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Idil Syawfi

Department of International Relations, Universitas Katolik Parahyangan, idil.syawfi@unpar.ac.id

Robby Cahyadi

Department of International Relations Universitas Katolik Parahyangan, crobby777@gmail.com

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**RUSSIA'S FAILURE AS A BENIGN HEGEMON:
THE DOMINATION OF HOBBSIAN CULTURE IN THE 2008
RUSSO-GEORGIAN WAR**

Idil Syawfi and Robby Cahyadi

**Department of International Relations
Universitas Katolik Parahyangan**

Email: idil.syawfi@unpar.ac.id & crobbby777@gmail.com

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan pecahnya perang Rusia-Georgia pada tahun 2008. Kejadian ini patut diperhatikan mengingat relasi sejarah, kultural, dan ekonomi kedua negara yang sangat dekat, sementara intensi Rusia untuk menjadi benign hegemon seharusnya dapat mencegah pecahnya konflik. Perang ini memberikan sinyal bahwa ada yang salah di antara hubungan kedua negara, dan hal ini membuka kemungkinan yang sama bagi negara-negara eks-Soviet lain yang memiliki kondisi serupa dengan Georgia dan Rusia. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan Konstruktivisme Wendtian untuk menelaah interaksi sosial, peristiwa penting, dan budaya anarki yang menjadi basis konflik tersebut. Sumber resmi negara dan penelitian terdahulu menjadi acuan utama penelitian ini. Sumber media dan berita juga digunakan untuk memvalidasi fakta dan opini yang ada. Berdasarkan hal tersebut, penelitian ini menemukan beberapa hal: 1) interaksi sosial antara Rusia dan Georgia mengafirmasi budaya Hobbesian; 2) aspirasi Rusia sebagai benign hegemon gagal tereproduksi karena penolakan dari Georgia dan kesuksesan Georgia membawa AS kedalam konflik tersebut untuk mengimbangi Rusia; 3) tindakan konfrontatif Georgia menyebabkan tindakan resiprokal dari Rusia, dan; 4) agresi militer Georgia di Tskhinvali menyebabkan kedua negara jatuh dalam logika permusuhan.

Kata kunci:

Perang Rusia-Georgia 2008, great power, Rusia, budaya anarki, konstruktivisme

Abstract

This paper aims to explain the advent of the 2008 Russo-Georgian war. It is an important question to answer due to the historical, cultural, and economic relations between the two states, as well as Russia's aspiration as a benign hegemon should have prevented the war from happening. The fact that two closely related ex-Soviet states went to war against each other points to a fundamental problem in their relationship that could happen to other states with similar preconditions, such as Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Moldova, and more. In order to address this issue, Wendtian Constructivism is used to analyse the social interaction, key events, and the culture of anarchy that led to open warfare. This paper mainly relies on official documents and previous research as the primary sources, using news and media coverage to validate truths and opinions on key events. Based on that, this paper finds that: 1) social interaction between the two states was consistent with the Hobbesian culture of anarchy; 2) Russia's aspiration as a benign hegemon failed to reproduce itself due to rejection from Georgia and their success in balancing Russia with the U.S., giving Georgia the capabilities to resist Russian narratives; 3) Georgia's confrontative behaviours led to reciprocal actions from Russia, and; 4) the Georgian offensive on Tskhinvali was the trigger that confirmed the suspicions from both sides, making both countries decision to be based on the logic of enmity.

Keywords:

2008 Russo-Georgian War, great power, Russia, culture of anarchy, Constructivism

INTRODUCTION

Russia portrayed itself as a benign hegemon in post-Soviet territories by engaging in cooperative relations with its neighbouring states, including Georgia (Dutkiewicz & Trenin, 2011). This occurred based on strong cultural relations and the development of interdependence among states in this region. However, Georgia interpreted Russia's efforts differently. Therefore, Georgia requested help from the West by approaching the United States (U.S.), attempting to become a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), displayed a confrontative posture against Russia by increasing its military budget, and denounced the deployment of Russian peacekeeping forces in the Georgia-Abkhazia and Georgia-South Ossetia borders. These measures led to a war between these two states, starting from 7 to 12 August 2008.

The war witnessed Russia's victory over Georgia, the perpetrator of the war, while Georgia justified its action to respond to Russia's military presence in South Ossetia, which allegedly would attack Georgia. The European Union's (EU) Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (IIFFMCG) concluded that Georgia initiated the war. However, Russia's counteroffensive operation to Georgia's territory, which further caused the conflict to expand, should also be accounted for (European Court of Human Rights, 2009). These findings prompted an important inquiry on the then-existing condition in the Caucasus region—why could states with strong cultural and economic relations, and despite Russia's aspiration as a benign hegemon in the former Soviet Union's territories, be at war.

Russia's aspiration to become a benign great power had been displayed during Vladimir Putin's leadership upon the basis of political, economic, geographical, and cultural stabilities (Tsygankov, 2016). Russia experienced political stability and positive economic growth due to rising gas and oil prices, which later became essential commodities. At the regional level, Russia developed the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) project, intended to maintain trade flows which were threatened by changes to borders between states formerly located in the Soviet Union. As time went by, Russia enhanced said cooperation and provided opportunities for former Soviet states to join and improve their bargaining power vis-à-vis the EU. Within the security sector, Russia established the Collective Treaty Security Organisation (CSTO) to facilitate collective responses among its members against threats across multiple borders, especially after the military was disintegrated in former Soviet states.

Russia's portrayal as a benign hegemon has also been channelled through its soft power. In 2007, Russia established the Russkiy Mir Foundation to promote a "Russian World" notion. This cultural idea was derived from cultural ties represented by the Russian language and Orthodox Christianity (Feklyunina, 2016). This effort was built upon cultural similarities between former Soviet states to enhance cooperation between states and relations between societies. Russia put forward the "Greater Europe" vision to justify its initiatives. Such a vision viewed Europe as a multicultural continent that stretched from Lisbon to Vladivostok (Sakwa, 2015; Trenin, 2016). This vision was employed to construct an image for Russia as a good neighbour for Western European and other former Soviet states. The vision did not represent a renewed imperial ambition for Russia, but it became a part of a greater project for European integration. The "Greater Europe" vision put cultures from Central and Eastern Europe as distinct, but equal, cultures from that of Western Europe and held the purpose of uniting the European continent upon the basis of these differences. Russia's support for the Organisation of Security and Co-operation for Europe (OSCE) was driven by that vision.

These conditions were supposed to push Georgia and Russia to form a positive relation. The Georgian and Russian markets were highly connected within the economic sector, and both maintained good political relations. It was shown through Russia's support for Edward Shevardnadze in winning the Georgian civil war and preventing the ethnic war between Abkhazia and South Ossetia. However, due to Russia's power preponderance, Georgia sought to improve its position against Russia. This was evident in Georgia's efforts to approach NATO, EU, and the U.S. (Stent, 2014). Russia was blamed for the emergence of *de facto* independent territories, namely Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Nilsson, 2019).

