other actors in international politics - non-governmental organizations and international institutions [Nye 2004].

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Moscow sought to keep the former Soviet republics under its control within organizations such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), disguising its imperial goals under economic and ideological cooperation. The main task for Russia was to spread an ideology that would be acceptable to the former Soviet republics. Most post-Soviet states saw imperialist goals in Russia's integration activities. Russia created separatism and contributed to its spread in the so-called "near abroad", using threats, blackmail and tools of economic influence (embargo, sanctions). If necessary, the Russian Federation used "hard power" (the use of military and economic force to force other actors in international politics to the desired behavior) against Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine.

With the coming to power of V. Putin in the 2000s the Russian Federation demanded that the West create a so-called "new architecture of security" and "indivisible secu-

rity in Europe”, which were supposed to provide recognition of Russia’s special rights in the so-called “privileged” spheres of interest in the post-Soviet space. In 2008, by invading Georgia, Russia showed the West that it would not allow European and Euro-Atlantic structures to unite states that are in the sphere of Russia’s interests. The reaction of the world community to the events in Georgia in August 2008 clearly demonstrated the lack of a clear NATO position and Europe’s strong dependence on Russia’s energy supplies. That is why Moscow has stepped up efforts to create a new Eurasian Economic Union project that could provide the conditions for Russia’s survival as a great power and integrate post-Soviet states under Russian control.

Basic research methods. Thanks to the system-structural method, it was possible to consider the object of study, the Russian information campaign in Georgia, as a generalized phenomenon consisting of elements, each of which has its own specifics and functions, but simultaneously these elements are closely interconnected. The method of generalization became helpful in formulating the conclusions of the study. The historical-genetic method made it possible to consistently reveal the evolution of the creation and activities of key actors of Russian influence in Georgia, their main approaches and narratives. The chronological method allowed us to consider these processes in a chronological order in the postwar period 2008-2015. The structural-functional analysis allowed a comprehensive study of the system of key actors of Russian influence in Georgia and identify the functions performed by each element.

## **1. GOALS AND NARRATIVES OF RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA**

Propaganda is a form of communication aimed at spreading in society the world-view, theory, statements, facts, arguments, rumors and other information to influence public opinion in favor of a particular common cause or public position. For effective influence, propaganda must cover as much space as possible “information reality” - a set of ideas, symbols, ways of understanding the world, which is formed by all streams and sources of information, determines the mass and individual consciousness and behavior. Propaganda is usually repeated and disseminated through various media to shape the chosen outcome of public opinion. In contrast to the objective presentation of information, malicious propaganda selectively presents information in order to encourage certain generalizations or uses the emotional coloring of the message to provoke a sensory rather than rational reaction to what is said. The desired result of propaganda is a change in attitude towards its subject. Propaganda uses the same techniques and techniques like advertising and public relations. In postwar usage, the term “propaganda” more typically refers to the political or nationalist use of these methods or the promotion of a set of ideas, as the term has taken on a negative connotation. Propaganda has much in common with government public information campaigns aimed at encouraging or denying certain forms of behavior. Russian propaganda (Kremlin propaganda) is Russian state information policy, special information events, and a conglomeration of relevant state bodies and institu-

tions that under the guise of “public information” are engaged in the psychological treatment of the population of the Russian Federation and the population of other countries - especially post-Soviet countries and the Russian diaspora. Russian state propaganda is total, cynical, false, uses the basic methods of Soviet propaganda, as well as the experience of other authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. Aggressive Russian propaganda has become a well-designed and effective tool in spreading Russian influence both domestically and in the post-Soviet space. Following the events of August 2008, the Russian Federation changed its foreign policy towards Georgia, combining the achievements of the Soviet propaganda machine with a full arsenal of “soft power”.

Distinctive features of Russian propaganda are:

- the idea of the plurality of truths that each story has two sides and the reliability of the sources is insignificant;
- flexibility, the lack of principles and unscrupulousness;
- cynicism
- constant throwing of misinformation into the information space of the media;
- absolute falsehood, inconsistency with reality and the invention of the necessary “facts”-modeling and creation of the so-called “parallel reality”;
- one-moment and situational dissemination of information, and denial of information that has been reported recently;
- creating a “dirty” information field to increase mistrust, fear, panic and apathy.

The main goals of Russian propaganda are declared in the country’s foreign policy and national security documents. Since the early 2000s, the concept of “putinism” has emerged in Russia – it is a common feature of the regime, political mentality, and state ideology. Early “putinism” was based on the need to “restore order” to ensure the civilizational advancement of Russia. The ideological support of early “putinism” was the growing influence of Russia in the club of developed countries, holding major political and cultural events in Russia and so on. Modern “putinism” is based on the need to establish Russia as one of the centers of a “multipolar world” in an effort to revive the political status lost by the Soviet Union. Attempts to revive the Soviet Union, which are carried out both on the ideological front and by overt or covert use of military force, are the ideological support of modern “putinism”.

Discussing Russian propaganda, two important documents need to be identified:

1. Vladimir Putin’s political manifesto “Russia and the changing world”.
2. Program article of the Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Federation Valery Gerasimov “The value of science in prediction”, which highlights the main provisions of the new military doctrine of the Russian Federation.

In the article “Russia and the Changing World”, V. Putin describes the Russian version of “soft power”, which differs radically from J. Nye’s definition of “soft power” (as a mechanism for achieving strategic goals by creating an attractive and successful model) [Nye 2004]. Vladimir Putin sees this concept as “a mechanism for achieving

foreign policy goals without the use of force, interference or aggression” and emphasizes the strategic importance of “reintegration” of Russian compatriots living abroad. He examines various global challenges and notes that “the modern world order and stability cannot be imagined without a strong Russia” and outlines the fundamental components of instability - non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which are the main sources of separatism and extremism that only destabilize countries (for example “Arab Spring”) [Putin 2012].

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov also stressed the importance of Russia’s “soft power”, arguing that “this mechanism is the best tool for promoting Russia’s national interests abroad”. As a result, almost all Russian international foundations or research organizations are beneficiaries of Russian foreign ministry grants [Vojtišková & Novotný 2016: 21].

An important fact was the statement of General Valery Gerasimov that “the political goals of the XXI century can be achieved by non-military and information means”, which became an important aspect of Russia’s “hybrid” war [Meister 2016: 3]. According to V. Gerasimov, “modern Russia will be able to neutralize any threat from the West and “Operation to force Georgia to peace” revealed the lack of unified approaches to the use of Armed Forces outside the Russian Federation” [Gerasimov 2013].

