

**Polyphonic Country:
A Peace Zone in Georgia and South Caucasus**

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Background of Peace Zone proposals in Georgia

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union the South Caucasus region has been plagued with ethnic conflicts—some of them remnants from Soviet times. Armenia and Azerbaijan are involved in a lengthy confrontation over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh, and Georgia struggles with Russia over the two separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. These conflicts have caused multiple military confrontations between different parties and are still unresolved even today.

In June 1997 **Johan Galtung**, founder of Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO), visited three South Caucasian countries in his tour to promote the “Transcend Method” of conflict transformation and to conduct collaborative workshops with the students of Tbilisi State University, Georgia; Yerevan State University, Armenia; and Khazar University, Azerbaijan. He held a large meeting with civil society representatives at the Caucasian Institute for Peace and Democratic Development (CIPDD) in Tbilisi. It was at that roundtable discussion, chaired by CIPDD director Dr. Ghia Nodia, that Galtung proposed creating a **Peace Zone** and a new international airport at the border area between Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia—namely at the **Red Bridge** area, one of the centers for regional trade for the last fifty years of the 20th century. Dr. Galtung has suggested that creating a Peace Zone in the South Caucasus was the only viable alternative to the continuous state of war and ethnic conflict.

Three years later, **Ambassador John W. McDonald**, Chairman and CEO of the Institute for Multi Track Diplomacy, attended a conference in Tbilisi, Georgia organized by the Georgia-America Business Development Council. At the conference, Ambassador McDonald also suggested creating a **Peace Zone in Georgia**, around the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, as a way of protecting Western energy interests through peace-building and economic development. Throughout the following nine years Ambassador McDonald continued to work with different Georgian governments on the formation of Peace Zones in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In 2003 the Vice-Speaker of the Georgian Parliament, Vakhtang Rcheulishvili, came to Washington, DC

to support the idea of Peace Zones in conflict regions. He met various U.S. officials like Senator Tom Harkin, Congressman Dennis Kucinich, and Matthew Bryza of the National Security Council at the White House. In 2004 the new Prime Minister of Georgia, Zurab Zhvania, endorsed Ambassador McDonald's plan for Peace Zones in conflict regions. State Minister Bendukidze and former Minister of Conflict Resolution Khaindrava were also very much supportive of this plan. After the Rose Revolution, when nonviolent protests brought down the corrupt government of Eduard Shevardnadze in November 2003, the idea of Peace Zones became a grassroots concept popular with certain segments of civil society and university students in Georgia.

Proposals for establishing Peace Zones faced a setback when the militaristic policies of Georgian, Russian, and separatist governments led to renewed violence, and in August 2008, a full war between different parties in South Ossetia.¹ They still remain however, one of the most promising means of breaking the cycle of violence in the South Caucasus. The purpose of this paper is to present the case for a Peace Zone in Georgia.

Zones of Peace

Definition

Zones of Peace, or Peace Zones, have been defined in many ways, depending on their usage. For many years the concept has been used mainly for the protection of places of worship and cultural sites. Accordingly, the Zones of Peace International Foundation (ZOPIF) defines the term as “a site with sacred, religious, historic, educational, cultural, geographical, or environmental importance; protected and preserved by its own community and officially recognized by a governmental authority.” It is not merely a Demilitarized Zone, but “a sanctuary that operates within ethical principles of non-violence, is free from weapons, acts of violence, injustice and environmental degradation.”² This definition stresses the absence of active violence creation of a haven in support of community-based dialogue to foster mutual understanding and inter-communal peace-building.

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2008_South_Ossetia_war.

² Zones of Peace International Foundation, at <http://zopif.org/>. ZOPIF Definition of a Zone of Peace.

History of Zones of Peace

The concept of Zones of Peace began in 1971, when Sri Lanka proposed to the United Nations the designation of the Indian Ocean as a Peace Zone in order to control the continued escalation of arms races between East and West, and a competitive military presence in the region. The proposal was unanimously adopted by the UN General Assembly in the same year despite the fact that it affected the interests of both of the major protagonists of the Cold War.³ Perhaps, for that reason, unfortunately, it was never successfully implemented. The United States later called for elimination of the committee working on the Indian Ocean as part of an attempt to reduce overhead costs in the financially ailing United Nations.⁴ In 1989, France and Britain completely failed to support the idea, saying that with the end of the Cold War there were no rival superpowers, so there was no good reason to establish a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean.

In the mid-1980s, UNICEF had introduced the idea of designating **children as Zones of Peace**. This concept was developed because of the everyday killing of innocent children, who are not part of a war. According to UNICEF, warring parties should stop their fighting whenever children are in the area, and all signatories to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CR) should abide by it. The most successful implementation of this idea was during 1988, when Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) negotiated through UNICEF with both the government of Sudan and the rebels to reach an agreement to allow eight “corridors” of relief to be created.⁵

In October 1986, the UN General Assembly declared the Atlantic Ocean situated between Africa and South America as the “Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic.”⁶ The resolution affirms the importance of this Peace Zone to the interrelated and inseparable goals of peace and development.

In 1988, the city of Naga in the Philippines was declared the country’s first Peace Zone. It was established as a result of an intensified internal armed conflict and the failure of the cease-

³ <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/resolutions/47/59GA1992.html>.

⁴ “UN may drop ‘peace zone’ proposal for Indian Ocean,” at <http://www.expressindia.com/ie/daily/19980430/12050684.html>, April 30, 1998.

⁵ 1996, “Children as zones of peace,” at <http://www.unicef.org/sowc96/14zones.htm>.

⁶ “Zone of Peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic,” United Nations Resolution 41/11 of 27 October 1986.

fire agreement between the government and the opposition party, the National Democratic Front (NDF). The process has now been successfully implemented in several other towns and villages. This working example sends a message that people do not have to wait for top-level government officials to bring peace, and that the grassroots level can initiate a peace process by collaborating and creating a common vision.

The next episode of Zones of Peace followed in 1989 from efforts to declare Medjugorje, Bosnia, which is a pilgrimage site, a regional and international Zone of Peace. However, Medjugorje and other zones established subsequently were all destroyed during the conflict that followed. Medjugorje was an area where people from different parts of the world with different languages and cultures came to pray for peace and reconciliation. Ivanka Vana Jakic, founder of ZOPIF, who visited the site in 1989, met with many of the world's religious leaders seeking their approval for the Zones of Peace Initiative. She then introduced the idea at several international conferences, the major one being UNESCO's Seminar on the Contributions of Religions to the Culture of Peace in Barcelona, Spain in 1993.

Johan Galtung of TRANSCEND has highly praised the concept of Peace Zones. Between 1995 and 1998 he suggested a zone of peace as a solution to the border conflict between Peru and Ecuador. The two countries have been fighting for more than one hundred and fifty years over the Cordillera del Condor area. Antecedents to the conflict date back to the time of the Incas, when the inhabitants of Cuzco (Peru) conquered the Kingdom of Quito (Ecuador).⁷ Despite repeated talks both countries continued to disagree, and the trans-boundary conflict continued until 1995. Galtung's idea emerged from the fact that if the two parties were given a chance to administer an area that they are fighting for, it would become a joint property where each would strive to work with the other cooperatively to bring a constructive peace. He lay down ten workable components emphasizing his idea. We review these ten components later in the paper and try to apply them to the South Caucasian region, Georgia in particular.

In late 1995, backed by Galtung's idea, Conservation International (CI) suggested the establishment of the Bi-national Ecological Park to solve the Peru-Ecuador conflict. According to the CI proposal, the advantage of having the park was to create a border market for eco-

⁷ "Peru-Ecuador Conflict and Tourism Peace Park (PERECUAD)," at <http://www.american.edu/TED/PERECUAD.HTM>.

tourism that would highly benefit both countries. After two years of resistance and disagreement from both countries, a Peru-Ecuador peace agreement was signed in 1998. It called for the creation of a demilitarized ecological protection zone.⁸ Galtung's proposal was also incorporated into the peace treaty.⁹ The bilateral agreement reached between the two countries not only reduced regional tensions, but also established the basis for a mutual and sustainable working relationship.

What we learn from the Peru-Ecuador agreement is that despite the strong nationalist feelings held by both countries, and centuries-old grievances, the lure of economic incentives persuaded them to sign the peace agreement. Five years after they signed their peace accord, the trade between the two countries has increased from extremely low levels in 1995 to \$577 million in 2002.¹⁰ The creation of this area has also mitigated the resentment and fear between the people in the area, and they have started to move freely across each other's borders.

In 1995, inspired by the successful creation of the Peace Zones in Maladeg Province, Philippines, a peace pact was signed between Christian and Muslim inhabitants of the Barangay region. The participants of this Peace Zone include different clans, the army, and the commanders of both the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), with a total of 13 leaders. It has strict rules and regulations. A violation of these rules could send groups or individuals to the community jail that was established for this purpose.¹¹

Following this success, in 2000 the House of Representatives of the Philippine government introduced an act declaring a national policy on Peace Zones¹² that was later signed by the government and the MNLF. The Act clearly lays down the basic and specific policies on the

⁸ "Peru-Ecuador Peace Agreement: Hemisphere's last armed territorial dispute finally settled," October 26, 1998, at http://www.webwort.de/peace_peru_ecuador.html.

⁹ Johan Galtung, "From Demilitarized Zones to Zones of Peace: A Transcend Perspective," 2000, at <http://www.transnational.org/fomm/meet/2000/galtungzones.html>.

¹⁰ Drew Bensen, "Peru, Ecuador Reflect Broad Latin Changes," Associated Press 2003, at <http://www.ohio.com/mld/ohio/news/6193067.htm?template=contentModules/printstory.jsp>.

¹¹ See Appendix, "The Maladeg Peace Zone and Dungos Peace Pact" (an excerpt from *New Friendship Must Be Born* by Rudy B. Rodil), at <http://www.appra.org/2001.pdf>.

¹² "The Peace Zones Policy Act 2000," at http://justpeace.net.ph/process/legal/le2000_1013_Ol.htm.

Peace Zones, with a special section that proposes binding sanctions on those who violate their agreements. In his explanatory note, Rep. Naime D. Jacob from the House of Representatives of the Philippines says, “Through Peace Zone action, communities seek to create a *social space* in which to address and resolve community issues as well as to explore alternative modes of conflict resolution, in accordance with their local culture and traditions.”¹³ In March of 2003, the areas of Pikit and the Liguasan Marsh in Central Mindanao were declared “Zones of Peace.” According to reports, these areas are paving the way for the safe return of 214,000 displaced people and also for carrying out relief and rehabilitation efforts in the areas.¹⁴ The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is also carrying out a development project, which it says is aimed at “cementing peace in the Special Zones of Peace.”¹⁵

Conflicts in South Caucasus

A Broader Regional and Historical Perspective

A closer look at the history of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan reveals the impact of feudalism and imperialism, and highlights the implausibility of rapid transition to the modern nation-state model. South Caucasian countries have a long history of feudal statehood. Georgia and Armenia trace their history thousands of years back, as does neighboring Azerbaijan that was earlier known as Caucasian Albania.

Located on the peripheries of Turkey, Iran, and Russia, the South Caucasus region (called in Russian *Transcaucasus - Zakavkazie*) has been an arena for geopolitical, cultural, religious rivalries, and outside expansionism for the last 2500 years.

Ancient kingdoms in the region included Armenia, Albania, Iberia, and Colchis (also known as Kolkhis), among others. These kingdoms were later incorporated into the Achaemenid, Parthian, Sassanid, and Roman Empires. Greek colonies were also founded on the Black Sea coast in the 6-4th centuries BC. During this time mostly Zoroastrianism was the dominant reli-

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁴ “Pikit, Liguasan marsh declared ‘Zones of Peace’,” Breaking News, March 4, 2003, at [http://www.inq7.net/brk/2003/mar/04/brkpol_10-1 .htm](http://www.inq7.net/brk/2003/mar/04/brkpol_10-1.htm).

¹⁵ UNDP Establishing the Foundations of Peace and Development, at http://www/undp.org.ph/dev_support.htm.

gion in the South Caucasus. However, after the Roman Empire expanded eastward, Eastern Christianity became the dominant religion. First Armenia and then Georgia adopted Christianity as their official religion in the 4th century AD. In the 8th century AD most of South Caucasus was conquered by Arabs, and it became a part of the Caliphate. Islam started to spread in the region with the coming of the Arabs. In later times South Caucasus was under the rule of different outside powers, such as the Byzantine Empire, Turkish Seljuks, Mongols, Safavid Iran, and the Ottoman Empire. After the fall of Safavid dynasty in 1736, semi-independent khanates and principalities were established in South Caucasus. In the first quarter of 19th century, after two Russo-Persian wars, the region was finally conquered by the Tsarist Russian Empire. After the October 1917 Revolution in Russia, South Caucasus was independent for a short period of time before being re-conquered by Soviet Russia in 1921. It was a part of the Soviet Union until its dissolution on December 25, 1991.

The South Caucasus region has been unified as a single political entity twice through its history, first during the Russian Civil War in 1918, when it was called the Trans-Caucasian Democratic Federative Republic. Second, under Soviet rule it became the Trans-Caucasian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic. It lasted for 14 years, starting March 12, 1922 until December 5, 1936.

Clearly South Caucasus has a long history of ethnic and religious tolerance, but not in a contemporary nation-state framework. On the contrary, *an ethnically composed nation-state system* has never worked in South Caucasus. It has always created conflicts and problems. It has always been a multi-ethnic, multi-religious entity.

Throughout history the Caucasus always had many different tribal and feudal groups that used one common language as a tool of communication for trading and cultural relationships. There are many different dominant languages that Caucasians have used for communicating with each other, usually the tongues of outside cultures—Greek, Persian, Arabic, Turkish, Russian. Also at certain points in the history of the South Caucasus the Armenian or Georgian states were so strong that their languages became the dominant means of communication. But these were largely isolated times, and mostly the dominant language came from outside. In the last 200+ years Russian has served as a lingua-franca of the Caucasus. But since the disintegration of the Soviet Empire, the Russian language has lost its legitimacy as a neutral tool for different nations.



Geopolitical map of the Caucasus Region (2008)¹⁶

It remained a main language for certain separatist groups, but it has ceased to be a main language of discourse in Georgia and Azerbaijan. Since the separatist wars in South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Nagorno-Karabakh were backed by Russian forces, the Russian language became

¹⁶ At http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Caucasus-political_en.svg, by user Jeroencommons (<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Jeroencommons>). Permission is granted to copy, distribute and/or modify this document under the terms of the GNU Free Documentation License, Version 1.2 or any later version published by the Free Software Foundation; with no Invariant Sections, no Front-Cover Texts, and no Back-Cover Texts. A copy of the license is included in the section entitled GNU Free Documentation License.

associated with trauma and imperialism in different parts of the Caucasus. At the same time English as a language of communication is becoming more and more important. So far *there is no common tongue of communication between different groups in the Caucasus, and this is one of the underlying reasons for the identity based conflicts.*

South Caucasian states never adjusted to dominant ethnic state status—they were either multi-ethnic monarchies or divided principalities. Or else South Caucasus was in the hands of one of the empires—the Russian Empire being the last one among them. Since 1991 there have been attempts to create modern nation-states in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia. It was the desire of local elites to create nationalistic sentiment around ethnically-based countries. But there are a number of unresolved violent conflicts: in Nagorno-Karabakh (1988–1994), South Ossetia (1990–92, 2004, 2008), Abkhazia (1992–93, 1998). There are approximately 250,000 Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan, 800,000 Azerbaijani refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, and 300,000 Georgian refugees from Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

By many accounts, the use of force to create modern nation-states in a region that has known only feudal and imperial rule has been a costly failure. Ever since the disintegration of the Soviet Empire, the South Caucasus has been plagued by ethnic unrest and divisions. Several developments contributed to this outcome.