Tendencies towards friction among both states increased following the Rose Revolution in 2003, a peaceful coup that replaced Shevardnadze with Mikhail Saakashvili as the then-new President of Georgia (Toal, 2017). During this phase, Georgia raised its military budget from 1% to 8-9% out of its total GDP (World Bank, 2020). Georgia also brought itself closer to the U.S., as it became the first state to support the U.S. Iraqi invasion and intensified military cooperation with the U.S. Moreover, Georgia was determined to reintegrate its *de facto* independent territories with every possible means, even threatening military operations if those territories aspired for independence. These tendencies caused more confrontations with Russia along Georgia's border and lead to

the Russo-Georgian War on 7 August 2008. This war was the first war that occurred in the European continent after the Second World War.

Regarding the Russo-Georgian War, the dynamics of the relationship between the two states garnered attention and became central to debates among academics. Their general views could be grouped into those who blamed Georgia on the one hand and Russia on the other hand. Bobo Lo (2015) depicted Russia as a post-modern empire. Albeit not having any physical imperial border, Russia was deemed to possess characteristics of an imperial power. The war between Russia and Georgia was provoked by Russia's rejection of Georgia's status as an independent, sovereign state. Studies by experts published in an edited volume titled *The Guns of August 2008* (Cornell & Svante, 2009) supported Lo's study. Russia's manoeuvres against Georgia were perceived as imperial attempts to maintain control over a state which was formerly a part of the Soviet Union. Georgia was at fault for being provoked by Russia and provided Russia with the opportunity to justify its response.

A contrasting view was conveyed by Tsygankov (2016) in his book titled *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity* and in an article titled "Duelling Honors: Power, Identity and the Russia-Georgia Divide" (Tsygankov & Tarver-Wahlquist, 2009). Tsygankov scrutinised Russia's pragmatic behaviours through a social constructivist perspective. Georgia's measures were deemed to hurt Russia's honour. Such a position was backed by Gerart Toal (2017) in his monograph entitled *Near-Abroad: Putin, the West and the Contest over Ukraine and the Caucasus*. By employing a critical geopolitics perspective, Toal criticised other geopolitics experts' attempts to simplify their understanding of Russia's measures in the Caucasus. Toal stated that the 2008 war resulted from Saakashvili's action that escalated the conflict rather than Russia's imperial ambition. Richard Sakwa (2015) added a contextual insight to the debate through a parallel comparison between the Russia-Georgia and Russia-Ukraine conflicts. Sakwa pointed out differences in narratives between those perpetrated by Ukraine and Russia, as well as between those by Georgia and Russia. Differences in perspectives on 'Europe' served as a point of departure in these conflicts. Russia's perspective on a 'greater Europe' was in conflict with the 'Atlanticism' perspective, which rejected pluralism in Europe and deemed Russia as having characteristics of a revisionist power. Georgia employed the latter understanding, which denied every regional initiative by Russia and pushed for integration with Western Europe and a closer relationship with the U.S.

Several shortcomings were present in these studies. First, they tended to minimise Georgia's role as an independent actor and simplify the conflict by situating it against the backdrop of Russia's rivalry with the West. Second, past studies were more inclined to blame Russia or justify Russia's actions while failing to scrutinise the dynamics of Russo-Georgia relations. Henceforth, this study puts the same weight on Russia and Georgia as actors during the 2008 war, focusing on the social process that both actors experienced. This research employs a constructivist perspective, especially that of Alexander Wendt, and is intended to connect conclusions achieved by past research. This study's focus on social interactions and the dominance of cultures of anarchy between the two actors will support the arguments of those who deemed Georgia to be at fault for the war without omitting Russia's faults.

Therefore, considering the contradiction between Russia's vision as a benign hegemon and the Russo-Georgia relations, as well as referring to debates among experts on Russia's revisionist/imperialists inclinations and its tendencies as a great power, this article inquires "why did Russia's aspirations of a benign hegemony lead to an open war between Russia and Georgia?" This study utilises a constructivist approach proposed by Wendt, which highlights how social interactions and cultures of anarchy are co-determined and mutually constitutive. This study argues that the dominance of a Hobbesian culture of anarchy between Russia and Georgia thwarted Russia's identity as a benign great power and pushed both states to adopt a logic of conflict.

To provide a clear explanation on the Russo-Georgian war and enhance this study's main argument, this article's temporal scope will be limited to 2003-2008. The main focus of the research are Russia and Georgia. The U.S.'s involvement will be presented from Georgia's perspective, not as an actor on its own nor a third-party power that actively pitted Russia and Georgia against each other.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Alexander Wendt (1999) offers his understanding on Constructivism to explain international phenomena through cultures of anarchy, which are formed through the history of interactions among actors. Cultures of anarchy guide the dynamics of interactions between actors. Cultures of anarchy, according to Wendt, are comprised of Hobbesian, Lockean, and Kantian, in which behaviours among states may lean towards either enmity, rivalry, or friendship, respectively. Changes can only occur if social interactions delegitimise the existing culture. Actors who initiate these changes must

constantly behave in ways beyond expectations derived from said culture to form new cultural expectations. Without acceptance from other actors, identity changes to individual actors will fail to change the existing culture of anarchy.

Wendtian Constructivism analysis is built upon the basis of macro-and micro-level structures (Wendt, 1999). The micro-level structure pertains to social interactions between an actor, with ideas and identities that revolve around themselves, other actors, and their environments. Said interactions form intersubjective understandings which serve as the basis of the formation of the culture of anarchy among actors at the macro level. Meanwhile, the macro-level structure pertains to the culture of anarchy among actors. Its occurrence is determined by the behaviours of actors which form the structure. These cultures make certain behaviours more logical than others. Macro- and micro-level structures are co-determined and mutually constitutive. Hence, anarchy is deemed as a self-fulfilling prophecy (Wendt, 1992).

Then, it is assumed that actors' identities form their respective interests. Wendt (1999) states that interests can be differentiated into objective and subjective interests. Objective interests are defined as interests that must be achieved to maintain the actor's identity, although said interests may still exist unbeknownst to the actor. Meanwhile, subjective interests are those which the actor *perceives* must be achieved to maintain their identity; thus, the actor is always aware of their subjective interests. The accumulation of all interests of a particular state actor, derived from all of their identities, then forms national interests. Wendt views national interests as "pre-social." Therefore, national interests can change due to social interactions. Wendt (1999) identifies four national interests: physical survival, autonomy, economic well-being, and collective self-esteem.

On the other hand, identity is formed through interactions and social learning. Identity can be learned, enhanced, and weakened through interactions between the Self and the Other (Wendt, 1999). Certain actors, defined as the Significant Other, can inflict greater consequences in comparison to other actors. Identity changes can only succeed when the Other displays an acceptable response to the Self's new behaviours.

Moreover, social interactions can be divided into four recurring phases. First, the Self defines their environment and behaves following their understanding. Second, the Other will process the Self's behaviour through the lenses of their understanding. The Other may or may not fully comprehend the Self's behaviour. There is no guarantee that the Self's behaviour delivers its intention to the Other. Third, referring to the Other's understanding the Self's behaviour, the Other will display response in reply. Fourth, the

Self will process the Other's responses in a process similar to the Other's attempts to process responses from the Self. Both actors will constantly be involved in social interactions and social learning through these phases (Wendt, 1992). Changes in these interactions will change each actor's identities and interests and, thus, change the culture of anarchy (Wendt, 1999).

Wendt identifies three cultures of anarchy to explain the system: the Hobbesian culture to explain enmity, the Lockean culture to explain rivalry/competition, and the Kantian culture to explain friendship. Cultures of anarchy guide the roles of states within the system. These roles affect the actor's behaviours, leading them to align with the existing logic. Should these behaviours align with the existing culture, the system will be strengthened, while behaviours that are not aligned will weaken the system.

