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The Nature and Power of the August 2008 Russian-Georgian War

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Abstract: Power in international relations remains a major, leading factor in the modern world political events. Locally, at different points on earth, wars continue for a variety of reasons. The main object of war is usually the resources that states cannot allocate, so that each one's interests are fully met.

The war is no stranger to powerful states that forcefully use their power over neighboring states. In this respect, the Russian Federation, whose geopolitical interests are directly involved in establishing control in Georgia, is noteworthy. Russia uses specific leverage against Georgia: engages in anti-Western propaganda and interferes in the country's domestic politics. With the support of the Russian Republic, there are two separatist creation on Georgia's territory that undermine the country's territorial integrity.

The major confrontation between Tbilisi and Moscow began in the 1990s, when the national movement in Georgia became stronger and eventually the country gained independence. Georgia's pro-Western foreign policy orientation often involved Moscow's violent action against Georgia, culminating in August 2008, when the conflict escalated.

The above issues will be discussed in this article. In particular, we will discuss what the nature of the August 2008 Russian-Georgian war was and what the advantage of force means. To date, this conflict has been the subject of discussion for the wider public since much has changed in Georgia's foreign and domestic policy since August 2008.

The article will use a qualitative research method to answer the questions of what the nature of the August war was, why the Russian Federation intervened in Georgia, how to take advantage of force and against whom to use it. The purpose of the paper is to answer these questions.

Keywords: Constructive, Destructive, Informational, Institutional, Value, Interdependent, Interests, The Superiority of Force, Defence, Intimidation, Coercion, Bragging.

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INTRODUCTION

The main actors of international relations are states that are legally equal before international law, however, they differ from each other in their capabilities. It is well known that the strength of a country is determined by various components, however, it is directly related to the responsibility (in establishing world peace), which is often forgotten by strong states.

Because of their brutal and ruthless nature, modern wars show that there is no winner in a war because the casualties are almost always bilateral and big. However, the question is often asked: is it possible to avoid any war? The answer is heterogeneous. However, we must not forget that any controversy can often be avoided by conducting proper diplomacy. In some respects, the August 2008 Russia-Georgia war can serve as an example of a collapse of diplomacy.

Any conflict is caused by differences in interests. When any event reflects the needs of the parties, it immediately becomes the cause of the conflict. Of course, the understanding of needs generates interest, but not all interests are the cause of conflict. There are also objective factors that give rise to conflict among which are resources, power, position, status, and so on. In the scientific literature, conflict is

discussed as the relationship between two or more parties (individuals or groups) who have, or think, have incompatible goals (Fisher *et al.*, 2002).

In any conflict, there is an object, a party, and an environment. The object of the conflict is what the parties claim, it can be a tangible or intangible value. The main subjects of political conflict are political regimes, the rivalry of leaders, the desire for power, territories, the satisfaction of "imperial ambitions", borders, etc. The parties to the conflict can be direct (major) and indirect (non-major). The first of them plays a crucial and active role in the origin and development of the conflict, in which the indirect side has a secondary role. It is also possible that other actors were involved in the conflict, such as the initiators (i.e. provocateurs, instigators, whose main task is to provoke the conflict, naturally, this action is based on a certain motivation), organizer (a performer who develops a plan of confrontation to benefit himself), consultant (facilitator, helper, who is involved in the organization of the conflict), mediator (authoritative person who can resolve the conflict) (Jorbenadze, 2003). As for the environment of the conflict or the situation, it affects the origin and dynamics of this or that conflict. It is mainly of three types: physical, socio-psychological, and social.

Thus, political conflict can be defined as a confrontation, a clash between political entities that have different interests, views, and values. They try to monopolize their own interests by influencing each other (Jorbenadze, 2001).

According to Jorbenadze (2001) it should be noted that the conflict is mainly of five types: informational, institutional, value, interdependent, and interests, which we will later analyze in the example of the August 2008 Russia-Georgia war.

It is widely acknowledged that power, by its universal nature, helps states to achieve a variety of goals. According to Robert Art's theory, there are several universal resources of power, including economic wealth (an essential component of military power), political skills (since a well-trained politician can make appropriate political decisions in the interests of the country, possess the art of persuasion, and enjoy high authority in political circles) and military power.