First, the Russian and then Soviet Empires that had served as a facilitating tool for different ethnic groups in the Caucasus had ceased by the early 1990s to provide such a coercive-unifying force. While some of the nationalities of the Caucasus pursued aspiration towards modern nation-statehood (Georgia, Azerbaijan, Chechnya), others chose to stay close to Russia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh, etc.). Armenia was in between those two extremes—it remained loyal to Russia as an ally, but also acquired nation-state status. In the end the process of “modernization” of Caucasian states became a very complicated process which faced considerable resistance. This identity-based conflict became more and more connected to the notion of self-determination as opposed to territorial integrity. Some former Soviet republics, even within the Russian Federation, chose to move towards establishing a modern nation-state, while others decided to cling to their identity by embracing separatism. In the end, what we have by the end of the first decade of the 21st century is the aspiration of many different groups to be recognized as independent states and a conflict of identities that does not have a modern facilitation tool.

This is also linked to another tendency towards so-called “modernization” in the South Caucasus. This area never had nation-states, other than a short period of independence in 1918 to 1921, before the Southern Caucasus was forcefully incorporated into the Soviet Empire. **South Caucasus was always a multi-ethnic and multi-actor entity itself, and even its dominant ethnic entities such as Georgians, Armenians, and Azerbaijanis fell under different feudal principalities.** The Abkhaz reading of history is quite different from the Georgian. Abkhaz sources suggest different origins than South Caucasians. Armenians and Azerbaijanis also have their respective visions. But in any case pre-modern, decentralized, feudal principalities constituted a dominant political order before the Russian Empire came into the Caucasus as a conquering force. So, after the disintegration of Soviet Union the so-called “modern nation-state” system of territorial division does not look very relevant to the Caucasian states. Principles of territorial integrity and homogeneous populations make did not work so far in this region. Three ethnic conflicts that are not resolved even today as a result of nation-building that has started in 1992 is the result of **modernization** of South Caucasus.

At the same time, going back to pre-modern principalities is also not the answer. This kind of structure cannot sustain itself in the 21st century. There is a need to find a new system that would guarantee rights to different ethnicities living in the region, while not violating the rights of their neighbors.

Since the South Caucasus has a history of peaceful co-existence within non-nation-state structures, it is worthy to explore the possibility of a **Caucasian Union**. This kind of federation has already had a precedent at the beginning of the 20th century. In this paper I will try to follow the model developed at the symposium organized at George Mason University in January 2009 and signed by social scientists from 5 countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the United States and Russia.

This paper proposes 3 different steps:

1. Creating Zones of Peace at border areas between Georgian and Separatist forces.
2. Georgia becoming a Peace Zone as a country.
3. South Caucasus becoming a Zone of Peace as a **Caucasian Union**.

Context of Georgia, Abkhazia, South Ossetia

The Georgian kingdom reached its heyday in the 12th and 13th century AD during the rule of King David the Builder and Queen Tamara. During this period of time the Georgian kingdom was called the Kingdom of Abkhazia or Georgia, by different historical accounts. David the Builder himself started his reign in the western part of Georgia that was called Abkhazia in the Middle Ages. He then went on to re-conquer Tbilisi and the rest of Georgia from Arab Emir and Turk invaders. Some Abkhaz claim that the Abkhaz state is the true heir of the western part of David's kingdom. It is very difficult to argue on these historical details—the fact is that South Caucasian kingdoms have existed for a long time and these people can trace their independence to ancient times.

In 1801 Georgia was annexed by the Russian empire under Paul I. By the mid-19th century AD the entire territory of the South Caucasus was incorporated into the Russian Empire. After a short term of independence as nation-states in 1918–21, the South Caucasian countries were re-conquered by the bolshevik armies of Stalin and Orjonikidze, and were incorporated into the new Soviet Union. Georgia was conquered by the Soviet Army by February 1921, and officially stayed under Soviet rule until 1991, when its first elected leader, Zviad K. Gamsakhurdia, declared independence. After Georgia's declaration of independence wars of secession erupted in South Ossetia (1990–92) and Abkhazia (1992–93). It is widely accepted that Russian military forces were heavily fighting on the separatist side during the armed conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. With the help of the Russian military, separatist forces were able to defeat the Georgians and expel the entire Georgian population from conflict areas. As a result, by 1994 there were about 300,000 internally-displaced persons in Georgia resulting from those two conflicts. The attempts to mediate the crisis by the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the UN did not lead to any tangible results through a long period of time between 1994 and 2003.

Modern-day South Ossetia joined Russia in 1801, along with Georgia proper. Following the October 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, South Ossetia became a part of the Georgian Democratic Republic led by a Social Democratic Government, while North Ossetia became a part of the Soviet Russia. The Georgian government accused Ossetians of cooperating with Russia. A number of rebellions took place in South Ossetia between 1918 and 1920, during which claims were made to an independent territory. Violence broke out in 1920 when the Georgian

government sent National Guards and regular army units to Tskhinvali to crush the uprisings. Ossetian sources claim that about 5,000 Ossetians were killed and more than 13,000 subsequently died from hunger and epidemics. These numbers were not confirmed independently.

After the Soviet invasion in Georgia in 1921 the Soviet government created the South Ossetian Autonomous District in April 1922. This district (oblast-olki) enjoyed partial autonomy, including speaking and teaching of the Ossetian tongue.

As far as the Abkhaz are concerned Kingdom of Abkhazia existed as an independent entity during much of the Middle Ages. While some Georgian historians called it “Imereti-Western Georgia,” the Abkhaz have always maintained that the name of this independent country in medieval times was Abkhazia. There are legitimate claims by both sides that king David IV (Aghmashenebeli) was the king of Abkhazia and Georgia, meaning that he contributed to the unification of two independent states. Russia took over both Abkhazia and Georgia in the 19th century.

The Bolshevik coup in October 1917 and the ensuing Russian Civil War forced the major national forces of the South Caucasus—Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia—to unite into fragile federative structures. Abkhaz leaders created, on November 8, 1917, their own post-revolutionary body, the Abkhaz People’s Council (APC), but Abkhazia became embroiled in the chaos of civil unrest. It was torn between supporters of the short-lived Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus, a pro-Bolshevik faction, a pro-Turkish nobility, and a pro-Georgian Menshevik group. In March 1918, local Bolsheviks under the leadership of Nestor Lakoba, a close associate of Joseph Stalin, capitalized on agrarian disturbances and, supported by the revolutionary peasant militias, the *kiaraz*, won power in Sukhumi in April 1918. The Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic, which claimed the region as part of itself, sanctioned the suppression of the revolt and, on May 17, the National Guard of Georgia ousted the Bolshevik commune in Sukhumi.

Meanwhile, a short-lived Transcaucasian federation came to an end and the independence of the Democratic Republic of Georgia (DRG) was proclaimed on May 26, 1918. On June 8, a delegation of the APC negotiated, in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, a union with Georgia, which gave autonomy to Abkhazia. All domestic affairs were to be under the jurisdiction of the APC, while the central government established the office of Minister of Abkhaz Affairs and the post of the Governor-General of Abkhazia. Abkhaz deputies gained three of 28 seats reserved for ethnic

minorities in Georgia's parliament. The relations between the central and autonomous authorities were soon clouded by the abortive landing, on June 27, 1918, of a Turkish force supported by the Abkhaz nobles, J. Marghan and A. Shervashidze. Georgia responded with the arrest of several Abkhaz leaders and the limitation of the autonomous powers of the APC that precipitated some sympathies from the Abkhaz for the White Russian forces, which engaged in sporadic fighting with the Georgians in the north of Abkhazia. The reaction was even harsher when the Abkhaz officers of the Georgian army, Commissar Marghania and Colonel Chkhotua, staged a failed coup in October 1918. On October 10, the APC was disbanded and Abkhazia's autonomy was abrogated for six months. A new Abkhaz People's Council, elected on March 20, 1919, adopted an act of Abkhazia's autonomy within the framework of the DRG; the status was confirmed in the Constitution of Georgia adopted on February 21, 1921, on the eve of the Soviet invasion of Georgia.

Despite the 1920 treaty of non-aggression, Soviet Russia's 11th Red Army invaded Georgia on February 11, 1921, and marched on Tbilisi. Almost simultaneously, the 9th (Kuban) Army entered Abkhazia on February 19. Supported by the local pro-Bolshevik guerillas, the Soviet troops took control of most of Abkhazia in a series of battles from February 23 to March 7, and proceeded into the neighboring region of Mingrelia. On March 4, Soviet power was established in Sukhumi, with the formation of the Abkhazian Soviet Socialist Republic (Abkhazian SSR), subsequently recognized by the newly-established Communist regime of the Georgian SSR on May 21. On December 16, however, Abkhazia signed a special "union treaty" delegating some of its sovereign powers to Soviet Georgia. Abkhazia and Georgia together entered the Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (SFSR) on December 13 1922 and on 30 December joined the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Abkhazia's ambiguous status of *Union Republic* was written into that republic's April 1, 1925 constitution. Paradoxically, an earlier reference to Abkhazia as an autonomous republic in the 1924 Soviet Constitution remained unratified until 1931, when Abkhazia's status was reduced to an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) within the Georgian SSR. Except for a few nobles, the Abkhaz did not participate in the 1924 August Uprising in Georgia, a last desperate attempt to restore the independence of Georgia from the Soviet Union. During the Stalin years, a purge was carried out against Communist Party officials and intelligentsia of Abkhaz provenance on the orders of Lavrentiy Beria, then the Party Secretary of the Transcaucasus and himself a native of Abkhazia, in order to break

the resistance to forced collectivization of land. Abkhaz party leader Lakoba suddenly died shortly after his visit to Beria in Tbilisi in December 1936. There was a strong suspicion that he was poisoned by Beria, who declared Lakoba an “enemy of the people” posthumously. The purges in Abkhazia were accompanied by the suppression of Abkhaz ethnic culture: the Latin-based Abkhaz alphabet was changed to Georgian and all the native language schools were closed, ethnic Georgians were guaranteed key official positions, and many place names were changed to Georgian ones. Abkhazia experienced collectivization in 1936–1938, much later than most of the USSR. Stalin’s five-year plans also resulted in the resettlement of many Russians, Armenians, and Georgians into the existing Abkhaz, Georgian, Greek and other minority populations to work in the growing agricultural sector. The 2,700-year-old Greek population of Abkhazia was completely deported by Stalin in a single night in 1949 to Central Asia, with Georgian immigrants taking over their homes. In 1959 the surviving Greeks were allowed to return. During the 1992–93 war, some 15,000 Greeks fled the turmoil in the region to Greece.

Military confrontation between Georgians and Abkhaz started in August, 1992. In this war Russian forces were aiding the Abkhaz, and in September 1993 they were able to defeat Georgian forces. Subsequently more than 250,000 ethnic Georgians had to flee Abkhazia and become an internally displaced person (IDP) population. As a result of this war, ten to thirty thousand Georgians and 3,000 Abkhaz perished.

In November 2003, Georgia was shaken by the so called “Rose Revolution,” when its leader, Eduard A. Shevardnadze, was forced to resign by mass protests in the streets of Tbilisi. The representative of a young generation of Georgian politicians, Mikheil Saakashvili, became the president after the revolution. He promised reforms and started to implement some changes in policy. But he has failed to formulate a peace-building policy towards Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The failure to resolve the situation peacefully has resulted in renewed conflict in South Ossetia in 2004 and then again in 2008.

At the beginning of August 2008 the world watched a bloody confrontation unfold between Georgia and Russia over South Ossetia. The conflict was sparked by a miscalculation on the part of Mikheil Saakashvili, who apparently felt emboldened by perceived U.S. backing, despite State Department warnings not to provoke Russia. Russian President Dmitri Medvedev

and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin responded, predictably, with military aggression, and Russia remains an occupying force in some parts of Georgia today.¹⁷

Possible Problem Solving in Georgian-Russian-Separatist Conflicts

The South Caucasus needs to explore a new type of structure, and perhaps the European Union is the model for it to follow—voluntary integration, while keeping and respecting national identities of different ethnic actors.

So to accommodate the demands of a new time, a post-nation-state kind of structure needs to be adopted by the Caucasian states. This is a very important part of building a new peaceful Caucasus. Some creative approaches, like creating a new Caucasian unity and Union following the lead of the European Union (EU), could be a good answer to the question of having a contemporary type of unity—it is obvious that a “modern nation-state” system has not worked in the Caucasus and we need to find some creative alternatives. It is not going to be easy to do this, but for reasons of international security a **common security mechanism needs to be elaborated. For this very reason a new lingua-franca as well as new legislative procedures for the whole area as a Peace Zone is a final destination.** But in the beginning small areas in Georgia could become very much a first experiments for building peace communities in the region.

The Georgian-Russian situation is an extremely difficult conflict to solve: Georgia will continue to assert its territorial integrity and independence from Russia, which dominated it for the last 200 years; at the same time Russia feels threatened by the increasing prospect of its near-abroad (former Soviet republics) being comprised of NATO countries. Both parties have legitimate security concerns. While the Russian response to the Georgian action in South Ossetia was largely disproportionate, it is hard to imagine that future actions will be any less extreme as long as the West is intent on making a show of bringing Georgia and Ukraine swiftly into NATO.

Neither the Russian approach—aggression and occupation of an independent state—nor the Georgian approach—NATO as an enforcer—is working effectively. Unfortunately the Rus-

¹⁷ Ellen Barry, “E.U. Report to Place Blame on Both Sides in Georgia War,” September 28, 2009, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/29/world/europe/29georgia.html>.

sian-NATO polemic is the one dominating our international policy debate. And little has been discussed, thus far, about a concept that has been around for a decade.

Indeed, it is very interesting to return to serious consideration of Galtung's 1997 proposal for a South Caucasus Peace Zone—Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia would form a demilitarized space in the South Caucasus. **Peace Zones** are an especially promising way to deal with the two breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Considering the fact that Zero-Sum approaches have not worked since 1992, it is worth it to try another approach. If we can imagine that Russians and Georgians will put down their arms, disperse their armies, and establish a process for community-based dialogue to foster peace-building between the parties, it is possible to foresee more a collaborative model of relationship in the South Caucasus. International peacekeepers that include neither Russians nor Americans, led by the EU, can maintain the peace as the dialogue for lasting conflict resolution proceeds. The same model could apply to the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.