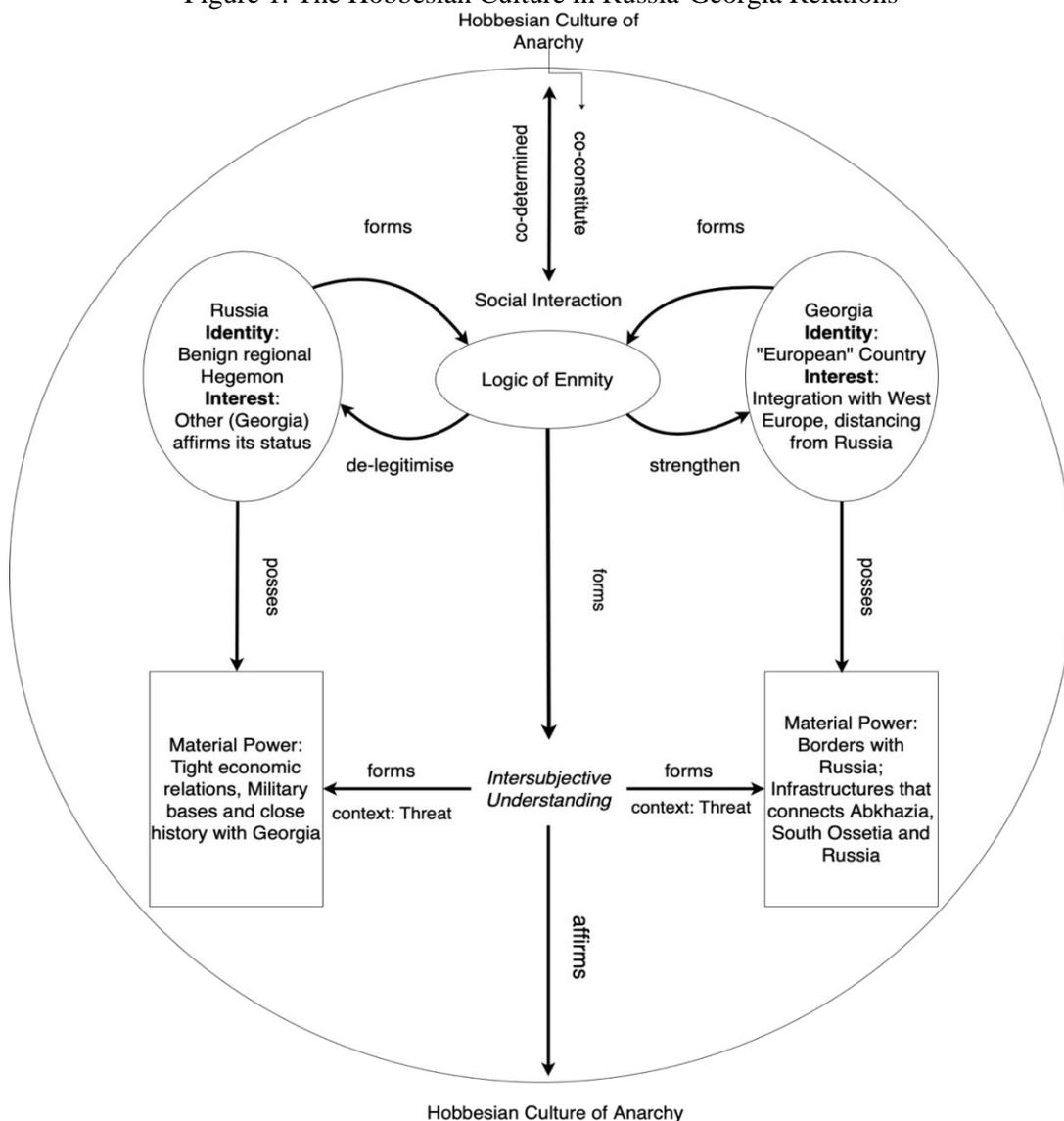
The Hobbesian culture is based upon the logic of enmity, in which states possess the roles of enemies of each other (Wendt, 1999). Wendt asserts that the enemy is the Other who does not acknowledge the Self's rights as an independent entity and will opt for violence to achieve their goals. Objective realities will not be needed to portray the Other as the enemy, so long as the Self believes so. This culture results in four actions. First, actors will imitate the enemy's responses if their capabilities allow. Second, the actors' logic will be based on the worst scenario possible. Third, relative military capabilities will be seen as a crucial factor. Fourth, if war occurs, actors will attempt to demolish the enemy if possible, or cripple the enemy for as long as possible.

The Lockean culture follows the logic of rivalry/competition. Wendt (1999) argues that this culture is the most likely to occur in the modern world. Rivalry occurs when actors acknowledge the presence and rights of other actors, although they will compete to achieve their respective interests. Contrary to the logic of enmity, actors will restrain themselves from violence if possible. This culture emphasises specific measures. First, the responses of each actor will be limited by the other actor's acknowledgment of their sovereignty. Second, actors will opt for long-term thinking. Third, military capabilities are present not to win wars but to maintain the balance of threat. Fourth, if war occurs, actors will practice restraint.

The Kantian culture is represented by the logic of friendship (Wendt, 1999). Actors will treat other actors as friends, not as rivals nor enemies. This logic will allow all conflicts among actors to be resolved peacefully. Actors will also protect each other from external threats. Wendt suggests that this culture is rather novel as peace has only started to emerge and states routinely cooperate.

The culture of anarchy is a constantly recurring process, and its occurrence is determined by interactions between actors with varying identities and interests and their interactions within a system. States' identities and interests must be scrutinised in analyses of international phenomena. Constant social interactions seemingly put states' identities and interests as constants. However, social interactions which delegitimise cultures of anarchy threaten the presence of said cultures. The process of identity formation is deemed as an important part of an analysis of international phenomena. The following figure demonstrates the application of Wendt's thoughts within the context of Russia-Georgia relations leading to the 2008 war in South Ossetia.

Figure 1. The Hobbesian Culture in Russia-Georgia Relations



Source: formulated by the authors based on Alexander Wendt's (1999) *Social Theory of International Politics*.

Referring to Figure 1, it is evident that changes to the culture of anarchy are possible, although it is unlikely to be realised. Behaviours of the actors are determined by their identities and interests and are affected by the dominant culture of anarchy in the system. Actors may change their identities and behaviours, yet responses from the other actor are based on anarchy's existing culture. Henceforth, identity changes will not automatically lead to structural changes, but structural changes will certainly entail identity changes.