Art distinguishes four functions of power: defense, intimidation, coercion, and bragging (Art & Jervis, 2011). The use of power for defense means the use of military means to achieve two goals - to prevent an attack and to minimize the damage received in the event of an attack. The use of power by states for intimidation means using military force to ensure that the adversary does not resort to any undesirable action. The essence of intimidation is the threat of using force to punish the opponent, and if the execution of the threat became necessary it means that the intimidation failed. The use of power for coercion implies the use of military power to force an adversary to cease an action or to do something it has not done. As for bragging, it is the most selfish use of power because its purpose is to strengthen the national pride of the people. States resort to bragging in order to present themselves as stronger and more effective. Through bragging, states and statesmen want to gain respect and prestige (Art & Jervis, 2011).

Given these theoretical approaches, it is interesting to discuss the nature of the August 2008 Russia-Georgia war and to analyze the purpose for which the parties involved used force.

The situation before August 2008 shows that the Russian Federation used its forces on the territory of Georgia with the purpose of intimidation. Which was carried out by building military bases on the territory of Georgia, entering and deploying military units, as well as by conducting military exercises in the separatist regions. This action was also a bragging by the neighboring state, demonstrating its military capabilities. However, neither reached its results because a military confrontation happened. At the same time, the Russian Federation claims that it used force for defense, considering that the Georgian side attacked

Russian citizens in the Tskhinvali region, and the Ossetian side claims that it used force to prevent the attack, while the Georgian side claims that it used force for defense purposes.

The mentioned war was unequivocally was of a destructive character, the direct parties of which we can consider Georgia, Russia, and the so-called "South Ossetia", and the mediating party - the EU, which was actively involved in resolving the conflict and took on the role of mediator (it was with the help of EU that the ceasefire agreement was signed). Also noteworthy is the environment in which the conflict took place. It is of three types at once: physical, socio-psychological, and social. Because there was an armed confrontation in a specific geographical area and a certain part of the citizens were involved in it, which caused a strong psychological trauma to them. As for the social environment, since it is directly related to ideological resistance, we can say that the parties involved in the August war (Georgians, Ossetians, and Russians) have different ideological leads and acted coming from the interests based on the latter.

It should be noted that the Russia-Georgia war of August 2008 was of all five types at the same time: informative - because there was often (and still is) a lack of information, and distortion, which was acceptable to the separatist regime and the Russian Federation (IWPR, 8th August, 2013). First, the information factor is revealed through incomplete and inaccurate facts — related to the history of the conflict, rumors, distortion of facts and their meanings, incomplete expression of information, and so on (Jorbenadze, 2001). We know how the Ossetian side has been falsifying history for years to the detriment of Georgians. We also know that these falsified and fabricated stories raise generations who have a wrong, unhealthy attitude towards the Georgian state, from which they created the image of the enemy. We also know that these falsified and fabricated stories raise generations who have a wrong, unhealthy attitude towards the Georgian state, from which they created the image of the enemy.

The August war is institutional because it is directly related to the rule of law, power, systems of governance, religion, social norms, and so on. It is a fact that the so-called "South Ossetia" does not recognize the central government and everything "Georgian" is categorically unacceptable to it. There are also divisions between the churches, disagreements in terms of administrative division at all levels of government, and communication between officials has been cut off.

This war was also a result of value conflict because values are a kind of measure of what is good and what is bad, what is fair and what is unjust, and what is moral and what is immoral. It has to do with

freedom, equality, sovereignty, and so on. It is categorically unacceptable for the Georgian government to have independent "sovereign" units on the territory of a sovereign country, which oppose the idea of state unity and undermine the territorial integrity of the country.

The August war is interdependent, as it is associated with mutual dissatisfaction between the parties. It is also possible that a lack of relationships can lead to conflict. Lack of relations is one of the reasons that led the country to the escalation of the conflict. After the war, we became even more distant from the Ossetians, which, actually, was the goal of Moscow.

It is important to note that the August 2008 war is a conflict of interest related to needs and behaviors. On the one hand, the Russian Federation has its own geopolitical interests in the Caucasus region, and the so-called "South Ossetia" has its own interest - to be an independent entity under the "Russian umbrella" or part of it, while the national interest of Georgia lies in maintaining territorial integrity. Consequently, on the one hand, Georgian and the other hand, Russian-Ossetian interests are mutually exclusive.

CONCLUSION

Given all the above-mentioned, we can conclude that the destructive August 2008 Russia-Georgia war was an informational, institutional, value-based, interdependent, and interest conflict that took place in a specific physical, socio-psychological and social environment. We talked about the parties involved in it which had specific goals and motives. We also talked about the supremacy of power and the purpose of the use of force on the territory of Georgia in August 2008 by the parties. We mentioned the power and importance of diplomacy. The fact is that in a 21st-century world where wars are fought in virtual and material environments, there is no alternative to negotiation and a constructive approach to conflict.

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