According to the “Gerasimov’s Doctrine”, the main goals of Russian propaganda are:

- defense-avoidance of “color revolutions”/“Arab Spring” and ideological treatment of the local population;
- offensive-influence on Western societies through misinformation and rumors (fabrications) spreading to protect “Russian national interests”;
- severance of relations between the EU and its strategic partners (USA and Canada);
- paralysis of the decision-making process in the EU and NATO structures;
- creation of various myths (legalization of LGBT marriages; migration will lead to mass criminal and sexual violence; the United States is going to start a war and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe will be used as shields);
- the spread of various false doctrines (“post-Soviet space is a legitimate zone of Russian influence”);
- discrediting the countries of the Eastern Partnership with the use of the Orthodox Church, public organizations and foundations;
- presentation of Ukraine as an aggressor and a country with a fascist regime;
- promoting the image of indomitable Russia – “no sanctions can harm us” [Meister 2016; Samadashvili 2015].

Gerasimov’s Doctrine” is a continuation of the reflections of one of the main ideologues of Russian propaganda, Igor Panarin. According to him, “nothing has changed since the end of the Cold War and the main task of modern Western policy is the removal of the Russian president and the partition of Russia” [Panarin 2012]. I. Panarin speaks

about the need to use such elements as creating public stereotypes, manipulating people, spreading misinformation and spreading rumors [Darczewska 2014: 15].

The main ideologue of the Russian Federation is Alexander Dugin, according to whom the principles of liberal democracy and liberalism in general directly contradict the “Russian idea” (worldview) [Vojtišková & Novotný 2016]. O. Dugin develops the concept of “Russian world”, based on Russian culture, language, history and Orthodox morality. The concept became the main guideline of the Russian Federation in creating a buffer zone around Russia, which will include protectorates (a form of interstate relations in which one state is under the protection (primarily military) of another state) and dependent states. He predicts the implementation of this political vision in the Eurasian space (in the geopolitical zone stretching from Cairo to Beijing). The consolidation of the post-liberal and neo-conservative Eurasian Union will be based on the idea of anti-Americanism and isolated from “Western tendencies” (LGBT marriages, terrorism, mass migration). O. Dugin criticizes fascism, communism and liberalism as dangerous ideologies for family and religious values [Dugin 2009].

O. Dugin’s political views are very popular in the Kremlin and in the Russian Orthodox Church [Judah 2013]. According to the Moscow Patriarchate, “Vladimir Putin was sent and anointed by God”. A number of clergy supports this narrative. Thus, Russian Orthodox activist Dmitry Tsorionov fully justifies Putin’s policy and considers it God’s will. According to him “Russian President Vladimir Putin has every chance to become God, because Putin can connect with God and receive all his perfections” [Gazeta.ru 2015].

The Russian Orthodox Church plays an important role in promoting the idea of “Russian world”. Patriarch Kirill stated at a meeting with Moldovan clergy that “Holy Russia is not an ethnic, political, linguistic term, but a spiritual term. It is the unity of values, the spiritual orientation that shapes our spiritual unity and stands above any political boundaries”. On November 3, 2009, at the Third Assembly of the Russian World, Patriarch Kirill mentioned the term “Russian World” 38 times, arguing that a united “Russian World” could become a strong actor in global politics, more powerful than any political alliance [Information portal of “Russkiy Mir” foundation 2009]. The issue of religious ideological treatment is very important in Russia. One of the main tools of the new ideological approach is Orthodoxy. This factor is used as a “banner” by which Russia “justifies” its own political and military interventions abroad. The Kremlin is manipulating the use of religious unity in various Orthodox countries. Thanks to the International Foundation for the Unity of Orthodox Christian Nations, Russia funds various forums and conferences aimed at criticizing and demonizing the Western world (as an antagonistic society for the Orthodox Church) [Samadashvili 2015].

Russia’s military-political leadership has made every effort to define Russia’s new identity and its role in a changing world, trying to find an ideological and legal ba-

sis for achieving its imperial goals. The determining factors influencing the modern geopolitical thinking of the Russian leadership were the ideas of “neo-Eurasianism” by O. Dugin and P. Shchedrovitskiy. In particular, P. Shchedrovitskiy is a generator of ideas about the future of Russia and ways of development, which are called the concept of “Russian world”, which should provide Russia with a “proper place” in a globalizing world. This concept was developed in 1993-1997 and today is a kind of model for Russian politicians and propagandists. According to the author of the concept of “Russian world”, large countries in the context of globalization should develop either through colonization or at the expense of diasporas. Russians and “Russian-speaking” people living outside the Russian Federation are the so-called “immune system” of the Russian Federation [Shchedrovitskiy 2006].

The main direction of Russia’s foreign policy is the post-Soviet space, in which, according to the concept of “Russian world”, live as many Russians as inside Russia. The category of Russians also includes bilingual people who, in addition to their native language, also speak Russian. Thus, many ethnic non-Russians also fall into the category of Russians. This concept states that there is a certain socio-cultural reality in the post-Soviet space, the so-called “civilization space”, which is based on three foundations: Orthodoxy, Russian language and culture, common historical memory and views on social development. This is a purely imperial expansionist concept, disguised as a civilizational and cultural project created by Russia to legitimize its actions in the post-Soviet space. Thanks to the skillful propaganda and active work of the Russian media, it can be successfully implemented. The idea of “Russian world” was first voiced in 2007 during President V. Putin’s annual address to the Russian Federal Assembly: “Russian is the language of the historical brotherhood of nations, it is a living space for many millions of people in the Russian-speaking world a community that goes far beyond the Russian Federation borders” [Pkhaladze, 2010b].

The idea of a “divided Russian people as the largest divided people in the world with the right to reunification” was voiced by Russian President Vladimir Putin in his address to the Federal Assembly on March 18, 2014 [President of Russia website 2014]. Commenting on the situation in Crimea on March 7, 2014, the press secretary of the President of the Russian Federation D. Peskov stated that “V. Putin is the main guarantor of the security of the “Russian world” and the area of responsibility of the Russian Federation in terms of national security has increased, its borders are wider than the state borders of the Russian Federation” [Vzglyad 2014].

## **2. MAIN ACTORS OF RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA**

The main actors in the spread of Russian propaganda in the context of the “soft power” concept use are public organizations, foundations, think tanks, research institutions, expert clubs, television, news agencies, the cyber army, and people working in social media. They actively spread fictions (fabrications), which purpose is to create chaos. The most famous actors of Russian propaganda in the world:

- Russian world Foundation, established in 2007 by the Ministries of Education and Foreign Affairs. The annual budget is 5.12 million euros. The main goal is to promote the Russian language and culture. The organization operates dozens of research and educational centers around the world. One of the functions is to select promising young people and prepare them for future activities;
- Rossotrudnichestvo (Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation), founded in 2008 by a decree of Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, subordinated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The main goal is to promote Russia's political and economic goals. It operates in 81 countries. The official budget of the organization by 2020 was increased from 40 to 115 million euros;
- Gorchakov Foundation (The Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund)-established in 2010 by a decree of President Dmitry Medvedev. The main goal is to support the foreign policy interests of the Russian Federation. Budget - 660 thousand euros. It includes The Primakov Georgian-Russian Public Center founded in 2013;
- Foundation for Supporting and Protecting the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad, established in 2012 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and Rossotrudnichestvo. The main goal is to protect the interests of compatriots living abroad, mainly in the Baltic States. The annual budget is 9.1 million euros;
- World Russian Press Foundation (World Association of Russian Press) established in 2014 by the Government Commission on Compatriots Abroad. The purpose of the organization is to present the Russian position abroad and to form an objective image of Russia [Julukhidze 2018].