Therefore, Wendt's perspective on Constructivism explains international phenomena through the dominant culture of anarchy in relations between actors. Cultures of anarchy guide the actors' behaviours towards specific tendencies—friendship, rivalry, or enmity. Cultures of anarchy, despite being reversible, are characterised as “homeostatic,” thus, changes will not occur without being preceded by a long process or an extraordinary phenomenon. To change the culture of anarchy, changes to the identities of state actors are needed. These changes alter the pattern of social interactions, which forms the new culture of anarchy. However, if other actors, such as the Significant Other, resist the change, the culture of anarchy will not change. Exceptions may apply when an actor, whose identity changes, is disproportionately more powerful than other actors and force other actors to follow its narratives. Thus, changes to an actor's identity might not change the culture of anarchy, but changes to the actors' identities will initiate all changes to the culture of anarchy. International phenomena result from social interactions based upon the actors' identities and guided by cultures of anarchy.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study explains the war between Russia and Georgia as a case study by employing the analytical framework detailed above. The Russo-Georgian war becomes significant due to its relevance to the conflicts in Ukraine and Nagorno-Karabakh in 2014 and 2020, respectively. Occurrences of open wars in former Soviet Union territories point to the importance of a profound understanding of these territories by policymakers and experts. The Russo-Georgian conflict has concluded, but it was deeply related to the recent cases. Therefore, an in-depth understanding of the root causes will help researchers and policy makers in conflict resolution efforts in Ukraine and Nagorno-Karabakh and prevent future conflicts in Eastern Europe. Data contained in this study are sourced from official documents from relevant states and international institutions, along with past studies by

experts. News and interviews are also used to verify facts and opinions on the conflict. All sources are obtained from the internet.

DISCUSSION

Russia's Great Power Aspiration and Georgia's Misperception of "Threats from Russia"

Russia's aspiration to become a great power was based on internal and external factors. The internal factor was related to the Russian people's belief in its role in international politics. Russia's material power and history supported this belief. Every form of Russia that has existed in the past, such as the Kingdom of Russia, the Russian Empire, and the Soviet Union, all had a major role in global politics in their respective times. Russia's geographic condition, located between two continents with its natural resources, also strengthened its position as a great power. Concerning its external factor, the marginalisation which Russia experienced mainly drove its aspiration to be recognised as one of the world's great powers. Other than that, the revitalisation of domestic power in Vladimir Putin's reign also allowed Russia to revive its aspiration (Leichtova, 2014).

These factors influenced how Russia saw itself and reaffirmed its identity as a great power. It was evident from Putin's speech in 2004 after the Beslan tragedy and *The Foreign Policy Concept of The Russian Federation* (2008):

"In general, we need to admit that we did not fully understand the complexity and the dangers of the processes at work in our own country and in the world. In any case, we proved unable to react adequately. We showed ourselves to be weak. And the weak get beaten. Some would like to tear from us a "juicy piece of pie". Others help them. They help, reasoning that Russia still remains one of the world's major nuclear powers, and as such still represents a threat to them. And so they reason that this threat should be removed."

In line with the statements above, Russia's economy recovered following increases in crude oil and natural gas prices in the early 2000s and the stability of Putin's leadership. This condition had enabled Russia to take a proactive approach in restoring its great power status. Russia's aspirations to restore its position were closely linked to former Soviet territories (Toal, 2017). These territories, where the former Russian Empire and the Soviet Union were located, were special because of cultural and historical factors.

They formed close ties and found similarities in the socio-cultural, economic, and political dimensions; henceforth, Russia still considered countries located in these territories as Russia's 'siblings' in the Eurasian civilisation, of which Russia would become the centre. Thus, Russia prioritised the former Soviet region and fought other great powers' attempts to enter the region. The excerpt from *The Foreign Policy Concept of The Russian Federation* (2013) below reflects this sentiment:

"... global competition takes place on a *civilizational level* [emphasis added]. Cultural and civilizational diversity of the world becomes more and more manifest."

"... a priority for world politics to prevent civilizational fault line clashes and to intensify efforts to forge partnership of cultures, religions and civilisations in order to ensure a harmonious development of mankind [emphasis added]. In these circumstances imposing one's own hierarchy of values can only provoke a rise in xenophobia, intolerance and tensions [emphasis added]."

The Russkiy Mir conception made Russia embrace post-Soviet states in a different identity and independent from other identities, such as Western identity (Fekyulina, 2016). The importance of Eurasia to Russia is shown in the table below, which consists of Russia's essential documents and its emphasis on the post-Soviet region.

Table 1. The Importance of Former Soviet Territories for Russia

Year	Documents, Speeches, and Interview	Direct Quotations
1997	<i>Russian National Security Blueprint</i> (1997)	"The deepening and development of relations [emphasis added] with CIS member states is the most important factor promoting the settlement of ethnopolitical and inter-ethnic conflicts, ensuring socio-political stability along Russia's borders, and ultimately preventing centrifugal phenomena within Russia itself."
2000	<i>National Security Concept of The Russian Federation</i> (2000)	"Developing relations [emphasis added] with the member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States according to the principles of international law and developing integration processes within the Commonwealth of the Independent States that meet the interests of Russia" "Carrying out collective measures [emphasis added] to ensure the security of the border space of the member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States."

2000	<i>The Foreign Policy Concept of The Russian Federation</i> (2000)	“ <i>To form a good-neighbour belt along the perimeter of Russia's borders [emphasis added], to promote the elimination of the existing and prevent the emergence of potential hotbeds of tension and conflicts in regions adjacent to the Russian Federation;</i> ”
2008	<i>Dimitri Medvedev's (2008) Interview with Channel One</i>	“ <i>There are regions in which Russia has vested interests [emphasis added]. These regions are home to countries with which we share special historical relations and are bound together as friends and good neighbours. We will pay particular attention to our work in these regions and build friendly ties with these countries, our close neighbours</i> ”
2008	<i>The Foreign Policy Concept of The Russian Federation</i> (2008)	“ <i>Development of bilateral and multilateral cooperation [emphasis added] with the CIS Member States constitutes a priority area of Russia's foreign policy.</i> ”

Source: obtained from documents and statements specified in the table.

The excerpts of official documents above show Russia's aspiration as a benign hegemon and the significance of ex-Soviet states as significant others to build that identity. The narrative of Russia being one of the centres of the world's civilisation required the affirmation of the former Soviet region. The region, which had strong historical and cultural ties with Russia, would be an important capital to defend Russia's identity and position as one of the great powers in international politics.

Russia and Georgia shared a long history that could be traced back to the Kievan Rus era. In this research, the eight-century-long history is assumed to be pre-social; the main focus will be on the war between the two countries in 2008; the history that is relevant to the phenomenon will be analysed through the framework of a social process, and the context of the relationship between the two countries is seen through the lens of cultures of anarchy.

Russia's aspiration to become a great power was not intended to threaten its neighbour countries based on the “Greater Europe” concept. This concept saw Europe as a multicultural continent. Eastern Europe or the post-Soviet region, represented by Russia, had a distinct, yet equal, identity with Western Europe. European integration, according to this perspective, is cooperation between different but equal European countries. Russia saw regional integration in the post-Soviet region as a part of a bigger European integration. The statement below reflects that perspective.

“Soon the Customs Union, and later the Eurasian Union, will join the dialogue with the EU. As a result, apart from bringing direct economic benefits, accession to the Eurasian Union will also help countries integrate into Europe sooner and from a stronger position. In addition, a partnership between the Eurasian Union

and EU that is economically consistent and balanced will prompt changes in the geo-political and geo-economic setup of the continent as a whole with a guaranteed global effect" (Putin, 2011).

Through the lens of the Greater Europe concept, Russia supported many regional initiatives to strengthen connectivity and cooperation between post-Soviet countries, such as the Eurasian Economic Community (EEC) that later became the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), and also Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)—with EEC and CSTO representing the Eurasian integration. In contrast, OSCE represented the integration of the whole of Europe. EEC and CSTO themselves were based on the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which was established after the fall of the Soviet Union to facilitate the civil separation of the ex-Soviet countries. CIS would then become an intermediary for regional integration in Eurasia (Mankoff, 2009).