In fact, a Peace Zone in Georgia could benefit all the parties involved in and around the conflict. Western energy interests would be protected in Georgia and the South Caucasus. A new multi-lateral agreement would decrease the chances that a Russian invasion would disrupt important transit routes. Russians would require security guarantees from any further NATO enlargement. The European Union would have a new sphere of influence where it would be a central player in peacemaking between the parties. Iran and Turkey would maintain the status quo, which is not being threatened from the Caucasus by any major power (Russia in the case of Turkey and the United States in the case of Iran). Acknowledging a significant improvement in the relationship between Turkey and Russia, it is possible to think about an increasingly cooperative settlement between the big powers around Georgia and South Caucasus in general.

South Caucasian peoples have lived in peace for centuries not as nation-states but as ethnic groups and principalities. For them, embracing the idea of South Caucasus as a Peace Zone will be a return to their centuries long tradition of co-existence—but at large **this will represent a new paradigm in international relations, where the sovereign nation-state will give up a traditional militaristic reliance upon armed forces and will try to build its relationship with neighbors based on mutual economic, social, political, and cultural gain.**

Of course, this proposal does not imply that South Caucasus should not have any collective system of defense. A multi-ethnic and multi-national police force and defense force is a

necessary part of enforcing peace zones in the first stages at least. But instead of the ethnic principle of building military forces, a multi-ethnic, multi-lateral, multi-voice polyphonic principle of defense could be elaborated between different parties. South Caucasus could have a common defense doctrine which is based upon the consensus both within South Caucasian nations and big powers having vested interests in the region. I must say that the realist approach of *détente* is very useful in South Caucasus—only an idealistic, peace and brotherhood approach is clearly not enough to achieve stable development in South Caucasus.

The proposed plan sees the EU as a main implementer of the Peace Zone agreement in the states of South Caucasus. Meanwhile the United States, Russia, Turkey, and Iran will be co-signatories of the Caucasian Peace Zone pact that would politically guarantee peaceful co-existence to different ethnic, religious, and cultural groups in the region of the South Caucasus. Georgia has to start the process, since it is viewed as the center of the Caucasus and it is essential for Peace Zones to work in Georgia in order for them to be successful in Azerbaijan and Armenia.

In fact, the European Union has proposed a strategic partnership to six countries of the former USSR, including South Caucasus countries, in May 2009. This proposal could be a good incentive for South Caucasian countries to start a process of economic integration.

The Peace Zone is a win-win solution to the problem of confrontation between the United States and Russia, between Azerbaijanis and Armenians, between Georgians and South Ossetians and Abkhaz. Everyone can gain from it and no one will lose—except the illegal drug and arms traffickers, and different interest groups that are heavily invested in having illegitimate territories in the South Caucasus. In the language of real-politic, South Caucasian *détente* can be beneficial for most parties involved. The territorial dispute will give way to collaboration based upon joint economic and security interests. It is very much realistic to start talking about common security and economic interests after the military conflict of 2008. After the South Ossetian war all parties can see that cooperation is a much better alternative to mutual distrust and territorial disputes. The polyphonic approach to territorial questions is not of advantage to any ethnic nation-state; instead it gives a framework to multi-national co-existence within a unified South Caucasus, where all languages (Georgian, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Abkhaz, Ossetian) could have an equal status. The European Union provides us with a good example for this kind of approach, where 23 languages are official languages of the Union.

This is a new vision for the South Caucasus, based upon the already-existing experience of the Trans-Caucasian Confederation in 1918 and Soviet Federation in 1922–36. This paradigm could be called a **Polyphonic Co-Existence**, where instead of one leading, dominant voice there are multiplicity of voices in charge. Polyphonic folk songs are part of the Caucasian tradition—so this multi-polar concept is not alien to the region. On the contrary it is very much ingrained in the culture of South Caucasus. South Caucasus has a long tradition of peaceful co-existence of different ethnic groups. It has also a tradition of multi-voice polyphonic arts, where all the voices are singing together and not dominating each other, basing the new type of relationship between different ethnic groups in an already existing traditional art of living and empowering every culture by giving it an equal status to others. The Abkhaz and Ossetian languages shall have equal status in the South Caucasus together with Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani.

While embracing a new vision for the South Caucasus it is very important to be realistic and to understand certain points of criticism from different points of view. It is extremely important to adopt a pragmatically idealistic stance as opposed to a simple utopian understanding of things that have never worked in practice. For this it is very much desirable to understand the critique of Peace Zones from the local neoconservative and realist points of view as well as others.

Critique of This New Vision by Realists and Neoconservatives in Georgia

This vision for a peace zone in Georgia drew wide attention, and generated a very spirited debate between groups with opposing points of view on Facebook on March 2, 2009.¹⁸ Leading Georgian neoconservative ideologist Levan Ramishvili from the Liberty Institute and leading Georgian realist political scientist Kornely Kakachia contributed their opinions about Peace Zones in this debate. Here is some of their constructive criticism that was directed towards the solution of peace zones.

¹⁸ Debate about the article “Georgia as a Peace Zone,” originally written to the *Ithaca Journal* in September 2008 by Irakli Kakabadze, available at http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=54188459878&comments.

Neoconservative Arguments: enforcing democracy and human rights in the Caucasus

In contrast with traditional conservatives, Georgian neoconservatives do not see themselves as ethnic or religious fundamentalists. They call themselves “conservative liberals” and trace their political ancestors to the times of Winston Churchill. They have a neoliberal economic platform, and in foreign policy issues they are allied with American neocons, who were especially influential in the United States during the second Bush administration years. Just like their American counterparts, Georgian neoconservatives believe in spreading democracy and enlightenment by coercion and force. Georgian neocons firmly supported George W. Bush’s policy in Iraq, and they are considered the centerpiece of Mikheil Saakashvili’s administration that has been in power in Georgia since 2004.

Here I am trying to list a number of arguments that they have proposed in debates about a Peace Zone in Georgia in 2009.

For the last six years neoconservatives in Georgia have argued that “modernization” of the contemporary Georgian state could not be conducted without enforcement and some level of coercion. For Georgian neoconservatives “modernization” and “unification” of Georgia are within the same concept. One of the main reasons that Georgian neoconservatives resort to strong statist and militarist policies is the fact that they do not believe in the possibility of voluntary union and democracy-building. They point out that the history of South Caucasus and Georgia in particular is filled with feudal remnants, and it will be very difficult to overcome the syndrome of decentralized principalities.

I want to say that this has some truth to it, of course. As was demonstrated in the 1990s and the first decade of 21st century, Georgia as well as other South Caucasian societies still suffers from feudal and imperial legacies, and there are relatively large portions of the community that are actively challenging a “modern nation-state” order of things. Instead they are arguing for some sort of return to the Soviet reality, perhaps with more contemporary elements in the system. It needs to be said that there is a significant segment of the population in Georgia, somewhere between 25–35 percent of its electorate, that wants to return to Soviet times. However, these numbers are decreasing, and the contemporary post-modern and post-industrial reality is establishing itself more and more firmly.

I would like to argue with Levan Ramishvili and other Georgian neocons that the return to a pre-modern state of the state is not an option in Georgia; these groups do not have a pro-

gressive vision into the future nor do they possess any kind of resources that would enable them to send the country back to the dark ages. This was very well demonstrated by the disorganized demonstrations and public protests that the pre-modern forces launched in 2007 and 2008 that did not lead to anything. So the threat of returning to pre-modern times, although always present in all societies, it is not as big as neoconservatives would like to imagine. Pre-modern “word of mouth” methods proved to be very ineffective compared with the post-modern internet generation. Post-modern ways of communication are far superior to pre-modern or even modern strategies.

At the same time, enforcing a modern and liberal “state” with mostly coercive methods can backfire and does not yield as good results as culturally sensitive “reforms” that do not completely rely on brute force. The attempt by the Saakashvili government to coercively bring “modernity” to Georgia has created a very large backlash. Thousands and sometimes even hundreds of thousands of people came into the streets to protest this coercive “modernization.” Instead of looking at creative options of peaceful reform through more post-modern methods, Saakashvili tried to enforce the democratic and secular order. Clearly, looking at the attempt from this point of time, it looks like a mistake that should have been corrected a long time ago.

Two conflicts in South Ossetia in 2004 and 2008 have led to further disintegration of South Caucasian unity. Saakashvili’s attempts to use military force to establish law and order in 2006 (in Kodori Valley) and in 2007 (during anti-government demonstrations in Tbilisi) have backfired. As a result his government has lost its legitimacy with large parts of the ethnic Georgian population, as well as most minorities. From a purely pragmatic point of view the militaristic approach of unifying and modernizing the country through military force has failed.

It needs to be admitted that so far the forced “modernization” of the South Caucasus is not working as intended by the originators of this process. The process of building “modern nation-states” in the territory of the Southern Caucasus has produced very bad results so far. A more sensitive approach to the issues of identity and statehood in the Caucasus is needed. A post-modern approach would incorporate the best elements of traditional cultures to re-build a shared “South Caucasian Identity,” and at the same time adopt an effective method of public administration that would benefit all parties involved. For the parties to be able to maintain as much autonomy as possible, but at the same time avoid identity-based conflicts in the future, we need to have some common denominators.

In short, the Georgian neoconservative policy of President Mikheil Saakashvili to force the “modernization” of Georgian society and nation-state building has not worked—in the period of 2003–2010 this attempt was unsuccessful. The South Ossetian and Abkhaz regions have not accepted the paradigm of a Georgian nation-state, even as Saakashvili’s policy of building a “modern nation-state” by force has failed in many instances inside Georgia. Since 2007 hundreds of thousands of Georgians came out into the streets protesting Saakashvili’s regime, in part because of human rights abuses, but in part because of the forced “modernization” project. Just like the Soviet “collectivization” project in 1930s, attempts to establish a liberal, democratic state by the method of coercion is backfiring in Georgia as well in many other places. Televised arrests of different people who were considered “enemies of modernization” have created a sympathy towards them. The brutal methods used during the arrest of fundamentalist preacher Basil Mkalavishvili, as well as massive arrests and killings of supposedly “criminal elements,” created uneasy feelings in many Georgians during Saakashvili’s term. Many critics claim that while embracing undemocratic methods of governing, the government itself retreats from liberal democracy and is just implementing a “neoliberal” economic agenda. In and of itself the economic “liberalism” is also causing big disagreements inside the society. There are many who strongly disagree with the agenda of “economic liberalism,” especially when it is based upon the teachings of the Vienna Economic School, which is mostly embraced by Georgian neoconservative “liberals” like Kakha Bendukidze, the head of “Georgian Economic Reform.” **The conclusion to this point is that instead of “forced modernization and liberalization,” Georgia, as well as other countries in South Caucasus, must embrace a new way of “voluntary post-modernization and horizontal egalitarianism” that recognizes not just individual freedoms, but also the collective rights of different ethnic groups.** This is definitely not an easy task, but experience with a number of failed attempts of “modernization through coercion” have shown that new approaches need to be elaborated, and finding a new paradigm will help establish a more stable environment in the South Caucasus, where the question of identity is not always dangerous to resolve.

Georgian neoconservatives make one point that is difficult to dispute: throughout the history of the Caucasus, there was always some consensual enforcement mechanism between the Caucasian nations, and even within each society and ethnic group. If one looks at the history of South Caucasus carefully the conclusion will be drawn that this argument abso-

lutely makes sense. For a long time during the history of South Caucasus there were different dominating large powers that were in the Caucasus. Either there was a Roman, Byzantine Empire, Persian Kingdom, Arab Emirs, Turkish Sultans, or Mongol ruler—there was always a common set of rules that guaranteed security for the entire South Caucasus. The last security arrangement was the Soviet Empire, and since it collapsed in 1991 there has been no joint security guarantor for all Caucasian nations. Russian forces lost their legitimate status after ethnic conflicts in the 1990s that were heavily facilitated by the Russian KGB. American forces are feared by their Russian allies—so there is a vacuum for the security consensus in South Caucasus, and this contributes to its unstable development.

It is obvious that some mechanism needs to be created for a joint enforcement of whatever “post-post-modern” order will emerge in the Caucasus—the order of things that is built on consensual and inter-cultural understanding of justice and relations between humans that South Caucasian nations often shared through their history of the last 2500 years. The common and shared enforcement mechanism is a necessary attribute of peace- and democracy-building in Southern Caucasus. **This Peace and Security enforcement, however, should be provided by a third party (parties) that is viewed as legitimate by all sides.** For instance, American participation as a third party enforcer would be considered highly partial by some parties. Russian involvement was never considered impartial in the region.

Neoconservatives in Georgia assert that the United States and NATO are going to be the best peace and democracy enforcers in the region, particularly in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

At this point it looks like Abkhaz and South Ossetians are not very well disposed towards unilateral NATO and American participation in the peacekeeping operations during the first stage. The European Union, since it is not a military power and is considered a highly desirable partner by different separatist powers as well as Russia and the United States, is going to be much better equipped to be able to meet the challenges during the first stage of the peace-building process. According to different surveys conducted in the region, the European Union is considered the most neutral power in dealing with south Caucasian conflicts.

A further concern of Georgian neoconservatives is the relationship with Russia.

Levan Ramishvili, for example, makes the valid point that Russia will not demilitarize. Russia is a big country and a former superpower, and surely it will try not to

demilitarize. It is completely understandable that the Russians would want to have a strong military and to maintain control over the Northern Caucasus. This argument of Georgian neo-conservatives is based upon a true premise that the Russian Federation is not going to give up its strongest asset, its military machine. There is no doubt that after a bloody campaign in Chechnya, the Russians will not allow total demilitarization of the region and they would not talk about demilitarizing their state.

But in contrast to this vision I would argue that this is a different issue. **Peace Zones in the South Caucasus does not necessarily mean Russian demilitarization.**

Russia has an existential fear of NATO enlargement, and is opposing it from any point of view. The Russian President, Prime Minister, and Foreign Minister have stated this a number of times.¹⁹ For the Russians, Georgian membership in NATO remains unacceptable, but they are willing to negotiate other issues, including the status of separatist regions. So the war in particular was a Russian reaction to the proposal of NATO enlargement into the South Caucasus. In that sense, NATO and the West can have a bargaining position with Russia—a Peace Zone in exchange for avoiding military confrontation in the region. The Georgian population has already voted for NATO membership and presence,²⁰ and they have welcomed NATO soldiers. Russian soldiers are welcomed in separatist enclaves—Abkhazia and South Ossetia. If there is a mutual compromise, then Russians withdraw from their occupied territories in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and NATO gives up its plans for enlargement. Instead the EU could take control of the process as the more neutral actor and launch a Peace Zone in the conflict areas and throughout Georgia.

What is offered in this paper is a non-military zone of peace, first in Georgia, and eventually in the entire South Caucasus. I am talking about a step-by-step process that is accompanied by hard work in trust-building between neighbors. First Zones of Peace and collaboration at the border areas of Zugdidi and Ergneti, then extending them to Sadakhlo and Red Bridge, then encompassing the entire territory of Georgia, and eventually having Armenia and Azerbaijan join the entire arrangement of a non-military Caucasus. This is a third alternative to either Rus-

¹⁹ “Russia army vows steps if Georgia and Ukraine join NATO,” Reuters, April 11, 2008, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/newsOne/idUSL1143027920080411>.

²⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgian_NATO_membership_referendum,_2008.

sian or NATO options. As a deterrent mechanism both the United States and Russia, together with the European Union, assure the security guarantees to all nations and ethnic units in the South Caucasus area. This is a chance to create a **new détente** in South Caucasus and at the same time to ensure that the interests of all ethnic groups are protected.

Georgian and South Caucasian Peace Zones offer a win-win solution for Russia and the West—neither the Russian Occupation nor the NATO has a presence as a military force.

In fact, separatist leaders display much more interest in joining European structures than in joining NATO. If there is any chance of bringing Abkhazia and South Ossetia closer to the rest of Georgia, it will be by offering social and economic incentives, not military alliance. Even investment in the amount of \$5 million would have a huge economic impact in Abkhazia or South Ossetia—this kind of investment can start serious changes in the process of reconciliation. Georgia is receiving help of about \$4.5 billion over the next four years from the United States, EU, World Bank, and other international organizations.²¹ It is a very good time to use this economic incentive to develop local economies in the conflict regions and the areas surrounding them. If this money is spent wisely one could expect a major breakthrough in the relationship between Georgians and Ossetians or Georgians and Abkhaz. Contrary to the neoconservative argument, economic incentive plays an extremely important role in this process of peace-building.

Georgian neoconservatives also make a point about the impossibility of neutrality for Georgia and the rest of the South Caucasus. Levan Ramishvili points out that Soviet Russia had already broken a pledge to respect Georgian neutrality in 1921 and post-Soviet Russia will do it again. In fact, this argument bears some historic relevance, since Georgia had already had a very negative experience with proclaiming neutrality as a state. **In the words of Georgian neoconservatives, neutrality is not an option for Georgia.** Georgian neocons have a scepticism that is based on Post-Soviet and particularly Moldovan experience.

But here I offer a different view of neutrality in the region.

²¹ Helen Maguire, “Georgia still bears scars a year after war with Russia,” 30 July 2009, at http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/politics/georgia-still-bears-scars-a-year-after-war-with-russia_100224939.html.

As far as neutrality is concerned, I am discussing a very different arrangement—neutral countries are in many cases military powers, like Switzerland and Sweden. Even though they refuse to enter different military alliances, they are not non-violent states. On the contrary, they are part of the old Weberian style nation-state community where the state is considered to be built upon the idea of monopoly over violence. In fact, Costa Rica is the closest country to the idea of a Peace Zone, and there are plenty of other examples mentioned earlier in this paper, but indeed, a Peace Zone is representing a new POST INDUSTRIAL PARADIGM OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS—a new relationship between the nations and ethnic entities based upon multi-culturalism. In fact, the European Union is serving as an example of this new Post-Industrial Paradigm. We are talking about a non-violent zone and not simply about a neutral power. Also, my argument is based upon the unity of the South Caucasus and not necessarily on one state declaring neutral status. I am advocating a step-by-step process that will eventually lead to a demilitarized South Caucasus.

According to the Georgian neoconservative point of view, Caucasian nations can never have a common cultural denominator and they can never construct a common identity, since Armenians are close to Russians and Georgians to the Western powers. Armenians are part of Indo-European civilization, Azerbaijan is part of the Turkish cultural milieu, and Georgians, Abkhaz, Cherkas, and Chechen are part of the Ibero-Caucasian language group. It is true that there were many conflicts between Caucasian nations throughout history. Georgian neoconservatives agree with Samuel Huntington's version of the "Clash of Civilizations" that basically enforces their argument about inevitable struggle for the territory between representatives of different civilizations. This neo-cultural-relativist approach contains some valuable points from anthropological and historical standpoints, but it does not offer a vision for the future. Yes, it is true that there are differences between at least three distinct civilizations in the South Caucasus. Here the argument ends.

But at the same time it is true that Caucasians found many ways to cooperate as well. It is obvious that the new paradigm of cultural identity needs to start operating if we are talking about eventual unification in one **South Caucasian International Cooperation**. The European Union has already provided a good example for forming a unified, new identity that is based upon traditional values.

Jacques Derrida and Jürgen Habermas identified this paradigm in their famous letter addressing the creation of a common European Community in 2003. In it, the great theoretician of communication and consensus and the doyen of deconstruction put aside their considerable intellectual differences to call for a unified European Patriotism.²² **But what they were really after was the creation of “a European identity.”** In our case, the creation of a Peace Zone will re-establish longing for a common **South Caucasian or Caucasian identity** (*not to be confused with the way Americans use the word “Caucasian” which means just a white person—here I mean people from the Caucasus region*) that is not something completely new, but was a common denominator of Caucasians during the Russian domination and Soviet regime. This is a multi-cultural construct that has a tradition of being in place and that can start operating from the very beginning.

Habermas and Derrida note that “The EU presents itself as a form of ‘governing beyond the national state,’ that could serve as an example as a post-national constellation.” The paradigm of a Peace Zone in the South Caucasus will be a similar post-national constellation moving directly towards a post-industrial paradigm of governing beyond the national states. South Caucasus has a best chance to win peace and prosperity with a policy of non-violent transformation into a Caucasian Union that would be closely linked to the EU. This is the vision that has accompanied the whole process of peace zone construction.

According to another neoconservative argument the EU is not a military block, and it is naive to think that the EU can provide any meaningful security guarantees separately from the United States. In addition to that the EU suffers from so-called enlargement fatigue. So it is not realistic that Georgia can even become an EU candidate country in the foreseeable future. Russia will object to any form of Georgia’s real independence.

However, this is exactly the point here. The participation of the United States and Russia in building a new security system around the South Caucasus is highly desirable together with EU. This is not a call to disengage, but a call to engage. This process needs active U.S. participation as well as Russian participation. The EU is the best arbiter of the situation precisely because

²² Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida, “After the War: The Rebirth of Europe.” Translation published online at http://www.faculty.umb.edu/gary_zabel/Courses/Phil%20108-08/Brett%20Marston:%20HABERMAS%20AND%20DERRIDA%20IN%20ENGLISH%20TRANSLATION.html.

it is not a military block, and so it could not be seen as a threat to Russian national security. The European Union united in the face of a legacy of animosity between its members that included two world wars in the 20th century. We have seen this example, and this is exactly why the EU is the best facilitator to building up Peace Zones in the Southern Caucasus. The EU can act as a party that is above the confrontation between the United States and Russia—since the Iraq war the EU has had a position that is more acceptable to Russia and is more distanced from the United States than during the Cold War. Hence, the EU could be more of a neutral third party between the United States and Russia, and can be trusted by Abkhaz and Ossetians as well as Georgians.

Realist Arguments and Counter-arguments

Realist arguments about the peace zones are a bit different from those of neoconservatives. One of the leading realists in Georgia, Dr. Kornely Kakachia, a visiting fellow at Harvard University in 2009, has made a number of very interesting remarks regarding Peace Zones in Georgia.

Georgian realists like Kornely Kakachia tend to favor the realist approach of Henry Kissinger, and especially his maxim that “Great Powers do not commit suicide for allies” (least of all small and unimportant ones). Realists emphasize that the interests of big powers need to be considered carefully and that Georgian national interests need to be followed in defining what is a good option for solving this problem.

Addressing realist concerns is necessary for building peace in the South Caucasian community. Considering the Kissingerian focus on national interests, we have to emphasize that there are multiple actors at the scene and all of their interests (or needs) need to be satisfied. There are numbers of outside actors that have the capacity to influence the peace process based on their interests.

First of all Russia, is openly involved in this conflict right now and is not hiding its interests. **The main interest of Russia is to prevent Georgia from joining NATO.** In the process of facilitating this Peace Zone Building process we need to understand that Russians feel very much threatened by the NATO enlargement to the east, and for them the South Caucasus joining a North Atlantic group is totally unacceptable. So when preparing for the final win-win outcome we need to know this interest. **A Peace Zone proposal can satisfy Russian interests by creat-**

ing a non-military, non-violent international sanctuary of peace where there is no military alliance present.

U.S. interests should be distinguished from the rest of the West in this case, although Great Britain has played a major supporting role. Although the new administration in Washington, DC has shifted a little towards a reconciliation with Russia, the main U.S. and British interest in the region is as an alternative energy route from the Caspian Sea. U.S. and British companies have heavily invested in Azerbaijani and Kazakh oil fields, and would like to see **the Energy Corridor function** in the South Caucasus. The United States is not primarily interested in a military presence in the region, as long as energy interests are protected. **A Peace Zone in the South Caucasus can satisfy American and British interests by keeping the Energy Corridor alive and maintaining U.S. and British companies' share in these energy fields for the near future.**

The European Union has its own interests in the region as well. One of its main goals is to have good and stable relations with both Russia and the United States, and keep the South Caucasus stable. **While European strategic interests also include keeping an alternative Energy Corridor, they would also like to maintain good relationship with Russia to keep the existing energy route alive.** So Europeans are naturally in the situation of mediators in this complicated picture. **That is another reason why the Peace Zone Mandate should be enforced first of all under EU sponsorship.**

Turkey and Iran also have their vested interests and security needs in the area. Both of those countries would like the region to be more or less independent from either Russian or American domination. Renewed Russian domination of their northern neighbors will make Turkey unhappy, and the same could be said about Iran while discussing a possible American military presence. **A Peace Zone under the EU mandate will serve Iranian and Turkish Security interests as well. This is the closest to a win-win solution.**

A deterrent factor for future escalation of violence in South Caucasus is needed—especially in the first stages of the process. This international multi-lateral system is the best deterrent factor in this situation. The European Union, as the most legitimate actor in the region, will be able to enforce the peace during the first stages of the agreement, together with the United States, Russia, Turkey, and other neighboring countries. The realist argument about the deterring factor is to be seriously taken into account, and multi-lateral agreements on the non-use

of force and demilitarization are key to having effective deterring mechanisms for the different ethnic groups. **A multi-lateral deterrent is the most effective way to ensure lasting peace, together with building mechanisms for positive peace.**

To put it in realist terms—South Caucasian détente could become one more stability factor in the post-Cold-War period.

Here we have discussed the interests of the non-insider parties. Of course, Georgians, Abkhaz, Ossetians, Armenians, and Azerbaijanis have their own interests and needs, and those need to be identified and worked on. But in today's global environment, without the agreement of outside forces such as the United States and Russia, together with the European Union, it will be impossible to reach consensus on the insider level.

From the realist perspective, the contemporary world is moving towards different security priorities. State actors are not as important in today's world as non-state actors. So maintaining security around the world requires more and more international cooperation on the issues of nuclear non-proliferation and defending different communities from the threat of terrorism. Terror has become the primary tool of inter-ethnic and international relations today. Conflicts between states are not as common today as sudden explosions of terrorist activities in different parts of the world. For this very reason it is in the interests of all major powers to have more integration in an international peace and security system.

It is extremely dangerous to have unrecognized regions without proper international legal mechanisms on arms proliferation, since those places can be used by different criminal cartels to sell arms as well as narcotics. Unfortunately, the South Caucasus has not been immune to these dangers. Through the early 2000s we had different instances when several individuals were detained near Gori and Batumi possessing unusually high amounts of uranium and nuclear materials. The implications were that these individuals were traveling from unregulated regions to different client countries. The arms trade has taken sanctuary in these unrecognized territories, and by having those places subject to economic sanctions and embargoes the illegal arms traders are encouraged to have safe havens in places like Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh, etc. This is not just a problem of the South Caucasus; indeed, we are dealing with a very international problem that the whole international community is dealing in the 21st century.

From the perspective of international security it is very important to have the entire South Caucasus under the legal jurisdiction of the United Nations and collaborating on the issues like arms proliferation. It is crucial to deter the smuggling of nuclear materials and other arms from Russia to unrecognized territories and international arms trade mafia using those grounds to make lucrative deals with arms and drugs. Conflict between ethnic and religious groups exacerbates the risk of illegal trade in arms and drugs, whereas mutual collaboration improves the chances of successful monitoring and deterrence. **A Peace Zone in the Caucasus offers this opportunity to the international community.**

Concrete steps in the PEACE ZONE PLAN

I am proposing a multi-step approach to building peace in the South Caucasus.



This map shows you the Zugdidi area for a Peace Zone. What is circled and labeled UNOMIG (United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia) is the destination for the first Zone of Peace in the area.²³

²³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:United_Nation_Abkhazia_small.PNG. This image is a map derived from products of the United Nations Cartographic Section. Modified versions of UNCS maps may be used provided that the UN name and reference number does not appear on any modified version and a link to the original map is provided. Modified UN maps are to be

ADMINISTRATIVE-TERRITORIAL UNITS



3. The third stage of implementing the Peace-Building plan is to turn Georgia into a non-military state, which means all parts of Georgia will have a joint police force, but no military. There will be no military units in the entire territory of Georgia, except for European Union peace-keeping units. All administrative territorial units will be demilitarized.²⁵

4. The fourth stage envisions turning the entire South Caucasus into non-military a federative Caucasian Union where five languages will be major communicative languages: Armenian, Azerbaijani, Georgian, Abkhaz, and Ossetian. At the final stage the implementation of the Polyphonic Post-Nation-State Constellation as the South Caucasian Union is the final destination.

²⁵ http://www.parliament.ge/pages/archive_e/n/territory/. Everything on the Parliament of Georgia website is free for reuse:
http://www.parliament.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=364.

Map of the South Caucasus



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But achieving success in this extremely difficult process is not easy. There are many factors that are going to create many different problems through the process of peace-building in the South Caucasus.

How to start a process in the small areas proposed?

This is the most complicated question that needs a response. However, there are ways to establish and maintain a Peace Zone and a Peace Community in the Zugdidi and Ergneti areas while using certain guidelines. Here I will focus on conducting the process in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and subsequently together with our Armenian and Azerbaijani colleagues move to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

In this paper, under the term “We” I mean the organizers of the Peace Zones who will start to work on the project. So far I have identified five scientists from Russia, the United States, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. But the list can be expanded significantly.

Here are the first 10 steps to be elaborated to establish Peace Communities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia:

1. To start a process of **Building from the Ground up** we need to know what the economic and social needs in the conflict areas are. There are a number of shared problems and needs from both sides of the frontline: poor socio-economic conditions, problems with health care and education, and lack of investment. To start facilitating Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian dialogue on the issues of affordable health care, education policy, and economic development, we need to bring people from local communities together to discuss the economic development projects. Helping small community-based businesses to build and re-establish their presence in places like Ergneti and Zugdidi, and the Liakhvi and Enguri rivers, and helping to organize joint small ventures in health care and education. Also, communities together have had a great experience in agricultural production and collaboration in the energy sphere, together running the Enguri Hydro Electric Station.