The budgets of these foundations, created to promote Russia, are comparable to similar Western foundations (for example, the budget of the British Council was about 210 million euros in 2015, the Goethe Institute about 213 million euros in 2015). However, Russian foundations have private funding through the so-called "hawala system" (a money-laundering scheme, an informal banking network that operates outside the official system and transfers certain amounts of money without physically moving them), so it is impossible to determine their annual budget or income [Samadashvili 2015].

To legitimize foreign policy, the Kremlin uses various think tanks and research institutions:

- Valdai Discussion Club, founded in 2004 by the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy of the Russian Federation. The purpose of the organization is to conduct research activities and organize an annual large-scale conference. This forum is attended by well-known figures who make pro-Kremlin statements and assessments;
- Russian International Affairs Council, founded by President Dmitry Medvedev in 2010. The purpose of this research center is to deepen cooperation between Rus-



sian and foreign think tanks. The organization often publishes analytical documents in support of Russian policy;

- Russian Institute for Strategic Studies, founded in 1992. The institute was part of the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation until 2009, was re-organized and subordinated to the Administration of the President of the Russian Federation. The purpose of the organization is to publish works that support the foreign policy of the Russian Federation;
- Institute of International Relations and Strategic Studies (Institut de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques) is a leading pro-Russian research center in France. The Institute is a beneficiary of grant projects of the Russian World Foundation;
- French Institute of International Relations (Institut Français des Relations Internationales) – a pro-Kremlin think tank in France, a beneficiary of grant projects of the Russian World Foundation;
- Institute of Democracy and Cooperation (Institut de la Démocratie et de la Coopération), founded in Paris in 2008, also had a representative office in New York until 2015. The purpose of the organization is to support and justify Russian foreign policy interventions;
- Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute (Dialog der Zivilisationen), founded in 2016 in Berlin. Analytical center that publishes pro-Russian research papers. The Institute is a beneficiary of Russian federal grant programs [Samadashvili 2015; Julukhidze 2018].

Television is actively used to spread Russian propaganda, namely the “Russia Today” (RT) channel, which has been operating since 2005. RT is an international multilingual news channel funded by the Russian government (20 billion rubles allocated in 2020). RT is the second most watched news channel in the world (after BBC News) and the first to receive over a billion views on the Internet [Samadashvili 2015]. RT audience is over 700 million viewers. RT broadcasts in over 100 countries. The channel broadcasts around the clock and covers the Russia’s official view on major international events.

News agency and radio “Sputnik” includes websites, mobile application, online broadcasts, radio service and press centers, founded by the international news agency “Russia Today” in 2014. “Sputnik” has regional offices and bureaus in different countries, news sites work around the clock in 30 languages. The Internet audience numbered about 64 million visitors per month in 2019. In addition to news content, “Sputnik” sells photo reports, live broadcasts, infographics and public opinion polls. To suppress and paralyze sources of information, the Russian Federation actively uses the cyber army. The greatest success of the cyber army was achieved during the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008, the first large-scale coordinated cyber-attack was carried out, which took place in parallel with and complemented the regular military offensive. Several Georgian servers (Georgian government, financial, business

and media websites) and Internet traffic were seized and relocated under external control [Hollis 2011].

The Russian side has managed to worsen communication between the Georgian government and the public; suspend financial transactions; there was confusion about the development of the situation; the Georgian government's efforts to disseminate information about the Russian invasion were thwarted; the Georgian government was deprived of many sources of information; it became more difficult to inform the outside world about what was happening, reducing the chances of receiving outside help, namely the Georgian government's ability to resist the Russian invasion became impossible. The Russian side also created the "StopGeorgia.ru" website, which provided instructions for ordinary users on how to carry out cyber-attacks against the Georgian side quickly and easily. This has allowed to attract more Russian users to cyber-attacks [Shakarian 2011: 63].

The so-called "troll factory" (Internet Research Agency), founded in 2013 in St. Petersburg (Russia), makes a significant contribution to the spread of Russian propaganda. That is, the Internet system of people who spread misinformation through social media, insult other users for expressing different opinions that do not coincide with the official position of the Russian Federation. The staff numbered about 300 people. According to M. Sidon's research, "on average, a troll posts 50 publications per day. Each of them has 6 Facebook accounts and 10 Twitter accounts, publishes at least 3-5 messages per day and regularly uploads propaganda texts to social networks. An estimate of 33.5 million Russian rubles per month is provided for their maintenance. The main task of network trolls is to write comments to organize fake discussions, which should be joined by real, not anonymous users" [Pomerantsev & Weiss 2015].

Russia also distributes its stories in leading Western publications. The government-paid insert about Russia is published in print and on the websites of "The Telegraph", "Washington Post", "New York Times", "Wall Street Journal" and "International New York Times" in 23 countries in various languages. The insert is edited together with the editors of publications and it is claimed that is this side of Russia, which is missed by Western journalists, denying any propaganda [Pomerantsev & Weiss 2015: 18]. The American public relations agency "Ketchum Inc." is engaged in spreading pro-Russian views in the world through lobbying and political promotion. In 2006-2015, the agency received about \$ 60 million for cooperation with the Russian government. In 2008 alone, Russia spent about \$ 20 million on services provided by PR companies "Ketchum Inc.", "Kreab Gavin Anderson", "GPlus" and "Alston & Bird LLP" to change the political regime in Georgia by inciting internal unrest and destabilization [Civil Georgia 2009].

### **3. INFORMATION CAMPAIGN AGAINST GEORGIA IN THE POSTWAR PERIOD**

To achieve its political goals, Russia is actively waging an information and propaganda war against the West, but the main targets for Russia remain the post-Soviet states. Russia seeks to increase its political and economic influence over these target countries and finally establish its monopoly in the South Caucasus. The main means to achieve this is to carry out measures aimed at reducing confidence in democratic values and increasing chaos.

Although Georgia is not a part of the “Russian world”, it has fallen into the category of compatriots and territories that “naturally and geopolitically belong to the Russian-political orbit and must remain under Moscow’s control” [Shchedrovitskiy 2006]. The largest agitational campaign against Georgia took place in 2005-2009, especially during the preparations for the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008. The mainstream Russian media spread the following narratives about Georgia:

- Georgia must stay with Russia because of its geographical location, common 200-year history and common Orthodox religion;
- the Georgian and Russian peoples are fraternal peoples, and Georgia’s political leadership is betraying this friendship, going against historical logic and trying to take Georgia out of Russia’s sphere of influence;
- Russia will never let go of Georgia, and joining NATO and the EU will destroy Georgia;
- The West is not a reliable partner, Georgia has illusions about its Western perspective.