Russia's actions in the modern era reflected a qualitative change to its position against Georgia. This change pointed to Russia's acceptance of the political reality of the Soviet Union's division and later inspired its aspiration to become a benign hegemon in the ex-Soviet region. It also indicated an understanding of the ex-Soviet countries' independent status from Russia and Russia's desires to establish good relations, cooperation and influence them in the future, including Georgia.

On the other hand, Georgia, as one of the countries in the region, perceived Russia as a threat (Asmus, 2010; Cornell & Starr, 2009; Freire & Kanet, 2012). This was motivated by the history of the social interactions between the two. The Georgian civil war that began in 1988 and ended in 1993 left Georgia with a bitter experience with Russia (Freire & Kanet, 2012). The heated conflict later propelled South Ossetia and Abkhazia to separate themselves from Georgia. The civil war ended after Russia provided aid to Edward Shevardnadze, which concluded Gamskhurdia's chauvinist policies. South Ossetia and Abkhazia already held suspicions towards Georgia, which could easily return to its chauvinist stance. The two regions then chose to separate themselves from Georgia. Russia was asked to mediate the conflict and facilitate reintegration peacefully, but the negotiation did not go well. Thus, South Ossetia and Abkhazia became (*de facto*) independent from Georgia and later followed by Adjara, who took advantage of the Georgian government's weakness. Shevardnadze won the civil war with Russian aid, but the loss of the central government's control over the three Georgian provinces was a hard

blow to the legitimacy of Georgia's sovereignty (Jones, 2011). Henceforth, Russian involvement was viewed negatively. According to Georgia, Russia was the main reason Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Adjara became (*de facto*) independent, and their presence in Georgia was perceived as an attempt to weaken Georgia so that it would remain dependent on Russia.

To contain the "threat" from Russia, Georgia approached the U.S. and built strong bilateral relations with them (Stent, 2014). Since 2002, under Shevardnadze's leadership, Georgia had opened opportunities to become a member of NATO and agreed to establish cooperation in the security sector with the U.S. through the Georgia Equip and Train Program (GETP). Georgia then formed the Georgia-Uzbekistan-Azerbaijan-Moldova (GUAM) cooperation and withdrew from the CSTO in 1999. Georgia also supported the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan gas pipeline, which interfered with Russia's interests in the gas sector.

The revolution, taking place in 2003, caused some tensions in the relations between the two countries. Mikheil Saakashvili, who replaced Edward Shevardnadze, had a more pro-Western foreign policy posture than his predecessor. Georgia became a close U.S. ally and received assistance from both USAID and the military. Georgia was also the first country to support the U.S. Iraqi invasion and has the third-largest contribution with 2,000 troops following the U.S. and U.K. Under Saakashvili, Georgia became the first ex-Soviet country to have close military cooperation with the U.S. Georgia and the U.S. revised the Georgia Sustainment and Stability Program (GSSOP 1 and 2) to provide military training and weapons to become a NATO member. In 2008, 7,800 Georgian soldiers fought alongside their American counterparts in Iraq.

Over time, the social processes between the two countries deteriorated. In 2006, the Georgian Parliament decided unilaterally to declare Russian peacekeepers on Georgia's border with Abkhazia and South Ossetia as illegal. Georgia also deported several Russian diplomats on charges of espionage. Both confrontations between the two countries militaries and between Georgia and militias from Abkhazia and South Ossetia became increasingly frequent. Georgia also pressured Russia to speed up the withdrawal of Russian troops from the former Soviet Union military base in Georgia. In the end, Georgia decided to attack Tskhinvali on August 7, 2008. The *National Security Concept of Georgia*, published in 2011, wrote explicitly about what threats Georgia faced—the majority of these threats were related to Russia.

"Infringement of Georgia's Territorial Integrity: Aggressive separatist movements, inspired and supported from outside of Georgia...

... the infringement of territorial integrity, if not addressed in a timely and efficient manner, may endanger the existence of Georgia as a viable state. ...

In addition, the Russian Federation's military presence on the territory of Georgia would be a risk factor to the stability of the country in certain circumstances."

"Military Intervention: Georgia has faced infringement of its sovereignty and territorial integrity on numerous occasions in the form of systematic violation of Georgia's land, air and maritime space, and by sporadic military attacks."

"The Russian Federation's Military Bases: ... a risk to national security, and still negatively affect the security environment in Georgia."

Russia's attempts to appease and convince Georgia of its benign narrative failed. At the start of Saakashvili's leadership, Russia and Georgia agreed upon several cooperation initiatives. This was marked by Saakashvili's visit to Moscow in February 2004 which confirmed Georgia's commitment to normalise relations with Russia. Russia and Georgia also built economic cooperation by holding the largest business meeting between the two countries in the same year. The highlight of the two countries' cooperation was the conflict resolution in Adjara, in which Russia helped Georgia regain one of three (*de facto*) independent regions since Georgia's civil war ended.

However, in early June 2004, Saakashvili decided to be more confrontational in reintegrating South Ossetia (Tsygankov & Tarver-Wahlquist, 2009). Georgia dissolved the Ergneti black market, which linked the South Ossetian economy with Georgia. Georgian military patrols in the border area followed the Ergneti disbandment. It started the escalation of the conflict between Georgia and Russia. In response to these confrontations, Russia transformed its foreign policy with reciprocal actions. Russia decided to deport Georgian immigrant employees and placed an embargo on Georgian wines. The confrontation between the two sides escalated following Kosovo's declaration

of independence in 2008. The tensions between them culminated in the five days of open warfare between Georgia and Russia. Russia's change in attitude showed its failure to maintain its cooperative narrative due to resistance from Georgia.

Social Interaction and Social Learning in Russo-Georgia Relations

Social interaction is a relationship between state actors based on the identities and interests of the actors, influenced by the existing culture of anarchy (Wendt, 1999). These interactions form the structure of behaviour between actors, and the sustainability of these structures is determined by social interactions that confirm it. In other words, the history of the social interactions of state actors determines the basis for expectations and behaviour among them. Significant events can be used to observe social processes between actors and what lessons the actors learn. Along with social interaction, an intersubjective understanding is developed and determines the dominant narrative in the relationship between actors.

Russia and Georgia each have their own identities and interests that have been shaped through their respective histories. To simplify the research, these identities will be considered as pre-social interactions. The scope of this research is the social interaction process that happened from 1993 to 2008, with a focus on 2003–2008, when Saakashvili became President of Georgia and declared the war against Russia. Russia had an identity as a benign great power in the Caucasus region and viewed Georgia as a neighbour that should have good relations with Russia. Meanwhile, under the Saakashvili regime, Georgia saw itself as a "European" country that was newly independent from the "colonial" occupation of the Soviet Union. The process of social interaction between the two countries showed the difference in identity-related narratives between the two countries. Russia's narrative as a benign great power failed to be reproduced, while Georgia's confrontational narrative was dominant following the outbreak of war in 2008.