2. A **Trigger Event** for starting a joint problem-solving process is the **War in the Caucasus**. Violence created by the Russia-Georgian war in the Caucasus has created very dangerous conditions. We need to be able to mobilize the members of a community around the idea of security in the name of peace. Creating conditions for lasting peace should be seen as the only way out of the prolonged violent confrontation between the parties. In any case, this is the only way out. Until a lasting solution is found in the region, the community won't have an opportunity to live in more or less decent conditions. Memories of the 1970s and '80s as prosperous times are still alive in the areas of conflict, and we need to include middle-aged people in the process of conflict transformation. **Involvement of the EU could be another trigger event for starting collaboration on just the economic level**, since the EU is seen more or less positively by both sides.

3. It will, of course, be challenging to ensure general and local support for a strategy of local neutrality. But here again, starting with the point of economic cooperation is very important. The investment of about \$1 million in each border area to begin with for joint collaborative projects will be a good determinant to ensure that there is a constituency for collaborative effort. Here again we are dealing with the former Soviet mentality and psychology of having to have some outside actors telling the parties what to do. At this stage it will be extremely useful to have the EU, Russia, and the United States act together in the interests of local reconciliation and economic development. If the agreement is reached between the big powers, it should not be a problem to implement this agreement at the grassroots level. As paradoxical as it may sound, our participant observation studies indicate that there is still much support for joint economic development projects in the area. Local Neutrality should be backed by Global Neutrality in this case—Russia and the United States must agree on a joint strategy towards the region, and this must be pursued by the facilitating efforts of the European Union.

4. In the process of preparing quietly with consulting main grassroots actors on both sides of the frontier we need to get information about the main actors. Here we are talking about farmers, traders, small business owners, local government representatives, civil society NGO representatives, local religious leaders, local press, governments, and paramilitary groups. **All parties must have a stake at this process.** Of course, this will be extremely difficult to achieve, but in the process of working with different partners we should be able to identify the needs and interests of different tracks. The main point of difficulty will be to meet the needs of paramilitary and illegal groups that are operating in the region. There is a big number of those groups in the region. We need to be able to attract their interests by economic means by giving them some stake in the future economic development projects—otherwise those forces are too powerful, and they will destroy the peace-building process for sure.

5. We should be able to find useful models and examples in different peace zones mentioned above in this work. The example of the Central American country Costa Rica might be very useful for the South Caucasian nations. They identify with Latin American countries culturally by the virtue of their Black Sea Mediterranean Identity, and this could be used as a positive spin while selling the idea of Peace Zones and economic development. Of course, the

example of the EU could be considered as a positive example towards creating a greater South Caucasian Union. Considering John Paul Lederach's "Insider Partial" approach, where insiders instigate the peace process and have a vested interest in keeping peace, many examples from Caucasian history could be drawn as Peace Zones at the time. One very significant example for this approach is the old Tiflis center, called Meidan, where Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Kurds, Jews, Christians, and Muslims have co-existed peacefully. There are different literary and arts works dedicated to the subject.

6. As a result of making a careful inventory of available resources within and around the communities in South Ossetia and Abkhazia we can find many historical facts of unity and peace. In fact, history does not tell us much about the conflicts between Kartvelian Georgians, Ossetians, and Abkhaz before Soviet times. There have been many stories of joint resistance to invading armies of Romans, Persians, Turks, Arabs, Mongols, etc. There are many literary stories, including Konstantine Gamsakhurdia's "Kidnapping of the Moon," Leo Kiacheli's "Haki Adzba," etc. King David IV (Agmashenebli), who is considered the biggest Georgian statesman through 2500 years of history, was called "The King of Abkhaz and Georgians," and started his process of liberation of Georgia from the Turks and Arabs as an Abkhaz king. In fact, he went to liberate the capital, Tbilisi, by the very end of his reign. His granddaughter, Queen Tamara, who is also considered one of the biggest names in Georgian history, was married to Ossetian Prince David Soslani, and they governed the Georgian kingdom together until their children Lasha Giorgi and Rusudan became the rulers. There are many more examples of peaceful co-existence in the region.

7. We need to anticipate negative reactions from both parties. Abkhaz and Ossetians have a deep mistrust of official Georgian politics, especially after the 1990s and recent conflicts between the parties. The same could be said about Georgians and Russians. Georgians do not trust Russians and are not trusted by Ossetians and Abkhaz. The wall of mutual mistrust could be demolished only by hard working trust-building, collaborative problem-solving, joint economic projects, and building guarantees of non-violence and non-use of force. Here the participation of more neutral European (or Asian) partners is very critical, since parties have a mistrust of Russian and American intentions in the region. It will be very difficult to overcome the mutual dis-

trust, and strong guarantees from the parties are needed—Americans and Russians must agree on mutual respect for non-violence guarantees, and the EU should be able to enforce them. This requires a very credible policy on the part of all parties—especially the United States and Russia.

8. We need to be able to prepare and alert key local supporters of Peace Zones at local, regional, and national levels. This process will include local small business communities on both sides of the frontier—we need to include them in the process of joint problem solving through establishing mutually beneficial economic zones. We need to include local paramilitary leaders in economic activities and give them a stake in new enterprises, so they can feel included in the process of peace building. If the local groups are not completely included in the process of the creation of Peace Zones, it will be no problem for them to destroy the process. Investing some more money in community development around frontier areas is very essential—about \$10 million could be used at the beginning stage to start the process of local community re-building via economic channels.

9. We need to be clear about the purposes and practices of the peace community. We need to include local communities, recognized or self-proclaimed government groups, and also local paramilitary units in the economic advantages of starting a Peace Zone. A Free Economic Zone or a Free Trade Zone might be also useful terms for engaging different groups in the process. The facilitators of the process need to be sure that they identify the goal as the future economic prosperity of the whole region—a stable place where people have security guarantees and opportunities to grow, both socially and economically. Joint aspiration of the communities towards joining the European Union could be used as a very useful example. The realistic goal of unifying into a Caucasian Union that would sooner or later join the big European Union should be a goal that can be realistically fulfilled by both sides. People should not be led to unrealistic expectations nor mutually exclusive prospects. Joining the European Union seems to be the most-shared object that is not opposed by either side's hardliners. Here again in today's dichotomy between the United States and Russia, the EU stands as more neutral actor for Abkhaz and Ossetians as well as Georgians. The goal of economic prosperity through partnership with the EU is the most achievable goal for the peace process.

10. Launching a Peace Community and Peace Zone ceremonially and giving it maximum positive publicity will also help in this process. However, the public relations side should be handled with great care from the beginning. Throughout the process leaks of information should be avoided by both parties as much as possible—only after mutually satisfactory results are achieved should the positive facts be known. Joint Economic and Social Prosperity through sharing a positive identity of South Caucasians should be a main element in the public relations strategy of building peace zones.

How to Maintain Internal Unity within a Peace Zone and Peace Community

1. This new initiative will absolutely challenge the existing elites in Tbilisi, Sukhum(i), Tskhinvali, Moscow, and other places. There is a large amount of work needed to include all these power groups in the process. The Russian military is a big part of the picture, together with the Moscow government that sees any kind of Caucasian unification process within a prism of the Cold War and its sphere of influence. It is necessary to be able to convince Russians that the establishment of a Peace Zone in the South Caucasus will be beneficial to its security. Including the Russian elite and power structures in the decision-making process is an extremely important part of building a peace community in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. At the same time, the factor of internal power elites needs to be considered seriously: Georgians, as well as Abkhaz and South Ossetians, have multiple local elite groups that are not necessarily always representing the same interest groups. In Georgia, government as well as both liberal and radical parts of the political opposition need to be included in the decision-making process. IDPs are a very important part of the populace that is instrumental for peace zone creation. Without the approval of internally-displaced persons, Tbilisi cannot make any substantial moves towards peace and demilitarization. There is also the factor of military and law enforcement agencies, such as the Ministry of State Security. In Abkhazia and South Ossetia there is a very strong factor of paramilitary groups that are quasi-official and are not entirely subordinated to the central leadership of those regions. There is also one more very important ring of actors—these are multi-national and multi-ethnic criminal groups that are involved in the business of smuggling. These groups often cut across ethnic lines, but they are sometimes very powerful economic forces able to interfere indirectly in state activities very much. So doing further research of local power elites is going to be extremely useful for the process of starting to maintain relations that are built during

the first stage of the process. Having a good picture of the dynamics between the power elites and internal and external actors will give us a better understanding of possible solutions to the problem. Often those elites need to be included in joint economic projects—according to the experience of the last 18 years (since 1992) they react positively to long-term economic, mutually beneficial cooperation—but for this they need to see the benefits of cooperation as opposed to confrontation.

A lot of work needs to be done with Church officials in all those places. During the conflict in August 2008, the Church was almost the only institution that was able to cross borders and conduct humanitarian work. Multiple factors need to be considered for this future consideration. The narratives and discourses of opposing sides need to be worked with, and their *basic human need for identity* needs to be satisfied as well. Working with different Christian and Muslim groups within the region is a very important part of peace community building.

2. We need to focus our efforts on projects that are of general benefit to the community (Georgians, Abkhaz, South Ossetians) and start building roads, schools, hospitals, and joint factories. Besides building infrastructure, there is a big need for re-starting agricultural and tourist industries in both regions. Abkhazia and South Ossetia were traditionally very agricultural places, with a good amount of tourist industry. These need to be brought back. With the help of Western companies, work must begin on high-tech and innovative information technology and knowledge-oriented projects. The Enguri Hydro-Electric Power Station is a good example of cross-war-zone cooperation between Georgians and Abkhaz. In some ways re-creating some of the Soviet economic ties could be useful in this respect, and linking different factories with a contract relationship that will be beneficial to all sides is also an important factor in this situation.

In Zugdidi, the neighboring town in the region of Samegrelo, there is already an established institution of trade between Georgians and Abkhaz—legitimizing this trade zone will be a very good tool to start a positive relationship. The same thing could be said about the border towns with heavy Azerbaijani and Armenian populations. Trade is one of the universal languages, and therefore free trade zones or favorable trade arrangements are very helpful to the establishment of peace communities. Trade is one of the long-term incentives to maintaining relationships between the parties.

3. At the same time we should be aware of some economic activities that have a potential for conflict generation and that are substantially very dangerous for the peace-building process. Major criminal businesses, especially arms trade, tend to be an instrument of division. Most of the criminal groups that have operated in the regions of conflict have been from outside. Of course, the arms-trading business in the Caucasus was for a long time a sphere of the Russian military domination. But in recent years we have witnessed the emergence of different actors on this scene—there were some Czech, Ukrainian, Israeli, and even American arms in the region. During 2008 military conflict between Georgia and Russia, several countries have provided arms to different sides. The Military Industrial Complex tends to benefit from conflict, and it has done exactly this in the Southern and Northern Caucasus regions. Drug trade has also a tendency of dividing parties, although we need to admit that, according to more recent studies, this division does not necessarily follow ethnic or even national lines. But here there is another very interesting detail—drug lords prefer to operate their illegal trade in rogue state territory that is not really accessible to any kind of international police presence, where semi-chaotic government structures are set up, and where they can easily buy influence. For this very reason the situation of “negative peace” is much more profitable for multi-national and multi-ethnic drug cartels than the situation of “positive peace” where you have proper law enforcement relationships between different actors. The same thing could be said about the human trafficking, as much of their profits also come from an unstable environment and they tend to use unregulated territories for their purposes. For the reason of peace-building in the region all these illegal businesses need to be converted into legal and mutually beneficial economic activities, such as tourism, agricultural industries such as manufacturing fruit and vegetable juices, farming, joint information technology centers, and educational facilities.

4. Since the beginning of peace communities in the conflict areas there needed to be a mechanism for setting some realistic guidelines for local populations and within ethnic communities. There should clear rules against violence, arms trade, and the drug trade, drawn from a consensual legislative process. The enforcers could be joint teams of “Insider-Partial” groups of conflicting parties (Georgian-Abkhaz, South Ossetian-Georgian) or outsider-neutrals, like an EU international police force. Actually, the joint enforcement

mechanisms could be a combination of multiple types of enforcer mechanisms. In these situations interlocking identities could be very helpful as crime deterrence functional units.

5. Re-establishing some of the “Village Elders” institutions that are traditional in these parts of the world should be one of the priorities. Re-establishing traditional methods of mediation and non-violent conflict resolution could be mixed with some innovative approaches. These communities in the South Caucasus have many practical, traditional mechanisms of non-violent conflict resolution. Of course, there needs to be a middle ground between the ethnic and religious lines, as has always been the case in the Caucasian context. Caucasians always found indigenous ways to solve disputes by agreeing on consensual inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflict resolution techniques. For instance, during the Soviet period they practiced the universal principle of “Respecting the Elders” that was common in different groups, whether Christian, Muslim, Zoroastrian, Jewish, or any other religious group.

Finding local non-religious secular common ground in the different cultures is very important, since every region has its own common sense of pride in its own culture, not just language or religion. In many cases you have collective memory of some wars in which people of the whole region were defending their land together; sometimes there is a certain attitude of respect towards women or towards the elderly that serves as a unifier; in many cases there is also a ritual that is shared between different cultures. In the South Caucasus this could be a table where everyone gets together and is peaceful at the same time, and this provides a good avenue for solving conflicts and creating some new solutions, opportunities for different sides and different people to deal with the conflict. These traditional methods need to be applied to the given conflict in a very careful pattern for them not to cause more conflict because of the inherent differences between the worldviews of the sides. We need to remember that there are some big parts of history that are dividing these peoples, and traditions are also a part of history. These decisions should not be made very superficially, since they could cause as much as solve any given conflict in the region. The institution of elders looks culturally more like a unifying mechanism—we also can consider women-peacemakers as a serious force as well. There are some other groups as possible peace-builders, like former combatants or the relatives of the deceased, but they need a more sophisticated approach. Modernizing and taking a creative approach to

traditional institutions of conflict resolution is also a wonderful way to continue the path of “Insider-Partial” peace-builders in the region.

6. It is necessary to make sure that traditional rivalries within the South Caucasian communities are played out peacefully and that the European Union as an outsider Party does not become allies or patrons of the ethnic groups, as Russia and to certain extent, the United States have done. This is a very important part of the peace building process in the Caucasus, since in this region the long involvement of Russian military forces leaves no question about which side are they taking and who they are supporting. At the same time, the United States has been in a friendly relationship with Georgian and Azerbaijani leadership. So these international actors have lost neutrality. Especially this could be said about the Russian Federation, since the Russian military has been engaged on indirect and direct confrontation with Georgians on Georgian territory. The United States has also maintained a limited military presence in Georgia—there have been about 200 military instructors training Georgian armed forces since the start of Iraq war.