After the end of the Russian-Georgian war in 2008, Russia focused on the use of “soft power” instruments such as diplomatic activities in its policy towards Georgia; protection of the rights and interests of Russian citizens living abroad; cooperation in the field of culture, education and science; activities of public organizations; impact on the media space; religious factor. In addition to the usual tools of “soft power” (language, cultural influence), Russia uses destructive propaganda and conducts information campaigns against the West. The main narratives are:

- The West is the enemy and wants to destroy Russia;
- The West is in the process of degradation, incapable of further development and immersed in dirt and vice;
- Russia is morally pure and will be able to consolidate around itself all the states that profess the right moral values;
- Western democracy is a myth, in fact the West is divided, and Russia’s activities are legitimate [Rondeli 2014].

After the war in Georgia in 2008, the intensity of Russian propaganda reached its apogee in 2014 during the events in Ukraine. In the information campaign against Ukraine, the Russian Federation used national Russian TV channels that broadcast the following contextual and propaganda narratives:

- there is a Slavic or “Russian world”, and Ukraine is an integral part of it;

- The Great Patriotic War continues, fascism in Ukraine has not yet been defeated, and Stepan Bandera's followers, extreme nationalists and fascists who rule in Kyiv, want to divide one Slavic (Russian) nation and weaken Russia;
- Ukrainian events are provoked by the West and are a conspiracy against Russia;
- Russia's activities are legal, Russia is telling the truth, and the West is lying;
- Eurasianism is the right step towards a better future for Russia, Ukraine and other post-Soviet countries;
- Ukraine is an important part of this Union, and the West and the Ukrainian fascists want to destroy it;
- The West has deviated from God and lost moral values.

At the same time, NGOs, compatriots' organizations, experts, and social media (so-called "troll factories") simultaneously disseminated messages of Russian propaganda on the Internet on a large scale. As the Russian media are fully controlled by the government - the Kremlin holds weekly meetings with media leaders and allocates a special budget for the media [Rondeli 2014].

After the end of the Russian-Georgian war on August 31, 2008, in an interview the then President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev said: "Georgia occupies an important place in the list of privileged interests of the Russian Federation. We have a special historical relationship, friendship and good neighborliness". On September 25, 2008, the then Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin gave the "green light" to exercise "soft power" in Georgia. According to him, "we must develop good relations with the cities of Georgia. We should not leave Georgia to nationalists and irresponsible people". It is worth noting that after the end of hostilities in Georgia, many Russian high-ranking officials also expressed their "warm feelings" towards the Georgian, Abkhazian and Ossetian peoples [Pkhaldze, 2010b].

Russia has successfully tested its propaganda in the context of using "soft power" against Georgia and has managed to dismember it. In post-Soviet societies, there is still a fertile ground for strengthening anti-Western sentiment among various sections of the population through the remnants of the Soviet legacy, the influence of Russian propaganda, and the crucial role of the clergy. Russia's political leadership has a unique vision of world politics - Russia is a victim of a Western conspiracy, especially on the part of the United States; The West is in the process of degradation, and Russia is moving towards a bright future. These statements are calculated for Russia's domestic and post-Soviet "consumption". Russian media, local pro-Russian NGOs and groups claim that European integration is not necessary for the Georgian economy and is dangerous for Georgia's culture, while accusing the Georgian government of not integrating with Russia. To this end, a certain "alternative reality" was created, which seriously affected the public opinion both in Georgia and in the post-Soviet countries. The Soviet experience became the basis for modern Kremlin "brainwashing".

As Russian remains the language of communication for the majority of ethnic minorities (about 20 percent of the population) in Georgia, as well as a tool for communication between different ethnic groups and audiences (Georgian, Azerbaijani, Armenian, Russian) - many young people do not know Russian, but middle-aged and elderly people still speak Russian and use Russian-language media (mainly television) [Rondeli 2014].

In January 2010, the Russian-language First Caucasus Information Channel (PIK TV) began broadcasting in Georgia, which stopped broadcasting in October 2012 with the coming to power of Georgia's new pro-Russian leadership. Newscasts about news from Georgia, Russia and the world accounted for 70% of the channel's programs, broadcasting was around the clock. The idea of creating "PIK TV" belonged to the then President of Georgia Mikhail Saakashvili. The TV channel served as a source of information for the Russian-speaking population of Georgia, and was also used as a means of counter-propaganda. Due to the high quality of TV journalism and its alternative view, the TV channel gained popularity in the post-Soviet space and provoked sharp criticism from the official authorities of the Russian Federation. "PIK TV" was part of the Public Broadcaster of Georgia and was financed from the state budget. The TV channel broadcast documentaries about the crimes of the Bolsheviks and the Sovietization of Georgia, as well as various talk shows hosted by members of the Russian opposition. In June 2011, the channel's website was additionally translated into English [Newsru.com 2010].

In regions of Georgia inhabited mainly by ethnic minorities (Armenians in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Azerbaijanis in Kvemo Kartli), most non-Georgians are insufficiently integrated and involved in Georgian socio-cultural and political life. The main reason is the low level of knowledge of the Georgian language. Earlier, "PIK TV" channel informed the local population about Georgia's domestic policy. With the cessation of broadcasting of the "PIK TV" channel, the information gap was filled by Russian TV channels. Currently Georgian TV channels "Obieqtivi", "Imedi", print and electronic media "Asaval Dasavali", "Saqinform", "Iverioni", "Geworld.ge", "Georgian Times" and the Russian news agency "Sputnik" spread Russian propaganda and anti-Western positions in the context of the "soft power" use. Features in the presentation of information are: dissemination of anti-Western and pro-Russian rhetoric, xenophobic and homophobic statements, emphasis on the restoration of Russian-Georgian friendship and normalization of relations between Russia and Georgia [Rondeli 2014].

Another tool for spreading Russian propaganda in the context of the "soft power" use is the activities of pro-Russian non-governmental organizations in Georgia. They carry out anti-NATO and anti-European activities, promote so-called Eurasianism and organize anti-Western and anti-NATO rallies, together with their Russian counterparts organize meetings of Georgian and Russian youth, invite groups of Georgian youth to Russia and create a friendly and positive image of Russia. The most active pro-Russian NGOs in Georgia are the Eurasian Institute (People's Movement for

Russian-Georgian Dialogue and Cooperation project), Historical Heritage, Russian Lev Gumilev Center, Society for the Scientific Study of Caucasus, Young Political Scientists' Club, Caucasian Cooperation, Global Research Center, People's Orthodox Movement, Eurasian Choice (Patriot TV project), New Leftists-People's Patriotic Movement, Society of Erekle the Second, "Russian World" foundation (Russian language courses for Georgian citizens project), Russian and Georgian People's Unity Foundation, The Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund, Russian-Georgian Public Foundation. It is worth noting that most of the NGOs were established after the end of the Russian-Georgian war in 2008 and the official severance of Russian-Georgian diplomatic relations, and are often founded by the same individuals. The activities of pro-Russian NGOs are to organize and conduct seminars-conferences with the participation of Georgian, Russian and other experts in economics, politics, media, culture and arts; as well as protests organization that helps strengthen anti-Western sentiment in Georgia [Dzvelishvili & Kupreishvili 2015].