The suspicion between these two countries was already present before the Rose Revolution. Following the resolution of Georgia's civil war in 1993, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Adjara became *de facto* independent from Georgia. Russia is often blamed for these circumstances, preventing Georgia from forcibly reintegrating Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Star, 2009). Although Russia considers itself successful in preventing an ethnic-based war from taking place, the narratives about threats from Russia remained dominant. In addition, Russia's support for Shevardnadze was an important factor in his victory over Gamsakhurdia in the Georgian civil war. However, Georgia's suspicion of

Russia over the conflict on the Georgian border remained dominant, in which Russia had been accused of siding with Abkhazia and South Ossetia instead of Georgia.

Reflecting on the experience with the Shevardnadze regime, Russia was initially cooperative with Georgia. Two crucial events represented this cooperative attitude. Firstly, the Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov intervened to persuade Edward Shevardnadze's resignation without violence during the Rose Revolution. Secondly, Russia played the role of a middleman in convincing Adjara's Dictator, Aslan Abashidze, to leave Adjara. This allowed the Georgian central government to reintegrate Adjara without armed contact (Goltz, 2009). Russia's actions showed its desire to maintain good relations with Georgia after the Rose Revolution.

Unfortunately, Saakashvili brought a different narrative into Georgia. Lessons from the 1993 to 2003 civil wars led Georgia to perceive Russia as a threat. Georgia did not reciprocate Russia's cooperative action. The peaceful return of Adjara and the resignation of Shevardnadze is attributed to Georgia's national revival. Therefore, Saakashvili's next step was to integrate Abkhazia and South Ossetia—by force if necessary. This caused the military conflict on the Georgian border with the two independent regions to escalate. Russia often helped Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which are much weaker than Georgia, as a third party. Therefore, Russia once again became the scapegoat which prevented Georgia from unifying its territory. The dominant narrative of the Russian threat prompted Georgia to seek allies against Russia.

The relationship between the U.S. and Georgia had been built since the Shevardnadze's regime, and Saakashvili took the relationship to a higher level. Based on the Russian threat narrative, Georgia had become very close to the U.S. The U.S. is Georgia's most prominent supporter in becoming a member of NATO. The U.S. is also Georgia's biggest investor. Georgia became the first ex-Soviet country to have military cooperation with the U.S. through the GETP and GSSOP 1 and 2. Georgia seemed to want to replace Russia with the U.S. as its closest ally. The U.S. was a priority in Georgia's foreign policy, which was explicitly stated in Georgia's concept of national security in 2005.

Georgia's inclination to draw closer to the U.S. and its confrontation with Abkhazia and South Ossetia caused Russia to change its foreign policy. Russia abandoned the cooperative approach and responded to the confrontation reciprocally by normalising gas prices. They responded to the point of criticising Georgia's attempts to join NATO. The history of social interaction between the two countries shows the learning process

they experienced. The two countries took similar lessons from their interactions; that they were enemies of one another. The table below shows the learning process carried out by both parties up until the war.

Table 2. Important Events and Social Learning in Russo-Georgia Relations

Important Event	Russia Social Learning	Russia's Actions	Georgia Social Learning	Georgia's Actions
Georgian Civil War 1993	Russia is a traditional regional power that is obliged to maintain peace in the region	1) Helped Shevardnadze win the war. 2) Prevented the forced reintegration of Abkhazia and South Ossetia without a comprehensive agreement between Georgia and them 3) Recognised Abkhazia and South Ossetia as part of Georgia	Russia violated Georgia's sovereignty. Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Adjara were able to become independent because of Russia	1) Looked for a counterweight against Russia 2) Paved the way for a NATO membership 3) Reduced Georgia's relations with Russia and approached Western Europe and the US
Rose Revolution 2003	Georgia was filled with suspicion about Russia. Russia had to show its intention to cooperate by accommodating Georgia	1) Helped facilitate Shevardnadze's retreat 2) Facilitated the return of Adjara to Georgia 3) Sought economic cooperation and invited Georgia to enter Eurasia regional integration	Georgia domestic revival. Proved the basic identity of Georgia which is the same as Europe and different from Russia	1) Accepted all Russian accommodating actions 2) Sought the withdrawal of the Russian military from Georgian territory 3) Increased military funds for forced reintegration of independent territories if necessary 4) Aspirations to become a member of the EU and NATO 5) Became an ally of the U.S.
2004 - 2007	Georgia did not accept Russia's cooperative intentions and is confrontational. A change of attitude is needed to safeguard Russia's national interests	1) Normalisation of gas prices with Georgia 2) Increased the number of peacekeeping troops in Georgia 3) Removed immigrants from Georgia 4) Embargoed some Georgia products	Russia showed its true intentions. Russia was a threat that wanted to colonise Georgia	1) Strengthened the alliance with the U.S. 2) Supported the U.S. invasion of Iraq 3) Exiled a Russian spy diplomat 4) Threatened military action if Abkhazia and South Ossetia still

Russo-Georgian War 2008	Georgia treated Russia as an enemy, thus Russia had to account for a worst-case scenario	1) Improved infrastructure linking Russia with Abkhazia and South Ossetia	Russia showed weakness. Georgia had become a strong country. The West and the U.S. supported Georgia's actions	want to be independent
		2) Lifted the embargo on Abkhazia and south Ossetia		1) Rebuked Russia's position in disapproving Georgia's entry into NATO
		3) Reasserted rejection of NATO's presence on its borders		2) Launched a military operation to reintegrate South Ossetia by force

Source: authors' analysis.

The processes above represent the social interactions and social learning experienced by the actors. As can be seen above, the learning differences between Russia and Georgia bred expectations full of suspicions. Russia's attempts to change relations between countries to a cooperative nature failed. Especially after the 2003 revolution, social interactions have instead consolidated Georgia's narrative about the Russian threat. Russia, which was constantly disillusioned by Georgia's rejection, changed its understanding towards Georgia from being seen as an illusionary enemy into a real enemy.

Social interaction between Georgia and Russia is a part of the author's application of Wendt's analytical framework in explaining the identity and expectations of each actor. Social learning events from the start of the Georgian civil war to the outbreak of the Russo-Georgia war in 2008 have shaped the hostile narratives between the two countries. Russia's attempts to change this narrative in the 2004 to 2007 phase have proven to be a failure in changing Georgia's position against Russia. The failure to convey Russia's benign intentions and Georgia's rejection of Russian aspirations led to the outbreak of war in 2008.

Identities and Interests Leading to the Russo-Georgian War

Identities and interests determine states' behaviour in social interactions. The result of their interactions will strengthen or weaken the existing culture of anarchy, which then legitimise or delegitimise the identities and interests of the involved states (Wendt, 1999). Specifically, identities set the position of the Self and the Other during an interaction, while interests determine what condition must be established or maintained by a state to legitimise its identity. Each actor has their own perception of their identities and interests

and the position of other states within their worldview. Differences in narratives on identities and interests among states may lead to conflict when their interests encroach on the interests of other actors. The resulting condition of said conflict will shape the intersubjective understanding among actors.

In this regard, Russia viewed itself as a benign great power with good intentions for their neighbours. This required Russia to fulfil several interests to preserve said identity. First, Russia must obtain hegemonic capabilities within the political, economic, military, and cultural sectors. Second, they must set certain territories which were of importance. Third, they must cultivate good relations with states in those territories to affirm Russia's position as a benign great power. Russia's behaviours were intended to satisfy these interests.