There are some other independent potential intermediaries, like India, China, New Zealand, or even Costa Rica that have been very good models for peace zones for the last 60 years. It is very important that the intermediaries play a neutral role, since they have to bring some legitimacy of non-partisan police force that would try to prevent a criminal explosion and looting at any given moment after the peace zone starts to operate. Clearly all sides need to give legitimacy to the parties, and this is going to be achieved by the balanced approach of the third party. In this case, the European Union is viewed as a more neutral actor; since it is not associated with Russia or the United States, it is considered to have its own, different agenda. It is very much necessary for this agenda to be seen as an “Agenda for Peace” in the South Caucasus. For this it is very desirable that the third party shows an interest in having all parties satisfied—for instance, the EU’s policy of keeping a balance between the United States and Russia on Eurasian space, its energy interests, and neighborhood policy. Being perceived by all parties as having a vested interest in peace and their well being is very important, since in all conflict regions suspicions about hidden agendas are extremely difficult to overcome. But the third-party mediator needs to be straightforward with its agenda, including an economic/financial gain, is always a good starter. It is also important to use culturally appropriate avenues of expressing the true

goals, since in some cultures throughout the Caucasus, talking about money and financial interests is considered not very polite. These matters are sometimes discussed in a different setting and within some defined rules, as well as matters of gender and sex relationships. The power structure between women and men varies within Caucasian ethnicities. In some cases women are at the forefront of peace-making, and in some cases they are not part of the decision-making process at all. Also, we need to know that through the last 15 years Wahhabi educational centers have penetrated the Caucasus—some of them were based in the Southern Caucasus as well. Also, we have strong traditional Shiite Muslim groups, Orthodox Christians, and Armenian Orthodox Christians together with Zoroastrian, Jewish, and other religious communities. The third party needs to make sure that those differences are respected and understood in the process of intervention.

7. For the successful completion of the process it is very important to know that development projects are planned out realistically and implemented with great responsibility so that in the end a shared sense of progress resulting from joint efforts is created. The existing model of development projects in the Caucasus is a mixed one. First of all, we should say that the work of civic organizations in the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s was very productive in the case of human rights and democracy-building work. Civil Society actors were a very important part of the “Rose Revolution” in Georgia in 2003. Non-governmental organizations have had a very active profile in the late 1990s and the beginning of the next decade, but at the same time the development projects were in many cases not implemented properly.

As democracy-building and human rights work was going on many development projects in the area were mismanaged, and there remains to be a good development strategy in the region. Many development projects depended largely on local government structures that are largely corrupt and are not necessarily interested in proper development of infrastructures, since their power often rests with different illegal activities like smuggling of different merchandise and even human trafficking. So only the development projects that were aimed at local development in areas like Samegrelo or Shida Kartli, those neighboring regions to the conflicts, were effective. About 90 percent of the project activities we can consider wasted, and 10 percent was more or less partly effective, since it employed some people from the region and gave some stake in local stability to some players. These projects should be looked over, and their centers need to

switch from the capital cities to regional centers, and possibly to initial peace zones around the Ergneti, Zugdidi, Sadaxlo, and Red Bridge areas. Keeping employment numbers up is essential, but at the same time it is important to start joint economic activities in the peace zones, such as developing foundations for joint cooperative agricultural factories; there is still a tradition of being involved in joint economic activities during existence of the Soviet Union. The tourism industry was also another economic infrastructure that required cooperation between the parties, and here too there is still the tradition of cooperation that stopped about 20 years ago, but still could be resurrected.

Even a very modest amount that is invested in the long-term process is more effective than short-term handouts. The basic criteria for **sustainability of development projects** needs to be worked out jointly. Cooperative agricultural and small industrial facilities that are co-owned by the partners from both sides are very effective in many cases. Investing in long-term development is a main criterion for the success of peace zones—joint free enterprise facilities are essential for the good outcome of the process. Working with local entrepreneurs from both sides needs to start in advance, and while there is a development project, money needs to be invested directly in the region of the sustainable project, as opposed to with the central authorities. The experience of the past two decades has shown us that central authorities do not play a positive role in development projects. Since the peace building is directly tied to development in this case, there needs to be a very careful and responsible approach to the development issues. Often times this is going to prove a central, pivotal point.

8. It is going to be important to devote significant resources to provide new opportunities for previously neglected groups within the communities. This is necessary so that the majority of families and individuals in the region develop a stake in the survival of the peace community. It is very important not to alienate the youth, as well as ex-combatants and former paramilitaries, together with other groups. Local paramilitary leaders still maintain some influence over the areas of conflict, and they control different businesses that cross borders. It is important to engage those people in legal economic activities and sometimes even give them a legitimate stake in future enterprises so they are also interested in providing support to the peace accord. Relatively ignored youth groups (gangs) are always able to bring lots of

unrest to the area if they do not have a vested interest in the development of the area. The concept of a peace zone is going to become much weaker without the participation of these groups.

Another very important element is the involvement of women and elders. Female-run tourist enterprises have some tradition in Abkhazia, coming from even before Soviet times. But re-emergence of the hospitality business there would be a very good opportunity to create more and more female-owned enterprises, and women have been much better than men at breaking barriers through cooperation in the region. So giving every group a stake is extremely important for the future of every enterprise and cooperative work in the area.

9. The parties need to agree on the rules and procedures. The European Union should be able to play the role of an enforcer of the different rules, including the rules of entry and exit from the peace community. It is very important to have a sensitive approach towards Internally Displaced People and ex-combatants. Rules of conduct must be elaborated for their participation, since they are going to be the main factors of psychological and physical stability in the area. Their voice needs to be included in the rules of conduct and defining who can join the community. There are some very important issues that need to be resolved that are connected to the right of return to the area. Some Georgian or Abkhaz ex-combatants are considered war criminals by the other side, and their presence will be a constant blow to the peace-building process in the community. So during these decision-making sessions a wide variety of actors should be consulted, and the decision should be an impartial one by the combination of “outsider neutral” and “insider partial” actors. In this case the EU needs to engage in the process together with local and international NGOs and closely cooperate with the groups of IDPs and ex-combatants.

10. Setting up of a lively and reliable communications network and media outlets that would inform everyone in the area is also important. Earlier the language of communication between the sides was Russian. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union Russian is less and less attractive as an international language of communication. More and more people in the region are learning English and other European languages. But the language of communication needs to be selected carefully. Some of the sides, like the Georgians and Azerbaijanis, are highly traumatized by the Russian presence, so it might be wise to have more than one lingua-Franca in the region. At the same time, we need to know that if there is no common language of communica-

tion and no media in which the different participants are able to discuss, then it will be very difficult to implement any of the agreements and have some common rules. For this very reason the peace zone needs to elaborate a proper communication and media strategy that would aim at giving everyone in the region the same amount of access to the information and to have a consensually agreed language of communication. Having a joint newspaper and even radio/TV outlet will be very beneficial for the inhabitants of the peace zone. The Southern Caucasus has a tradition of a common language in the area, and it needs to be restored carefully with all due consideration for trauma and linguistic healing.

Points to Ensure Good Internal Governance

1. Local Multi-Ethnic administrations need to be formed for the areas of peace zones.

Those administrations will have to have some power of self-rule, and also they should be closely cooperating with the EU mission at the peace zone. **Regular plenary meetings with wide representation of peace zone inhabitants should be set up.** Some of those activities and self-regulating acts should be broadcast and printed through the local media, so the process of self-rule and governance is also very transparent and people develop the trust in local joint authorities. The decision-making mechanism should be as consensus-based as possible. It is going to be difficult to have decisions taken by majority. This should be avoided at least in the beginning of the process. But regular plenary meetings of the self-rule council should serve the purpose of sharing responsibilities and duties, as well as fostering the return of shared pride that the inhabitants of the Caucasus once felt about their common Caucasian identity. In Soviet times there was a firmly established identity of a Caucasian, which was even reinforced in Moscow and other cities of the Soviet Empire. Caucasians were considered the toughest people around the Soviet Empire. The plenary meetings and shared decision-making at the first stages will be very difficult, because of the existing rift between the sides, but at the same time solving even very small problems will bring back the joint feeling of achievement through working together and reclaiming Caucasian identity as a basis for Caucasian Union.

2. It is extremely important to organize different forums and discussion groups that are focused on different interest groups like gatherings of women, trade unions of doctors, teachers, farmers, etc. Gatherings of elder members of the ethnic communities have been a very

powerful tool. Also, creating a forum at a traditional table gathering—“Supra”—is one of the strongest uniting factors between Caucasians. In fact, Georgians, Armenians, Abkhaz, Azerbaijani, Chech, Ossetians, or any other nationality of the Caucasian region are used to having this ritual as the form of interaction and relationship-building. This is also a good tool to overcome alienation. “Supra” can be used as a useful tool to get different interest groups together and to form alliances across the borders between ethnic groups. Cross-cutting identities can be productive since they provide a good avenue for unified goals for different ethnicities. Even after seventeen years of ethnic warfare and constant fear, Caucasians found ways to deal with each other at the table at different conferences. At the meeting at Rondine, Italy the table was the favorite place to discuss relationship-building and bringing different professional communities together. So, forming different interest groups according to their professions and other affiliations is a very useful tool to bring other shared elements into the discourse.

Women’s groups have been very effective in the business of communication and building bridges—most of the peace builders in conflict regions are women. So having a very strong women’s organization is a very much needed component of the peace zone. Academic men have also been active in these situations and they are also considered a very good resource. Usually, academic men are more liberal than others, and they represent the vanguard of the peace movement.

On the other hand, ex-combatants and former members of paramilitary units, such as “Mkhedrioni,” “Aidgilara,” etc., need to be included in this process through regular meetings and discussion. This area needs to be worked very carefully, since ex-combatants everywhere have a very specific relationship with alcohol and they often tend to get into physical confrontations after drinking alcoholic beverages. Their plenary meetings could have a different form—either more a formal business setting, or leisure-types of activities. While it is productive to engage intellectuals and members of the political-economic class in the “Supra” setting, it could be counter-productive to have ex-combatants and tough guys in these circumstances—for these audiences it is very useful to find some less threatening venues for them to interact. Some have suggested some creative avenues for them to express themselves together and get in touch with their more lyrical side. These kinds of meetings have proved to be more productive, with ex-combatants focusing on their creative sides and opening up the artist in themselves.

3. It is useful to record all these meetings and gatherings and have digital video files of all these events to keep track of the history in the making. These video files must be available for all members of the community, and everyone should be able to watch contemporary history in the peace zone community. These files would help in different respects. They will definitely help in diminishing a huge distrust that different sides have towards each other and the suspicion that the other side has a hidden agenda. With everything out in public and being recorded and kept for the community to learn from, there is less feeling of mutual distrust, and hidden agenda suspicions give way to a more open relationship based upon consensual goals.

4. This takes us to the next point, that every decision that the local self-rule council makes will made in full transparency, free from any shadowy deals, corruption and favoritism. It is obviously difficult if not impossible to make all kinds of sensitive decisions transparently, since the decision-makers are facing certain political risks with their constituencies and therefore are not able to act completely freely. For this reason many peace negotiations at the beginning stages are conducted in secret and are not made transparent until a deal is made that all parties feel satisfied about. But here again, we are confronted with the situation where there are two conflicting notions: one of transparency and the other one of process efficiency. In this case it is important to keep the public as informed as possible, while walking a thin line of sensitive relationship-building. In this context we are dealing with the relationship-based concept that Michelle LeBaron discusses in her book *Bridging Troubled Waters*. This is indeed a very thin line that needs to be carefully thought about by third parties and by the involved actors themselves. In some cases, culture gives us a very good concept about when and where to have a meeting and problem-solving in private and in public, but in some cases lines are less clear. For instance, talking about taking or giving someone money, as in many other cultures, is almost a taboo. But at the same time, keeping secrets about ones' financial situation and then having this secret discovered by the community at large is also a very embarrassing act. People ask each other about how much money they make and what their salary is; in local cultures this is considered normal and not part of the taboo, but at the same time, many kinds of big-money business deals usually made by male members of society are kept secret. This is one of the contradictions that we can find in local cultural patterns, and it is very important to be very sensitive to both sides of this issue. So keeping everything transparent is an important part of the building of

peace zones, but at the same time keeping some secrets that some powerful groups have might be necessary for the time being, especially at the beginning of the process.

5. For the lasting and stable functioning of the Peace Zone communities it is essential to have a leader selection or election process that is as participatory and democratic as possible. The same rules need to be applied to their stay in office and to their participation in decision making. They need to have the same responsibility. Electing those representatives in a democratic way is a necessary component of having a functioning system inside the peace zone. Obviously, quotas for representation need to be used for different ethnicities to have a balance of power in the legislative and executive branches of a self-rule council. Fair process needs to be followed by the third party that is going to be serving as a facilitator of the process, and in some cases as an arbiter. In this case elections are the best option in this region, although in some mountain villages, selection as opposed to election might be a method, whereby village elders select their representative from a given place. There are different places in the Caucasus that still have these traditions, but most of the region is already functioning under the democratic tradition of electoral democracy. So the working out of these rules should not be a big problem. The proposal is to have different sides of the conflict represented in an equal way, notwithstanding their physical numbers. This might create problems with some constituencies, but the opposite solution is going to attract even more misunderstanding and possibly protests from either side, so providing “Equality Quotas” (a sort of affirmative action) in this case might be a good solution to the local “self-rule councils” operating in Peace Zones. In this case more participation is going to bring more positive results in the area.

6. There needs to be one decision-making legislative and one executive branch of “self-rule,” and there should be no alternatives to any of those power structures inside the Peace Zone. Creating alternative and potentially rival centers of power is going to destroy the peace building process. The structure of power should be as horizontal as possible, but without alternatives. This way ensuring the participation of a wide variety of citizens will be a good way to be able to have one legitimate decision-making unit. The Peace Zone cannot exclude any members of the society—even former criminals and the representatives of the shadow economy represent a powerful interest group, and they need to be incorporated in the decision-making process from

the very beginning. No radical group should be left out of the decision-making process. If this occurs we will have major problems that might easily lead to violence. In Georgia the formation of an alternative “National Congress” in 1991 led to a civil war, and parallel power structures have a tendency to lead societies towards unavoidable civil confrontations.

7. We need to pay attention to the problems that are likely to arise at the implementation stages of the project. One thing is for sure: smuggling rings, drug and human traffickers, and arms dealers are going to suffer a blow with the establishment of a peace zone and a more or less legal environment in the area. These business interests are the most powerful in these areas today. So, we need to have a process that considers this factor. At the first stages there need to be some incentives for mafia members to cease their criminal activities and switch to peaceful and legal businesses. In the beginning of the process amnesty needs to be provided to different groups that have done smuggling during the last two decades—they need to be included in some other, legal activities. We need to give those economic powers a stake in the future of the peace zone. Of course there will be some of those who would want to continue their very profitable business without paying taxes, but the peace zone needs to have their backing at the beginning stages. At the later stages those who would understand the benefits of doing business legally would persevere in staying in honest work, and those who would not want to continue would be brought to the margins of a new criminal world. In two or three years a new multi-party elite will be formed in the area, and this elite should have every incentive to rely on free and legal trade as opposed to illegal business dealings.