In 2009, Gulbaat Rtskhiladze and Irakli Vekua founded the Eurasian Institute in Georgia. The main goal of the organization is to help improve Russian-Georgian relations. With the coming to power of pro-Russian political forces in Georgia in 2012, the Eurasian Institute's activities intensified in the direction of restoring friendly relations with Russia. In 2013, the Eurasian Institute founded the Young Political Scientists' Club, whose members are constantly promoting anti-Western discourse, for example, in their speeches stating that the United States and the EU aim to undermine Georgia's national traditions. Since 2014, representatives of the organization have attended various meetings in Russia at the Institute of CIS countries, the Institute for Forecasting and Settlement of Political Conflicts, the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies. In 2013, the Eurasian Institute launched the People's Movement for Russian-Georgian Dialogue and Cooperation project (georus.org), which helped ease tensions in Russian-Georgian relations. In 2015, the Eurasian Institute launched the initiative "Why May 9 is Georgia's Victory Day", which involved students and veterans of World War II in order to objectively cover information about these events. The organization's partners are Georgian publications: "Geworld.ge", "Saqinform", "Iverioni", Russian Lev Gumilev Center, which disseminates the ideas of "neo-Eurasianism", and the Society for the Scientific Study of Caucasus, established in October 2010 at a conference in Abkhazia and registered in Russia, which specialized on the study of the Caucasus and aimed at cooperation with Russia [Nauchnoe obshchestvo kavkazovedov 2010].

In 2009, Tariel Gagnidze founded the non-governmental organization Historical Heritage in Tbilisi. A statement issued during the founding process said: "As information about Russia and Georgia is falsified, the organization will help the younger generation learn about their country's true past. To this end, it will publish state historical acts, modern memoirs, biographical materials, etc." In 2013, the Historical Heritage published a book in Georgian "Unknown Putin", which, according to T. Gagnidze, col-

lected materials that objectively reflect the policy of Russia as a state and the personality of Russia's President as the main leader of this policy [Neizvestnyj Putin 2013]. "Geworld.ge" (Georgia and the World) has been published since 2009, with Irakli Todua as its editor-in-chief. The publication has a trilingual (Russian, Georgian, English) website, which is updated daily. "Geworld.ge" actively covers the activities of the Eurasian Institute members, invites them to comment on various topics and disseminates their views, often homophobic and xenophobic. In 2010, the news agency "Saqinform" was founded, with Arno Khidirbegashvili as editor-in-chief and owner. The agency's materials are dominated by anti-Western sentiments, it cooperates with the Georgian media union "Obieqtivi", established in 2010, and the Russian news agency "Rex" ([www.iarex.ru](http://www.iarex.ru)). In 2012, Zaur Nachkebia founded "Iverioni", which also publishes pro-Russian materials [Dzvelishvili & Kupreishvili 2015].

In 2011, Gulbaat Rtskhladze and Nana Devdariani founded the Caucasian Cooperation. There is an organization of the same name in Moscow with which the Georgian organization works closely. The purpose of the Caucasian Cooperation is to restore Georgian-Russian scientific ties. The organization has held conferences, including "The Great Victory Achieved by Unity: The Caucasus during the Great Patriotic War" and "Demographic Problems Existing in Georgia" and runs a Russian-language website "Russia-Georgia: Expert Dialogue" ([georgiamonitor.ge](http://georgiamonitor.ge)). In February 2013, during a visit to North Ossetia, a representative of Shota Apkhaidze stated that "in 2008, M. Saakashvili committed genocide against the Ossetian people" [Tarhanova 2013].

Nana Devdariani is also a co-founder of the Center for Global Studies, the People's Orthodox Movement and the People's Legal Foundation. In 2013, Irakli Ubilava founded the Global Research Center, which is a partner of "Geworld.ge". The purpose of the Global Research Center is to "promote expert dialogue in Georgia and abroad". The organization has held a number of conferences and seminars on the negative impact of NATO in Georgia, as well as published studies based on the views or analysis of members of the Eurasian Institute. For example, "NATO Myths and Reality", where the Alliance is portrayed in a negative context. It has been argued that the West needs Georgia's membership only to meet its own interests, meaning providing "cheap" soldiers to carry out various NATO operations [Dzvelishvili & Kupreishvili 2015].

In 2010, the People's Orthodox Movement was founded in collaboration with "The Georgian Times". According to the organization's charter, its purpose is to promote state-building based on Orthodox values, preserve Georgian identity, develop and support traditional Christian lifestyles, promote the idea of monarchy as a form of government in Georgia and implement joint projects with the Georgian Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church [Dzvelishvili & Kupreishvili 2015].

In May 2013, Archil Chkoidze, Maia Khinchagashvili and Boris Manzhukov founded the Eurasian Choice, which aims to implement cultural, educational, scientific and social projects, holding events for children and youth in the Eurasian space. The Eurasian Choice is engaged in charitable activities, publishing museum and educa-

tional materials, translation of foreign literature. The organization's co-founder Archil Chkoidze often appears in the Russian media as an active supporter of Georgia's pro-Russian foreign policy, promotes the ideas of "neo-Eurasianism" by O. Dugin and states that "it was the West that occupied Georgia". In 2010, the Eurasian Choice created the New Leftists-People's Patriotic Movement, which also spread anti-Western sentiments [Eho Kavkaza 2015].

In 2009, the Society of Erekle the Second was established, headed by Archil Chkoidze. The scope of activities of the organization includes the promotion of Russian culture and art in Georgia and vice versa - the promotion of Georgian culture and art in Russia; closer integration of the Russian-speaking population of Georgia into Georgian society and assistance to them in learning the state language; promoting the protection of the rights of the Russian-speaking population of Georgia; development of Georgian-Russian dialogue at the public level; promoting the beginning and development of political dialogue between the authorities of Georgia and Russia [Kavkazskij Uzel 2009]. The organization initiated Russian language courses in Georgia, funded by the "Russian World" foundation established in Russia [Information portal of «Russkiy mir» foundation 2013], and repeatedly organized rallies demanding the restoration of diplomatic relations with Russia and a referendum to determine the country's foreign policy. The partner of the Society of Erekle the Second is Russian and Georgian People's Unity Foundation, whose website published information about relations between Russia and Georgia. In 2015, the Eurasian Choice and the Society of Erekle the Second founded Patriot TV project (a television based on authentic Georgian traditions useful to the future generation of the country, based on Georgian ethical ideas) to spread pro-Russian sentiment [Dzvelishvili & Kupreishvili 2015].