To achieve these interests, Russia focused on developing territories relevant to Russia's interests and pursued good relations with states in those territories. Russia utilised the legacy of its economic background as a capital, along with cultural independence. This effort was also demonstrated in their relations with Georgia as a former Soviet territory.

Several actions represented Russia's intentions to Georgia. Russia sought to ensure peace in conflict zones, dubbed as "frozen conflicts," due to the Soviet Union's sudden collapse. Abkhazia and South Ossetia were examples of such zones, which became *de facto* independent from Georgia following the 1993 civil war. Though both territories aimed for separation from Georgia—South Ossetia even desired to join the Russian Federation—Russia still considered both territories as Georgia's before the 2008 war. Russia took the initiative to form a regional institution to improve cooperation among former Soviet states under the auspice of CIS. Within the economic sector, Russia established EEU to support economic recovery in Eurasia. Within the security sector, Russia formed CSTO to secure borders from crimes that often occurred across the region. Russia also backed the concept of Eurasia and provided support to cultural NGOs to promote the idea of *Russkiy Mir*. Russia's support for the Eurasia concept was a part of their vision in pursuance of European integration under the concept of a Greater Europe. Forming institutions upon the basis of a Eurasian identity served as a medium to augment Eurasian perspectives, thus allowing them to be at a level playing field with Western Europe during the process of European integration.

Contrary to Russia, which built a Eurasian identity and distinguished itself from Western Europe, Georgia put itself as a part of Western Europe who was colonised by

Russia (Parliament of Georgia, 2008). The following quotation depicted Georgia's perception of their worldview.

“The 2008 war demonstrated that the Russian Federation does not accept the sovereignty of Georgia, including Georgia's choice of democracy and its independent domestic and foreign policy.”

“Broadening the integration processes in Europe is important for the security of Georgia. Georgia is a part of the European and Euro-Atlantic space. Therefore, the expansion eastward of NATO and of the European Union is important for Georgia.”

In line with the said vision, all forms of regional integration, which did not come from Western Europe, were seen as threats. Georgia deemed that integration would lead them to memberships in EU and NATO. Georgia's advance to the U.S. was not a problem but a necessity as a European state who had repealed Soviet colonialism and was in the process of resisting Russia's imperialist power.

Georgia's identity as a European state led Georgia to be in possession of certain interests. The first one was to join NATO and EU. Second, to achieve close relations with the U.S. as a Western European ally. Third, to promote narratives that justified its position as a European, instead of a Eurasian, state. Fourth, it preserved Russia's position as a threat to Georgia. Similar to Russia's needs to have Georgia as a good neighbour to protect its identity, Georgia needed an “evil” Russia to legitimise its European identity. Henceforth, all forms of cooperation from the West, both from Western Europe or the U.S., were welcomed by Georgia.

In contrast, Russia's initiatives were often neglected or even viewed as imperialist endeavours. Georgia believed that Abkhazia and South Ossetia's *de facto* independent status was Russia's plan, and Russia's peacekeeping forces were agents who distanced both territories from Georgia. Georgia perceived itself as a European state held captive by Russia, and their main interests were to free themselves from Russia's captivity and join Western Europe.

Georgia's actions provoked more robust responses from Russia. Russia retaliated by lifting the embargo imposed on Russian goods to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, normalising Russian gas prices, and conducting similar military activities to those of

Georgia. These responses weakened their identity as a benign hegemon and legitimised Georgia's narratives which viewed Russia as a threat.

Identity-based narratives served as foundations to both states' national interests. Russia viewed itself as a benign hegemon, and Georgia, as the neighbouring state, was supposed to affirm Russia's position and maintain good relations. Georgia perceived itself as a European state and positioned Eurasia as an antithesis to its identity. Russia's identity pushed Russia closer to Georgia, while Georgia's identity distanced them from Russia. These contrasting identities and interests were the contextual basis of the 2008 war.

The national interests of both states, which stood in opposition against each other, formed their behaviours that infringed the interests of each other. With their efforts to be "European," Georgia threatened Russia's national security with its proximity to NATO and violated Russia's self-esteem as a regional great power. In pursuance of their status as a benign great power, Russia impaired Georgia's aspiration to be "European." The identities and interests of both states enabled a confrontative social interaction. This confrontative nature pointed to the Hobbesian culture, which emerged in their relations and underlay the 2008 war.

The Domination of Hobbesian Culture as the Context of the War

Culture of anarchy is the result of social interaction between actors. This culture determines expectations on behaviours among actors. The culture of anarchy can explain why state actors do what they do with certain actors but not with other actors (Wendt, 1999). According to Wendt, the culture of anarchy is homeostatic. Therefore, changes will not occur if there are no crucial events or a shift in the nature of social interactions in different directions for a long time. The culture of anarchy shapes and is shaped by social interactions. Therefore, changes in anarchic culture must be carried out from changes in the identity and interests of the actors. Not only that, changes made must be affirmed by other actors or a significant Other in order to replace the dominant culture of anarchy. One-sided changes from actors that are not followed by affirmation from other actors can only be done if the strengths of the two actors are far different and the stronger actor continues to accommodate or coerce the weaker actor.

According to Wendt's classification, Kantian culture did not correspond to the reality of Russian-Georgian relations. Firstly, the conflict between the two countries ended in the war in 2008, and the escalation of the conflict between the two sides from 2004–2008 was marked by military confrontation. Secondly, Georgia left the CSTO in

1999. This action removed the formal ties between Georgia and Russia to help each other when there are enemies from outside. Finally, military capability became Georgia's main focus after Saakashvili became president. Georgia's military spending increased from 1% in 2002 to 9.8% in 2007 and 8.5% in 2008, the year of open warfare (World Bank, 2020). This was followed by GTEP and GSSOP 1 and 2.

Lockean culture is also incompatible with the reality at hand. Firstly, Georgia's sovereignty was violated when Russia decided to continue its military operations beyond South Ossetia's borders and enter Georgia's *de facto* territory. Secondly, both Georgia and Russia sacrificed their long-term relations in decisions taken following the open war in August 2008. Thirdly, military power is a determining factor in warfare, not a tool to balance threat. Georgia's decision to invade Tskhinvali departed from the assumption that the Georgian military was strong enough to occupy South Ossetia before Russia could respond. Finally, the two sides showed no control over their behaviour during the war. The Georgian military operation to occupy Tskhinvali was carried out without a declaration of war, and if successfully carried out, it could displace the Ossetians living in the area. The case is the same as Russia's actions. Russia's counteroffensive destroyed Georgia's civilian and military infrastructure and inflicted heavy losses on the Georgian government and people.

Continued disillusionment with Georgia's disregard for its cooperative efforts led Russia to follow its neighbour's narrative. Russia acted with the same hostile perception as Georgia. This allowed Russia to repel U.S.-trained and armed Georgian troops quickly and even go on a counteroffensive. The Russian military's swift reaction was based on Russia's understanding of its relationship with Georgia. Georgia was no longer a friend or neutral country in the region but an enemy that had the potential to attack Russia. The conflict of national interests between the two countries had resulted in failed cooperation efforts and dominant hostilities. The Hobbesian culture between Russia and Georgia caused all benign efforts of Russia to be seen through the perception of the enemy, preventing any improvement of relations between the two countries.