8. There needs to be a two-fold strategy in decision making—insider-partial and outsider-neutral. Most of these decisions need to be taken by insider actors and by a local “self-rule council.” But in the Caucasus, if the decisions are not reached by insiders then the institution of “outsider-neutral” is necessary. That is why a neutral actor like the European Union is very much needed. 90 percent of decisions need to be made by local councils, but there will be some issues that would need to have facilitated or even arbitrated results in the end. This is the reality of today in the Caucasus, and that is also the historical context. So in this case decision-making will be divided into different parts

How to Ensure the Continuity of the Peace Zones in Abkhazia and South Ossetia

1. First of all it is necessary to create local, sustainable institutions, so that in time outside support and resources become less and less needed. I have discussed joint economic sections and enterprise zones. Indeed, even restoring some of the old Soviet factories might be useful. Tea and orange plantations were an important part of the local economy in the Gali district before 1991. Bringing some of those enterprises back is going to be very important. Together with jointly-operated markets, some joint educational zones could be created inside zones of peace. Enterprises like the Peace University, Peace Television, and Peace Radio that are going to be in all languages that are spoken in the area.

2. For the future, we need to diversify sources of outside support. Besides the European Union there could be other supporting actors on the scene. Some of the Scandinavian countries are going to be very useful in this enterprise. The Norwegians have a very strong presence in the area. Also, relations with Asian countries such as Japan, India, and China are increasing. China already has some presence in Georgia—there are thousands of new Chinese immigrants there. So having a good relationship with those Asian countries is very important. As far as Indian participation goes, peace studies centers could be opened up together with Indians exploring the Gandhian concept of **Sarvodaya** and **Swadesh**—having access to sustainable enterprises that are ecologically clean. Abkhazia has been known for the production of Indian tea during Soviet years, and bringing this tradition back should be a promising goal. Also, creating alternative energy sources will be another avenue for cooperation. Having joint U.S.-Russian enterprises could make a contribution to the region.

3. It is necessary to create lasting political institutions in Zones of Peace. After the first group of leaders passes the torch to a future generation it is important to be able to maintain the arrangement that makes all groups safe. It is necessary to arrange some sort of an agreement that would give different groups an equal voice in the business of governing and administering those joint territories. The institutions should be set up as soon as possible, since we need to expect changes any time. Forms of collective rule could be explored, such as confederate models, perhaps along the lines of the Swiss one. The ruling structures in the first stages must be selected on a consensual basis.

4. Parties in Peace Zones must not be too closely identified with any outside patrons, for instance Georgians to the United States, and Abkhaz and Ossetians to Russia, as well as Azerbaijanis to Turkey. This dichotomy should be overcome by working together with different partners. As we have mentioned, the EU, India, China, and Japan do not have very particular vested interest in the region, so they will be more appropriate patrons of the peace process rather than Russia and the United States, who have already been involved with different parties.

5. The Peace Constitution (Arsen Kharatian's idea) should be set up for all of the Peace Zones and will include some clear and generally-agreed basic rules of behavior. This constitution should be flexible enough to amend it at different times. This general framework for cohabitation and collaboration must be set up so this can be a beginning of the long process of joint administration through multi-ethnic Caucasian countries. It will be a challenging task, considering a multitude of cultures and behavior patterns, as well as religious affiliations of different ethnic groups in the region. The Soviet period provides some examples, although not really sufficient enough for building a new South Caucasian Union that is based on a democratic value system. The integrated system of the Caucasian tradition and of the very recent Soviet brand was working well within the Caucasus. But this time democratic institutions can be added to it. It will be working as a kind of mix of democracy and confederation.

6. Arrangements need to be made to modify and amend the peace constitution and internal conduct and development rules if circumstances and problems facing the community change. This flexibility is very much needed, since the situation in the conflict zones is very dynamic and is subject to fundamental change at any time. But the Peace Zones need to be ready for any kind of economic and political change. For instance, having good peace education places in the Peace Zone will enable the members of the community to avoid a sudden stress—so having a diversified portfolio of economic opportunities, as well as the laws and regulations that could be changed with passing time, is of a great advantage to these peace communities. Together with fundamental principles of a peace constitution and approximately five-year economic development plans, it is going to be useful to have media-friendly interactive changes proposed every month if needed. This is going to be an important mechanism for the local elected or appointed officials to communicate with the Peace Zone constituency.

7. Building up institutional memory and a strong peace constitution should serve the purpose of turning this enterprise into a permanent venture and not a one-shot that was tried and did not work. It will be very useful to have the constitution and rules of conduct already in writing before the launching of a Peace Zone. The example set up by Galtung is very inspirational material, and since contemporary recording devices can practically have relatively inexpensive digital copies of the whole process, it will be useful to have all the rules and regulations recorded. How leaders of the community follow those directions must be recorded too. In an age of transparency and media, everything must be made part of history. This would partly serve as a reminder and partly serve as audio-video law that has precedents in setting up a Peace Zone.

8. It is necessary to develop informal peace-builder networks largely based upon the women's groups work with South Caucasian peace groups. The work of women's groups has been especially productive. Consider the experience of the Caucasian House set up by Dr. Naira Gelashvili and her colleagues from Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Chechnya that has worked since early 1990s. The Caucasian House united many groups of mostly women from different ethnic groups. This institution is still working. Since then the only constantly and permanently working group in the direction of peace-building has been women's interest groups. Those groups are invested in peace since many members of those groups are intermarried, and their natural interest is to be able to maintain whatever ties they can have with the other group.

How to deal Successfully with Outsiders around the Peace Zone

1. It is important to establish and follow clear rules for the community members regarding contacts with local paramilitary units on both sides. These principles need to be adopted by consensus. Georgians, Abkhaz, and Ossetians must have very clear rules for interacting with paramilitaries around the region, since this is the most dangerous part of local relationship dynamics. We do not expect local paramilitaries to disarm right after the creation of Peace Zones, but agreeing with them on some rules of interaction is very much possible. The process must proceed gradually under strict international supervision. It is important not to rush the paramilitaries to the extent that they withdraw their collaboration.

2. At the same time some well understood, accepted, and clearly delimited methods of communication with local paramilitary units and armed groups, like Amsakhara, the Georgian “Forest Brothers,” the Ossetian militia, and others need to be established. These could be called contact groups, liaison committees, etc. These channels of communication need to be kept open all the time, especially when there is any political change going on in the region. In the future it will be useful to be able to include paramilitary men and women in the peaceful life of the community or to ensure that most of them leave. So jurisdiction will switch to the jointly-administered police forces that are not built on a national or ethnic basis. It is important to keep the paramilitary units under control and have their powerful leaders invested in the peace zone. These channels of communication are valuable tools to ensure that the peace-building process is not ruined by paramilitary activities in the first few years of its existence.

3. While maintaining a close relationship with unofficial paramilitary units, it is also important to be able to keep in touch with all official military institutions, as well as police and justice ministry officials; not just those from Tbilisi, Sukhumi, and Tskhinvali, but also around the whole South Caucasus. The military is a very strong institution in all three South Caucasian countries, as well as in separatist regions. In the beginning of those conflicts armed activities were mostly conducted by the paramilitary units. Starting at the end of 1990s, the military started to become stronger and stronger. For instance, in the year 2008, the Georgian military had about 1.5 billion GEL (Georgian Lari, roughly about \$1 billion), which was a huge increase from about 45 million GEL about 6 years ago. The relationship with the military is a very sensitive subject as well, since most of the actors in the region rely upon the military most of the time. The goal of the establishment of the Peace Zones in the South Caucasus is to abolish military forces in the end—but for this purpose it is especially important to find a good place for military personnel as well as their families to adjust to a peaceful life—so working with the military is also one of the most important tasks. Eventually, the South Caucasus and conflict regions might have a joint security force that would be under a joint command.

4. We must be aware and careful if the armed groups (paramilitaries, army) try to subvert by violence the peace community’s decision-making process. This is especially true of the economic interests of the armed groups. Some armed groups benefit greatly from the negative

peace-war situation in the region, since they make their profits largely on arms, the drug trade, and human trafficking, together with smuggling. In the event of establishing Peace Zones in the very heart of their business enterprise, there will be some opposition to this on their part from the very start of the process. So they will have every incentive to penetrate the community and start their subverting activities. Careful intelligence work is needed to be able to identify those military-industrial interests and neutralize them with an inclusive action.

5. It is necessary to obtain accurate information regarding human rights legislation and law enforcement structures in all South Caucasian countries as well as separatist regions. It will be necessary to cooperate with all these structures in all South Caucasian countries in the process of building peace zones to begin with. We need to be very considerate of the laws of the countries and be able to work with different worldviews about law enforcement. The former Soviet worldview oftentimes is different from the Western one in understanding the function of police and the army. This aspect needs to be taken into account. There are also different attitudes towards using force in general, and peace builders need to know about those aspects of culture as well as laws within the countries.

6. As far as possible, all peace zone activities need to be kept within the framework of existing laws, national objectives, and stated values in South Caucasian countries and separatist regions. It is not easy to be able to keep all activities under the same framework. Meetings need to be conducted with the lawmakers and decision makers from Tbilisi, Sukhumi, and Tskhinvali, as well as different South Caucasian countries and regions on possible consensus-building and problem-solving about finding some common ground on legislation. First an agreement needs to be reached around local Peace Zones in the Zugdidi and Ergneti areas, as well as Sadakhlo and the Red Bridge. Finding a common denominator of shared laws and judicial framework then could serve as the first stage of the Caucasian unification process, which is also one of the ultimate goals of peace-building in the South Caucasus.

7. It is necessary to use international networks (the EU, etc.) and contacts to bring local problems forcefully to the attention of national governments as well as international institutions like the UN. The participation of the European Union in this peace-building process is

extremely important, since the EU provides a shared goal for the conflict parties and is something that the common consensus can be built upon. The EU can be an effective tool to help problem-solving in different situations arising out of a lack of consensus. At the first stages of the process the involvement of outsider-neutral parties is a necessary part of the long process. Bringing China and India into the process is also very important, since a sense needs to be created that the world cares about the Peace Zones, and decisions inside the region need to be made with a great sense of responsibility.

8. Create a responsible media policy for the entire region that is not focused on traditional sensation-seeking journalism, but on responsible peace journalism. Relationship with responsible media needs to be cultivated from the very beginning so as not to encourage the creation of conflict through violent media reports. Galtung's and Rubenstein's books on peace reporting could serve as a good framework for establishing a responsible partnership between the peace community and the local, national, and international media. Issues regarding paramilitary groups, illegal and legal economic activities, and cultural differences need to be covered with great sensitivity.

How to Have Continuous Outside Support While Maintaining South Caucasian Independence

1. It is important to establish contacts with different existing Peace Zones or communities around the world. The example of the Peru-Ecuador National Preservation Park is good to follow; establishing good relationships with those countries that provide a useful example for the Caucasians to follow is very important. Also the good example of the country of Costa Rica is extremely useful. Having a relationship with those existing communities and countries will be useful, as well with as the scientists and practitioners like Dr. Christopher Mitchell, Dr. Johan Galtung, Ambassador John McDonald, and others who work on the idea of Peace Zones.

2. Build upon existing local organizations that already have extensive networks within the regions of conflict and extensive contacts outside the localities. Having a close relationship with churches, local businesses, and educational establishments is essential. Schools in Gali and Zugdidi, as well as Tskhinvali and Tkviavi, do have some tradition of interacting. Orthodox

Churches in Georgia and Russia still have some good relationships with each other. These contacts need to be used to ensure a smooth continuation of the process within the region.

3. For the purposes of building Peace Zones and a peace community it will be useful to seek helpful advice, ideas, and technology of communications from the local Abkhaz, South Ossetian and Georgian scientists, and communication practitioners. In these circumstances it is extremely important for any outside actors to be able to use “insider” technologies of communication. At the first stages of communication it is useful to know the local traditions of interaction, and local boundaries and taboos. There are some themes that are considered taboo for almost all Caucasians—for instance saying sexual profanities about their mothers, sisters, wives, or other female relatives is considered off limits in the Caucasian context. Also, talking about money in public discourse is very different for Caucasians than it is in America.

4. It is necessary to collaborate with Abkhaz, Ossetian and Georgian civil society representatives who work in the field of civil rights, justice, and development. There are different organizations in the area which have been working for these causes for a long time. During most of the events that led to at least some social and political change in the area, civic organizations played a large part. The civic organizations are the healthiest part of the society, and they have led the agenda for social change. For instance, before and during the “Rose Revolution,” civil society organizations played a very strong role in those events. The presence of civil society organizations is a positive influence on the development of democratic institutions in the entire South Caucasus. So inclusion of these actors as inside and outside collaborators and consultants is essential.

5. Local members of the community need to know about the national and international legislation that is affecting local interests and the Peace Zone. For the purpose of the Peace Zone there needs to be specific legislation passed in all Caucasian countries and regions. Also, there needs to be a Council of Europe decision for this occasion, as well as a multi-lateral agreement between different international actors such as Turkey, Russia, Iran, the United States and other global powers.

6. The international courts that can possibly help to preserve security and human rights in local peace community is the Hague and European Legal Institutions in Strasbourg. The best court to hear cases from the Peace Zones will be the European court, since Europeans are considered most neutral to this case. Here, the Peace Zone starts with an outsider-neutral approach and gradually moves towards insider-partial mechanisms. For a period of time the local legal specialists will be trained to slowly take over the international part and establish non-partisan, non-ethnic types of regional courts that will be very much autonomous from either government.

7. At the first stages of the enforcement of the Peace Zone we need to use international observers and their escorts to increase local security and help efforts to stay safe from outside interference or attack. Different international peace observation and accompaniment organizations need to be contacted in the first months of the existence of the Peace Zone. Gradually the mission of international observation will give way to a local enforcement and monitoring system. But in the beginning it is important to have international institutions observe the process.

8. It is essential to establish a reliable and accurate media center as an information source in the community that will be accessible to the national and international communities. It is extremely important to have a permanent media center that will inform the international community about the events in the Peace Zone. The entire South Caucasian region needs to be very well informed about the Peace Zone community, and at the same time direct and reliable lines of communication need to be kept available for the inhabitants of the region to the European Centers as well as to other international communities.

9. It is very important to establish a good interrelationship between the local rules of conduct, and eventually the legislative basis of the peace zone, with the national laws of the Caucasian countries. Since we are moving towards the establishment of Peace Zones, the laws should be established for common use, bearing in mind that sooner or later the whole South Caucasus is aspiring to be a Peace Zone.

10. We need to plan a later stage as well where the Peace Zones in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, as well as Sadakhlo and Red Bridge start to integrate into the bigger regional structure of the greater South Caucasus Peace Zone and demilitarized territory. This is going to be a long process which is going to take hard work. There will be a plenty of resentment at the beginning stages from different factions in national and local politics, but eventually we shall persevere and pursue our path towards the total demilitarization of the entire Caucasus.

Conclusion

While talking about building of Peace Zones we need to remember that in the post-colonial space of the South Caucasus where Stalinism was a way of life just 20 years ago, it is not very easy to challenge the notion of structural and cultural violence. The people of the South Caucasus have been incredibly courageous and creative, but at the same time they have been subjected to the role of subordinate actors in the great geopolitical games of history. This means that building **Peace Zones** in the region will require concerted effort on the part of insiders and outsiders. While Ossetians and Abkhaz are trying to assert their independent identity from Kartvelian Georgians, the latter are trying to do the same in relation to Russia, remembering 1801 and 1921. Russians, on the other hand, remembering 1812 and 1941, are trying to hold off the West (which is right now associated more with the United States than with Germany or France) at its borders. The Russian military has a long tradition of getting ready to defend itself and engage in aggression for the sake of defense, and American and British oil corporations have also a tradition of starting geopolitical wars around the world.