In 2010, the Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund was founded. The organization's official website states that "international events in recent decades have shown that "soft power" policies - the ability of the state and society to influence the international space through their cultural, historical and political values - have not lost their significance and importance". The creation of the Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund was the first and unique for modern Russia mechanism of state-public partnership in the field of foreign policy, which will intensify the international activities of Russian non-governmental organizations and other civil society institutions. The main task of the Fund is the successful formation of a worthy socio-political and business image of Russia in the world. According to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Foundation Serhiy Lavrov, "over ten years of the Foundation's work it has achieved significant progress in supporting public diplomacy, doing much to expand international contacts of domestic nonprofits. More than 300 grant projects were supported, more than 500 events were held". Leonid Drachevsky became the Executive Director and Chairman of the Board of the Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund [Fond Gorchakova 2010]. With the assistance of the Gorchakov Foundation, in



July 2013, the Georgian-Russian Public Center named after E.M. Primakov, headed by Dmitry Lortkipanidze. The Georgian-Russian Public Center organizes and holds meetings of Russian and Georgian experts and public representatives, conducts free Russian language courses, actively cooperates with Tbilisi universities and promotes the involvement of students in major international projects involving the two countries [Fond Gorchakova 2013].

The Georgian non-governmental organization Caucasian House is also actively cooperating with the Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund and various conferences have been held jointly between Russian and Georgian youth. The meetings took place within the framework of the Russian-Georgian Dialogue for Peace and Cooperation project, which was implemented with the support of the United Kingdom. Unlike other non-governmental organizations, the Caucasian House does not spread anti-Western sentiments [The Centre for cultural relations Caucasian House 2015].

In November 2014, the Russian media corporation “Sputnik Georgia” began broadcasting in Georgia. Initially, the programs were broadcast on FM 101.4, which belonged to Radio Monte Carlo. This fact caused public outrage - the non-governmental organization “Institute for the Development of Freedom of Information” demanded the publication of documents and further clarification, and the National Communications Commission of Georgia initiated proceedings. A study of the case showed that content in Georgian for “Sputnik Georgia” was prepared by the “Newsgeorgia” news agency. Sanctions were later imposed on both organizations, and broadcasting was stopped. In 2015, Tato Lashishvili, editor-in-chief of “Svobodnaya Gruzia”, registered “Sputnik Georgia”, a limited liability company that is a partner of “Obieqtivi” and “The Georgian Times”. Currently, “Sputnik Georgia” maintains a website and broadcasts radio programs [Dzvelishvili & Kupreishvili 2015].

The Russian media space has also spread to Abkhazia and South Ossetia. According to the Decree of the President of Abkhazia Serhiy Bagapsh of November 20, 2009, made free broadcasting of 7 Russian TV channels: “First Channel”, “NTV”, “TV Center”, “REN TV”, “Culture”, “Petersburg’s 5 Channel”, “New Television of Kuban”. The information space of South Ossetia has also been completely occupied by the Russian media. According to Georgian law, media distribution must be licensed, which is why the Georgian National Communications Commission fined “NTV”, “TV Center”, “Russia” and “Kultura” channels in 2009 for unauthorized broadcasting in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and demanded the cessation of unauthorized broadcasting, but the commission’s decision was not complied with. Russian websites and social networks are widespread in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. For example, since February 2009, Odnoklassniki.ru has allowed users from Abkhazia and South Ossetia to register as residents of separate countries, and the Yandex-Map server has changed the Abkhazian and South Ossetian borders with a separate line separating them from Georgia [Tsatsanashvili 2010].

There are other non-governmental organizations in Georgia whose goals are to promote Russian culture and develop Russian cultural centers in Georgia. The International Cultural and Educational Union “Russian Club” has been operating in Tbilisi since 2003, the president of which is the head of the Tbilisi State Academic Russian Drama Theater named after A.S. Griboyedov Nikolai Sventitsky. The union publishes a monthly socio-cultural magazine “Russian Club”. Public associations “Raduga”, cultural, charitable and scientific-educational union of the Russian community in Georgia, the Russian Cultural Center “Iskra”, the Association of Russian-speaking journalists of Georgia, the Russian Cultural Center “Zhemchuzhina”, the Union of Russian Women of Georgia “Yaroslavna” are also engaged in cultural projects in Georgia - they organize meetings, round tables in various fields of culture, literary evenings, performances and other events [Pkhaldze & Devdariani 2010].

Another successful environment for Russia’s “soft power” use was Georgia’s cyberspace. In April 2009, a powerful cyber-attack was carried out against Georgian websites, blocking the websites of the court and the media. The technology used is publicly available commercial software used by computer network administrators. Hackers have modified the software to suit their destructive intentions. They have stepped up a number of so-called stress tests, which are commonly used to estimate the size of servers to handle http-packet waves. Another program was also changed - software-damaged websites were sent to randomly selected, non-existent addresses. For example, during the attack on the website of the Office of the Patriarch of Georgia, the English version of the website showed a phrase that caused outrage in the Azerbaijani media. For several days, Azerbaijani and Georgian spiritual leaders and journalists have condemned the fact as a deliberate act of incitement to hatred, thus preventing the conflict. The cyber-attack on the website of the Office of the Patriarch of Georgia was carried out from Belgium. E-mails registered in the Georgian.ge domain have also been blocked during this period [Tsatsanashvili 2010].

Russia is actively using the religious factor as an instrument of “soft power” in Georgia. About 80% of the population are followers of the Georgian Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church, which has a high level of trust in society. After the end of the Russian-Georgian war in 2008, relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Georgian Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church remained good. Both Churches cooperated in providing assistance to the civilian population, Georgian Catholicos-Patriarch Ilya II visited the conflict zone with a pastoral visit, brought humanitarian aid, although the territory was occupied by Russian troops. After the end of hostilities contrary to the Kremlin’s policy, the Russian Orthodox Church refused to recognize South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states. The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church has adopted a resolution officially recognizing the jurisdiction of the Georgian Orthodox Church over the Abkhazian and South Ossetian dioceses. But in September 2009, the Abkhaz Orthodox Church declared its independence from the Georgian Orthodox Church. The Georgian Orthodox Church

has become an instrument for Russia to put pressure on the Georgian community and promote its narratives - as a result, Georgian clergy have openly linked the EU to destroying values, undermining Georgia's national traditions and spiritual mission, and spreading anti-Western sentiment [Kakachiya 2014].