The first tendency of Hobbesian culture is to treat each other as enemies and to counter confrontation with confrontation whenever the capabilities allow. This tendency could be seen in Georgia's behaviour, which saw Russia as an enemy. Georgia committed acts that violated Russian interests from 2004 to 2008. The Georgian Parliament unilaterally prohibited Russian peacekeepers on the Georgia-Abkhazia and Georgia-South Ossetia borders. Georgia also insisted on being a member of NATO with U.S.

support. Georgia also expelled Russian diplomats from Georgia on charges of illegal spying. With countries in the ex-Soviet territories, which were also suspicious of Russia, Georgia built several regional initiatives that excluded Russia. Examples are GUAM, Community of Democratic Choice, and the Carpathia Declaration. Georgia was also looking to strengthen its military on its borders with Russia. An increase in Georgian military spending accompanied the GTEP, GSSOP 1, and 2 programs. Georgia's military confrontations with the Russian, Abkhazian, and South Ossetian militaries had become increasingly frequent. Prior to the Georgian invasion of Tskhinvali, Georgia abolished the special autonomy status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in law. Georgia's invasion of Tskhinvali in 2008 proved that Russia was seen as an enemy by Georgia.

Russia initially accommodated Georgia in the expectation that Georgia would also accommodate Russia. This action was represented by economic cooperation and Russian mediation to bring Adjara back under Georgia's central government without armed contacts. The constant confrontation with Georgia caused Russia to abandon its original position and respond with reciprocal action to Georgia. The harder Georgia was against South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the more Russia relaxed its embargo on both regions.

The second tendency of Hobbesian cultures is a worst-case scenario-based decision-making process, which was evident in both parties. From the Georgian side, the Tskhinvali invasion was based on distrust of Russian mediation to restore South Ossetia and Abkhazia. For this reason, Georgia chose military operations because the independent state of the two regions was attributed to Russian influence. Georgia also suppressed the withdrawal of the Russian military from the former Soviet military base in Georgia. The presence of the Russian military was seen as a threat, not as a sign of cooperation, as if Russia were going to use these military bases to invade Georgia. Georgia also weakened economic relations with Russia and strengthened economic relations with the West, especially the U.S.

Russia had done similar stances; seeing Georgia becoming increasingly confrontational, the Russian embargo on Abkhazia and South Ossetia was officially lifted. The infrastructure connecting Russia and the two regions was renewed to facilitate the mobilisation of military and goods in the event of an invasion from Georgia. The number of Russian peacekeepers was also increased; it was as if Russia predicted Georgia's attack.

The third tendency is the domination of military power in conflict resolution. The two countries strengthened their infrastructure following the outbreak of open war in

2008. During the Saakashvili period, Georgia's heavy military spending was followed by the GCEP and GSSOP 1 and 2 programmes of the U.S. The Georgian army was ostensibly prepared for war during the reign of Saakashvili. Russia did the same. Following the frequent confrontations with Georgia, Russia increased its military personnel based in North Ossetia and increased Russian peacekeepers in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The last tendency is to destroy the enemy whenever possible and immobilise the enemy as long as possible. Once again, the two actors showed this attitude. In its military operation against Tskhinvali, the Georgian military used war-grade missiles to bomb the city of Tskhinvali. These actions showed that Georgia had no qualms about destroying infrastructure in South Ossetia. Russia did the same thing; Russian military operations did not stop in Southern Ossetia but continued into the *de facto* areas of Georgia. Russia also destroyed military and civilian infrastructure in its path to prevent future invasion of Georgia. This action reflected the thick Hobbesian culture between the two countries. The table below shows a comparison of the culture of anarchy with the realities of Georgia-Russia relations.

Table 3. Tendencies in Culture of Anarchy and Russo-Georgian War 2008

Tendency	Hobbesian	Lockean	Kantian
Counteroffensive military operation short of Tbilisi	✓	✓	✗
Worst scenario-based decision making	✓	✗	✗
Military power for instruments of war	✓	✗	✗
Destroying opponent's infrastructure	✓	✗	✗

Source: authors' analysis.

Thick Hobbesian culture filtered all Russian actions through perceptions of hostility and suspicion. Russia's actions were also filtered through the lens of Georgian hostility. Russia's role in the Rose Revolution and the return of Adjara were eliminated. Both events were attributed to Georgia's domestic revival instead of Russia's efforts to improve relations between the two countries.

Russia was much stronger than Georgia, but it failed to bring Georgia to accept its narrative. This failure was due to Georgia's success in embracing the West, especially

the U.S., in association with Russia. The U.S., in particular, was Georgia's biggest sponsor. The U.S. support for Georgia was also why Georgia dared to be confrontational with its neighbours, who were much stronger than it. The U.S. presence, which often supported Georgian policies, caused the Russian narrative to fail in its relations with Georgia.

Using the social process framework put forward by Wendt in explaining the phenomenon of the Georgian and Russian War, it is shown that Hobbesian culture based on the Realism tradition was very thick in the relationship between Russia and Georgia. This caused the outbreak of war between the two countries.

CONCLUSION

Social interactions between Russia and Georgia, especially those which occurred through the 1993 Georgian Civil War and the 2003 Rose Revolution, pointed towards the dominance of the Hobbesian culture, which led to conflict escalation and, consequentially, the 2008 war. Russia failed to reproduce its aspiration to become a benign hegemon as Georgia, the Significant Other, interpreted the aspiration as Russia's colonial ambition. Georgia's manoeuvres in balancing Russia through the U.S. succeeded in shifting their relative material power against Russia. Supports from the U.S. enabled Georgia to debunk Russia's cooperative narratives despite Russia's power preponderance against Georgia. Georgia's actions, which stood in opposition to Russia's cooperative aspirations, shifted Russia's cooperative stance into a confrontative one to protect its national security. The 2008 war occurred due to the prominence of the logic of enmity between the two states; thus, confrontative actions were deemed logical and military actions were viewed as the best option possible.

Alexander Wendt's Constructivism provides an alternative explanation to the 2008 war. Employing the identity-based social interaction scheme, as well as the influence of the culture of anarchy on actors' behaviours, Georgia's contributions which were often simplified in other research as a minor actor, took on a more active and prominent position, making them one of the primary responsible party that caused the war to happen.

Wendt's Constructivism is often criticised by other proponents of Constructivism, as it is built upon assumptions derived from positivism. This study finds that employing Wendt's proposed analytical framework on social process and cultures of anarchy within interstate relations has affirmed the prominence of Hobbesian culture—a culture derived from a realist lens and stems from positivism. Therefore, consequent studies should employ reflectivist theories to compare this research and other previous studies that employed positivist approaches. This

research emphasises the West's roles, especially the U.S., without providing a detailed account of Europe's role. Henceforth, future studies may be able to fill the said gap by scrutinising the positions of West European powers, such as Germany, France, and the U.K., who were divided into those who were sympathetic with Russia's Greater Europe vision and the Atlanticist group, such as Poland and Baltic states, who viewed Russia as a threat. President Saakashvili's dominant involvement in the 2008 war provided great opportunities for studies at the individual level. A comprehensive understanding of the 2008 Russo-Georgian war will allow scholars to understand former Soviet territories better. The 2014 Russo-Ukrainian war occurred in similar manners to that of the conflict between Russia and Georgia. The conflict escalation in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020 is another example of territorial conflicts in former Soviet territories.

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