After the end of the war in 2008, Russia focused on using the cultural factor in the context of "soft power", trying to create the image of a friend and win the sympathy of the Georgian people. Old Soviet ideas, clichés and stereotypes were used for this purpose. The main emphasis is on the common Soviet past, the status of the Russian Federation as the successor to the Soviet Union and the common "Russian space", as well as the works of joint Soviet cinema. Mass events with the participation of Russian cultural figures were held in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. An Agreement on Cooperation between the Ministries of Culture of the Russian Federation and Abkhazia was signed on November 11, 2009, and on July 6, 2010 between the Ministries of Culture of the Russian Federation and South Ossetia, which provided for cooperation programs in the field of culture. Since 2010, St. George's Ribbon action has been held with the participation of students from Abkhazian schools to celebrate Victory Day in World War II. In November 2009, Abkhazia began the process of switching to Russian phone codes +7,940 for mobile communications and +7,840 for landlines, and in January 2010 it completely switched to the Russian telephone code system. In South Ossetia there were round tables "Russia's role in restoring Ossetia's statehood", "Russia and South Ossetia in the 21st century", "Ossetians in the Russian army", "I am a citizen of Russia" campaign as part of the celebration of Russia Day, the Russian House was also opened [Bachiashvili 2010].

Education and science are also used as tools of Russia's "soft power" in Georgia. The educational process in Georgia, except for the occupied territories, is carried out in accordance with the curricula and manuals approved by the Ministry of Education of Georgia. Teaching in Abkhazia and South Ossetia is carried out in Russian according to curricula and manuals approved by the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, which are fully consistent with Russian ideology. Very little attention is paid to the Abkhazian and Ossetian languages, the level of their study is reduced to the level of an optional subject. The same applies to the study of the Georgian language in places with a predominant Georgian population, for example, in the Akhgori district of South Ossetia, Georgian language and literature were removed from the curriculum in 2010, and in the Gali district of Abkhazia education in the Georgian language is banned. After graduating from secondary schools, young people from the occupied regions are given the opportunity to receive higher education in higher educational institutions of the Russian Federation at the annual quota. In parallel, the Russian Federation is holding a number of events with the participation of public figures from Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Representatives of Russian scientific circles often visit Abkhazia to hold joint conferences and develop projects. For example, in 2010 on basis of the Sukhumi Institute of Physics and Technology established

a joint Russian-Abkhazian enterprise “ERA-SFTI” for the high-tech production of polycrystalline silicon panels, which are necessary for environmentally friendly electricity production [Bachiashvili 2010].

The Russian side as an instrument of «soft power» used the granting of Russian citizenship to the people of Abkhazia and South Ossetia even after the end of the war. On August 26, 2008, then Russia’s President Dmitry Medvedev signed a decree recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and on September 9, 2008, diplomatic relations were officially established between Russia and the Republic of Abkhazia, Russia and the Republic of South Ossetia. In April 2009, the Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Republic of South Ossetia and the Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Abkhazia began their work. In January 2009, the Embassy of the Republic of South Ossetia in Russia opened, and on May 17, 2010, the Embassy of the Republic of Abkhazia was officially opened in Russia. On February 1, 2010, an agreement on visa-free travel was signed between the Russian Federation and the Republic of South Ossetia and the Russian Federation and the Republic of Abkhazia. On June 11, 2009, the online publication “Ossetian Radio” reported that “the temporary consular post of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation in South Ossetia is accepting documents for the issuance of Russian foreign passports”. Extreme pressure and coercion were reported in the Gali district of Abkhazia and the Akhagori district of South Ossetia, where the population was forced to obtain passports from Abkhazia and South Ossetia along with Russian passports. As the socio-economic situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia was extremely critical and the local population suffered from mass unemployment, the acquisition of Russian citizenship provided visa-free travel between Russia and the occupied territories and appointment pensions and allowances for Russian citizens [Pkhaldze 2010a].

As a tool of “soft power”, Russia has used diplomacy to increase its influence in the region. Thanks to Russian diplomatic efforts, the international OSCE Mission to Georgia and the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia were shut down in 2009. A plan for resolving the military conflict in Georgia was signed on August 12, 2008 in Moscow during a meeting between Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and French President Nicolas Sarkozy (so-called Medvedev-Sarkozy Plan). On August 14, the Medvedev-Sarkozy Plan was signed by the leaders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, on August 15 by Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili, and on August 16 by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. The Medvedev-Sarkozy Plan included six points: 1) not to use force; 2) finally cease all hostilities; 3) ensure free access to humanitarian aid; 4) the Georgian Armed Forces must return to their places of permanent deployment; 5) the armed forces of the Russian Federation must be withdrawn to the line preceding the start of hostilities; 6) international guarantees for stability and security in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Subsequently, after consultations with M. Saakashvili, the thesis on the international discussion of the status of South Ossetia and

Abkhazia, which was previously included in the sixth point of the Plan, was rejected. The initial text of the sixth paragraph was as follows: “the beginning of an international discussion on the future status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia”. Following the signing of the document, accusations were made of violating Russia’s compliance with the terms of the Plan in accordance with the fifth paragraph, as Russian military units remained in South Ossetia. Russia has stated that Georgia has not complied with the terms of this agreement. On September 8, 2008, three additional items were added to the Plan: 1) concerning the procedure for withdrawing the armed forces of the parties to the line preceding the start of hostilities; 2) considered the continuation of the UN and OSCE international missions and the deployment of a new EU observation mission of 200 observers by 1 October 2008; 3) announced the beginning of international discussions on the situation on October 15, 2008. On September 9, the amended Plan was signed by Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili, and on October 1, 2008 an unarmed civilian European Union Monitoring Mission began monitoring the withdrawal of Russian armed forces from the territories adjacent to South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Although the Mission’s mandate extended throughout Georgia, the de facto authorities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia denied observers access to the territories under their control. The EU Monitoring Mission also stated that Russia did not comply with the fifth point of the Agreement, as Russian military units and equipment continued to remain in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. On 13 February 2009, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution welcoming the six-point agreement of 12 August 2008 and the follow-up to its implementation of 8 September 2008 [EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia 2008].

The OSCE Observer Mission has been working in Georgia since 1992, with the main goal of promoting a peaceful solution to the conflict in South Ossetia. Following the end of the 2008 war and the Russian Federation’s recognition of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Russia demanded conditions for the extension of the Mission’s mandate, which ended on 1 January 2009 - the Mission will continue its activities only if the OSCE also recognizes the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. According to the Russian version, an OSCE Mission to South Ossetia should be opened alongside the OSCE Mission to Georgia. The Russian side called South Ossetia a “host country” and introduced the concept of a “border between Georgia and South Ossetia”. It was also envisaged that the OSCE Mission to South Ossetia should take all measures in coordination with the host country and maintain contacts with the Russian military contingent, which, if implemented, would legitimize the Russian military presence in South Ossetia in accordance with OSCE provisions. In order to legalize the de facto activities of the South Ossetian authorities, the following version was devised: The OSCE Mission should assist the South Ossetian authorities in resolving interethnic relations. In addition, it was the South Ossetian authorities, not the OSCE, that were to select the staff of the OSCE Mission and limit the number of support staff recruited on the ground. It was envisaged to conclude a separate

agreement on the details of the organizational position of the Mission between the OSCE and the de facto authorities of South Ossetia. Every six months, the mandate of the OSCE Mission to South Ossetia was expected to be extended with the consent of the host country, which would create additional leverage for Russia's influence on the Mission's activities. It was also planned to establish a similar OSCE Mission to Abkhazia. As this version proved unacceptable, the OSCE began work on a draft Mission with a Neutral Status, which provided for the presence of twenty-two observers from the Georgian side and eight observers from the South Ossetian side with the right to cross administrative borders. However, Russia did not agree to such conditions – Russia's representative to the OSCE Anwar Azimov said: "If the OSCE Mission issues are not resolved by June 30, 2009, Russia will terminate the OSCE presence in Georgia as a whole". Thus, on June 30, 2009, the OSCE Mission to Georgia ceased its activities [Sharashenidze 2010a].

The United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia has been operating since 1993, with the main aim of verifying the implementation of the July 27, 1993 ceasefire agreement between the Georgian government and the de facto Abkhazian authorities, with a special focus on the situation in the city of Sukhumi, as well as to investigate allegations of ceasefire violations and efforts to resolve similar incidents with those involved. During the 2008 war, the UN Monitoring Mission in Georgia was based in the Upper Kodori Gorge, the Zugdidi and Gali sectors, and had 136 military observers, with 18 UN police and 311 civilian personnel on the ground. After the end of the war, the UN Secretary-General proposed a neutral name - the United Nations Stabilization Mission - did not mention Abkhazia or South Ossetia as part of Georgia in either the title or the text of the report. This provoked a reaction from Georgia, which did not agree with the de facto recognition of Abkhazia, the Russian side demanded the use of the terms "Republic of Abkhazia" and "borders of Abkhazia". Due to disagreements between members of the UN Security Council on the extension of the mandate, the UN Monitoring Mission in Georgia was suspended on June 15, 2009 [Volski 2010].

As the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has become one of the important forums for discussing the consequences of the Russian-Georgian war, Russia has tried to use "soft power" to actively defend its point of view, discredit the Georgian side, and avoid criticism and unacceptable resolutions. The main directions of Russia's activity were appellate to the norms of international law and were based on the Russian interpretation of historical or modern realities: 1) Georgia has no historical rights to South Ossetia, it was annexed to Georgia by J. Stalin, and Ossetians do not want to be part of Georgia; 2) Russia is the only patron and protector of the Ossetian people - a small and oppressed nation affected by M. Saakashvili's regime, and Russia's military presence in South Ossetia and Abkhazia is explained only by the will of the local population; 3) Russia did not violate international law, as there is a principle of self-determination of nations; 4) Russia has used the precedent of Kosovo's declaration of independence, calling for a new world order and a new security archi-

tecture in Europe, as the old system is a relic and has proved ineffective; 5) Russia plays a secondary role in this situation and is not responsible for it, as there was no military conflict between Russia and Georgia - there was a conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia, which began with Georgia's attack on South Ossetia, Russia acted only as a mediator, because Abkhazia and South Ossetia had their own governing bodies; 6) Russia considers the Georgian people as fraternal, which turned away from Russia, receives military assistance from the United States, Russia in Georgia was in the status of a peacekeeper, whose efforts were not appreciated; 7) Mikhail Saakashvili started the war to hide internal problems - there is no democracy in Georgia, and the majority of the population is dissatisfied with the government; 8) Georgia must sign a non-force use agreement. Although the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in its resolutions urged Russia to revoke the recognition of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, to provide access to EU and OSCE monitoring missions to these territories, together with the de facto governments of Abkhazia and South Ossetia to promote the movement of Georgian citizens in these territories, condemned the granting of Russian citizenship to the population of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and ethnic cleansing of Georgians in these regions - Russia did not meet any of these requirements, calling them politicized [Sharashenidze 2010b].

International negotiations on security in Abkhazia and South Ossetia between Georgia, Russia and the United States began in Geneva on 15 October 2008 with the mediation of the EU, the UN and the OSCE. Russia tried to make Abkhazia and South Ossetia official participants in the talks, but Georgia did not agree. In the format of the Geneva talks, two working groups were formed: one on incident prevention and response mechanisms, and the other on issues of internally displaced persons and refugees. Between October 2008 and July 2010, twelve rounds of talks were held. At various stages, Russia has traditionally raised the issue of arms supplies to Georgia and criticized Western governments for supplying weapons to Georgia. Russia's main diplomatic goal in these talks was to lobby for Georgia to sign a non-use agreement with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Although the Georgian side stated that a similar agreement (the so-called Medvedev-Sarkozy Plan) had already been signed on August 12, 2008, Russia has always referred to "new realities", arguing that units of the Russian armed forces remain on the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia on the basis of agreements concluded with the "two governments". The Georgian side refused to make unilateral commitments and sign an agreement with Abkhazia and South Ossetia as separate parties, insisting on the existence of an already signed agreement between Russia and Georgia. In turn, the Russian side also refused to sign the agreement and did not recognize itself as a party to the conflict. As a sign of no progress in the talks, the Abkhaz side boycotted further meetings, accusing Western mediators of supporting Georgia. Thus, the Geneva talks did not bring the desired success in resolving the post-war situation in the region and were suspended due to Russian efforts [Pkhaldze & Sharashenidze 2010].

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Thus, it can be concluded that after the end of the Russian-Georgian war in 2008, the Russian Federation made every effort to use “soft power” on diplomatic, cultural, religious and educational fronts to increase its influence in the isolated regions of Georgia.

Today, Russia is successfully using all available means and tools of “soft power” in Georgia. The lack of diplomatic relations between Russia and Georgia to some extent limits the possibilities of Russia’s anti-Western activities in Georgia. NGOs and groups promoting Eurasianism, organizing anti-Western and anti-NATO rallies, promoting rapprochement with the Russian Federation, holding joint Russian-Georgian meetings and events, organizing trips of Georgian youth to Russia, etc. are the main actors in spreading Russian propaganda in Georgia. The main goal is to create a friendly and positive image of Russia and convince Georgians of the only correct pro-Russian course of Georgia.

There are four media audiences in Georgia: Georgian, Russian-speaking, Azerbaijani and Armenian. The Abkhaz and Ossetian audiences in the two separate regions also need special attention due to the growing pro-Russian influence. There is currently no national TV channel or daily newspaper in Russian in Georgia. About 20% of Georgia’s population are ethnic minorities, for whom Russian remains the language of communication. Although television is the leading media as the most influential tool for manipulating public opinion, the print media, which partially occupy the Internet, still play a role and influence. That is why ethnic minorities remain the main consumers of information of Russian media (mainly television) and are the most vulnerable audience for the spread of Russian propaganda.

It is worth noting that the democratic media in Georgia pay more attention to domestic political processes and do not consider countering Russian influence to be an urgent and necessary task. That is why the Georgian government needs to pay more attention to neutralizing lies and misinformation coming from Russia, and to develop and organize effective measures to counter the spread of anti-Western sentiment in Georgia. It is also necessary to create a center for counteracting Russian propaganda, which will provide adequate information to all citizens and media, and will positively contribute to the establishment of interethnic relations.

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