Building the Peace Zone in the Southern Caucasus is a challenge for the 21st century. It is not easy to overcome barriers towards the main goal. But creation of a Peace Community in the region is the only way to ensure stable development in this part of the world.

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Appendix A

Peace Zones Conference at Cornell University, September, 2009

September 29, 2008 Cornell University hosted Ambassador and Dr. Susan Allen Nan, together with Dr. Louis Kriesberg from Syracuse University, and Dr. Matthew Evangelista and Dr. Valerie Bunce from Cornell University. This meeting was facilitated by the CRESP center for Transformative Action and the Cornell University Department of Government. Here Ambassador McDonald presented his vision of Peace Zones in Georgia. The *Cornell Chronicle* reported next day:

The Ambassador presented his plan for peace in the region:

McDonald's plan would create "peace zones" in the separatist enclaves of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The zones would be weapon-free sanctuaries where peace would be promoted by fostering dialogue and mutual understanding of religion, history and culture. "The peace zone is not just a demilitarized zone," said McDonald, now the chairman and CEO of the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy (IMTD). . . .

McDonald, who served as a U.S. diplomat for 40 years, said that similar peace zones have been successfully established in the Philippines, Colombia and Peru, and he predicted such a zone within three years along the India-Pakistan border to enable access to Sikh religious sites in both countries.

In developing such zones, McDonald stressed his grass-roots approach and "people-to-people" diplomacy: "We only go where we are invited to by the people in a conflict, not the government," said McDonald. "We go in and listen . . . the only way to solve a conflict at any level of society is to sit down face to face and talk about it."

McDonald used conflict resolution in helping broker an agreement on Northern Ireland's bill of rights, in helping citizens cross the "green line" separating Christians and Muslims in Cyprus and in creating "the people's bus" in Kashmir linking India with Pakistan.

With the Russian army still in Georgia, the panelists discussed complicating factors in developing the peace zones, such as a lack of neutral players available for mediation, the attitude of the Georgian government and an indication that Russia is seeking to wield more power in international relations.

"Russia sees [its zone of influence] as increasingly defined in terms of regional sovereignty as well as domestic sovereignty," said Bunce, who suggested that Russian foreign policy might continue to oppose the interests of such bodies as NATO, the European Union, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

However, McDonald was optimistic. "These things can be done. It takes time, it takes skill, it takes patience, it's not going to happen overnight," he said.²⁶

²⁶ Nadia Drake, "Peace plan for Georgia, developed with Cornell visiting scholar, is outlined by ex-U.S. diplomat," *Cornell Chronicle Online*, September 30, 2008, at <http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/Sept08/GeorgiaCrisis.nd.html>.

Appendix B

Peace Zones Symposium at George Mason University, January, 2009

As a follow-up to the September, 2008 meeting in Ithaca, social scientists from five countries got together in Maryland, to discuss the joint statement on peace zones in January, 2009. Susan Allen Nan (USA), Irakli Kakabadze (Georgia), Arsen Kharatyan (Armenia), Jamilla Mammadova (Azerbaijan), and Eketarina Romanova (Russia) co-convened the George Mason University-Cornell University symposium on Peace Zones held on January 30, 2009. After a lengthy session they were able to create a document calling for the creation of a peace zone in the entire South Caucasus.

What was extremely interesting at this session was that scientists from all three South Caucasian countries have agreed that a Peace Zone is the best way to get out of the prolonged and deep-rooted confrontation in the region. Azerbaijani and Armenian colleagues have agreed that demilitarizing the region will help foster economic development as well as restore old ties between the nations in the Caucasus. Scientists have noted that the example of the European Union and the Derridian paradigm for a new unified patriotism rather than ethno-centric nationalism is the goal to work for. Although the process of building peace communities in all three countries might take many years, this is the process to be pursued.

This is the statement that was adopted by the social scientists from five countries: The United States, Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Zones of Peace in the South Caucasus

At a recent symposium, peace-builders based in Baku, Tbilisi, Yerevan, Moscow, and Washington considered Zones of Peace. Zones of Peace are geographic areas where violence is limited and a culture of peace and interethnic and interreligious tolerance encouraged. Zones of Peace present promising prospects for the future of the South Caucasus.

Rather than the Caucasus developing as the battlefield of global power struggles, the Caucasus as a whole could become a Zone of Peace, where no military powers would compete. Rather than hosting interreligious and interethnic tensions, the Caucasus could be home to multi-religious coexistence within a Zone of Peace where all cultural traditions, religious practices, and languages are respected. In the context of the U.S. having inaugurated the first black American President, just sixty years after his father would not have been served in many restaurants, and in the context of the reconciliation processes within Europe after World War II and the development of the E.U. we see today, surely Zones of Peace in the South Caucasus must also be possible—possibly sooner than sixty years.

Zones of Peace have worked to keep villagers in Colombia and the Philippines safe from the violence surrounding their homes, to protect eighty-six communities in a larger Local Zone of Peace in Ecuador, and to safeguard locals along the mountainous Peru-Ecuador border. The whole country of Costa Rica has no military forces. Zones of Peace could help the South Caucasus in isolated villages, across buffer zones, or regionally.

In the Caucasus there is already a history of markets serving as informal Zones of Peace in the towns of Ergneti and Sadakhlo, and at the Red Bridge market. While local people from across conflict lines bought and sold produce, they kept communication open between their communities. More of these micro zones of peace would help locals who need to trade with each other, while keeping grassroots communication open between the societies separated by conflict.

Why not support and legalize markets in Zugdidi near the Inguri, near Sadakhlo, the Red Bridge area, and Ergneti?

The larger buffer zones running along the conflict lines could also become zones of peace. Rather than hosting daily sniper fire, these transition spaces could be demilitarized zones where only locals, civilians, and local community-based regulations would operate. Impartial enforcement mechanisms should be available to prevent illegal activities, and unarmed military observers could patrol such security zones to ensure their demilitarized character was maintained.

An even larger regional Zone of Peace would remove military forces from the whole South Caucasus, allowing economic interests to flourish and a culture of peace to develop. The people in the zone would stop allocating precious resources to fight debilitating wars, and development would surge with more open market access. In the absence of a threat of war, travel between the conflict zones would be restored, and a longer-term conversation on settling political differences without the use of force would develop. Only a stable Zone of Peace, and much time, would make radical reconciliation possible.

The radical change from a war-torn region to a beacon of peace will take courageous risks. Are there leaders throughout the South Caucasus willing to consider what kind of life they want to leave to those who will be born in sixty years? Will world leaders support innovative Caucasus Peace Zones? Peace Zones could start small with markets along the conflict lines. Then, the norms of limited military could spread to whole buffer zones. When the stability of the buffer zones is proven, trust may be sufficient to consider broader regional steps.

The European Union was not built overnight. It emerged from the ashes of World War II when brave individuals envisioned the possibility of cooperation. They started with coal and steel, and now we see intensive multifaceted cooperation. The South Caucasus, too, could be radically different in a few decades. Gradually building Zones of Peace will steer the future of the Caucasus away from one of ongoing geopolitical struggle and violent conflict, and towards a future of interethnic and interreligious coexistence. Are we willing to take risks today so that in two or three generations coexistence in the Caucasus is as obvious as the EU's post-World War II integration is today?²⁷

²⁷ "Peace Zones in South Caucasus," symposium at George Mason University, 29 January 2009. Text of report available online at <http://www.a1plus.am/en/print/politics/2009/02/19/caucasus> and <http://www.transcend.org/tms/2009/03/zones-of-peace-in-the-south-caucasus/>.

Appendix C

Conference of Caucasian People in Rondine, Italy, in May, 2009

The Association “Rondine Cittadella della Pace” has been committed to actions of solidarity, dialogue and peace in the Caucasus since its beginnings. For more than ten years university students of different cultures coming to Italy from conflict zones in several parts of the world, and particularly from the Caucasus area, have been selected through a network of partners from the institutional, academic, religious, associational and diplomatic fields, to take part in the project of dialogue building and reconciliation at the International Hall of Residence in Rondine.

The project “Ventidipacesucaucasos” (Windofpeaceoncaucasos at www.ventidipacesucaucasos.it) is the outcome of a focused elaboration of the Association with international partners and Italian institutions. It aims to create an international feeling of friendship and cooperation with the Caucasus so as to give a contribution to the resolution of tensions in that region, where the Association has been operating since 1995 and has built many relationships at an institutional, cultural, economic and religious level.

** The “Conference of the peoples of the Caucasus” saw the participation of around 130 guests coming from several parts of the region and from the rest of the world (young people, mothers and families, members of the cultural and economic world, and exponents from the civil society), together with international specialists, students of the International Hall of Residence, and the members of the Association. First result of the meeting, held from the 16th to the 19th May 2009, was the ratification of a document for peace in the Caucasus in 14 points that is to be used as a path or track to replace the old bureaucracies which now appear inadequate for international crisis prevention and management, besides generating international sympathy and joining the forces of the involved peoples.

The organizers of the conference have invited representatives from different Caucasian ethnic groups such as Abkhaz, Cherkez, Dagestani, Chechen, Ingush, Ossetian, Azerbaijani, Armenian, Georgian and other participants. Students have drafted the document that was used as a framework for elaborating eventual 14 points of Rondine document.

The Rondine Conference Dynamics

It was extremely interesting to observe the dynamics of the conference at Rondine in May, 2009. Representatives from Georgia, Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, the United States, Italy, Abkhazia, Chechnya, South and North Ossetia, Ingushetia, Cherkez Republic, and Dagestan attended the conference. The first day of the conference was extremely interesting.

When the group started to work on point 3 of the 14 points for peace in the Caucasus, Armenian, Georgian and Abkhaz members of the delegation have proposed to include the complete disarmament and demilitarization of the Caucasus instead of non-use-of-force that was proposed by the Russian side. Former Russian Ambassador to Georgia, Felix Stanevski, took this issue very seriously and declared that asking for demilitarization of the Caucasus was a direct assault on Russian sovereignty and territorial integrity. Dagestani and Chechen representatives supported their Russian counterpart. The situation became extremely tense for the moment. The Cherkez representative decided to back disarmament as well as European Union representatives. The discussion over the conference table was followed by heated arguments at the break. For a minute it looked like situation was ready to explode. The Russian delegation wanted participants to speak in Russian and to respect Russia as a superpower. As a result of about 5 hour conversa-

tion between Russians, Georgians, Abkhaz, Armenians, Azerbaijanis and Ossetians the compromise was elaborated at the meeting. Point number 3 was formulated like this:

CREATE THE CONDITIONS WHERE THE DIALOGUE TABLE IS THE IDEAL PLACE TO BRING TOGETHER ALL THE EFFORTS TO PURSUE HUMAN, CULTURAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL GROWTH OF THE REGION WITH THE PROSPECT OF A GRADUAL AND COORDINATED DISARMAMENT OF THE CAUCASUS.

So, after much deliberations this common aspiration towards the Peace Zones in the Southern Caucasus was signed by different representatives of all peoples of Caucasus at Rondine. This could serve as a goal for the entire region. The conference showed that representatives from disparate regions with sometimes conflicting interests can nevertheless agree on the merits of a Peace Zone, but it requires a lot of work between different nations in the Caucasus. In the end 14 points for Peace in the Caucasus were adopted by the conference at Rondine.

It is a great success that all the parties, especially Russians have signed this document.

One of the most important points of Rondine was the sense of shared identity that Caucasians still maintain, after 18 years of living in different countries, there is still a sense of shared cultural heritage. In 14 points you can see that there constant references to the Caucasian identity. In the final document this element is very strongly emphasized. In the beginning of the 14 points of Rondine there is a statement that could be a very potent confirmation that a Caucasian identity still exists.

Here is the quote from the very beginning of the document:

Caucasian participants of the conference “ARE COMMITTED TO EMPHASIZING THEIR COMMON HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL ROOTS, STRENGTHENING THE VALUES AND FEATURES THEY HAVE IN COMMON IN FULL RESPECT OF THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF MAN AND THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLES.

PEACE IS THE COMMON GOOD WHICH ALL THE PEOPLES OF THE CAUCASUS ARE LONGING FOR.”

This statement as well as other adopted by the participants at Rondine serve as a good reminder that regardless of almost two decades of conflict and artificial alienation Caucasian peoples still can find a common language. There are different problems that exist between the Caucasian nations and ethnic groups, but Rondine proved that Caucasian coexistence is not just a utopian idea, but it is backed up with practice. If Caucasians are left alone without the interference of outside forces, they usually find common language. Russian, Turkish and other influences have not been very constructive, since the old empires always viewed the Caucasus as a good territory to conquer and exploit.

One of the positive experiences at Rondine was the use of Italian as a common language of communication. Since Russian is associated with imperialist policies and many Georgians and Azerbaijanis prefer not to speak Russian, Italian was perceived as neutral to all of communication and it made it easier for sides to come to common agreement. The alliance between the former “enemies” – Georgians, Abkhaz and Armenians around the idea of disarmament was a very unusual event, but it showed that not all bridges are broken between different ethnicities. Still there is lots of room for improvement and healing of wounds. This process will take some time for sure, but it is not hopeless. This was the most important message from Rondine.

Here are the 14 points of peace adopted by the Rondine Conference:

The participants at the conference for peace in the Caucasus, inspired by the positive experience of coexistence of the students of Rondine Cittadella della Pace and on the basis of the document developed by them, are committed to emphasizing their common historical and cultural roots, strengthening the values and features they have in common in full respect of the fundamental rights of man and the of peoples.

Peace is the common good which all the peoples of the Caucasus are longing for. It is attainable through cooperation, respect for the different identities and cultural exchanges.

For the realization of this goal we indicate the following points, which we consider essential in order to overcome conflicts:

1. Support opinion movements in the Caucasus and worldwide that will induce governments to establish a permanent dialogue table including all the parties involved in the conflict, dedicated to the solution of political, financial and social disputes.
2. Demand all the parties to the conflicts in the region to commit themselves to peaceful conflict resolution at the dialogue table.
3. Create the conditions where the dialogue table is the ideal place to bring together all the efforts to pursue human, cultural, economic and political growth of the region with the prospect of a gradual and coordinated disarmament of the Caucasus.
4. Re-establish the social status and guarantee the rights of all the people who have suffered because of the conflicts in the region, including the right to return of all those who were forced to abandon their homes and guaranteeing the security of all on the basis of dialogue and any other peaceful measure.
5. Create the conditions where cooperation among companies throughout the Caucasus region is developed as the first step towards the construction of a common economic space and of a free trade area in order to promote economic integration and the free movement of people, capital, goods and services, with full respect for the environment.
6. Support the investment of international companies, and in particular of European ones, in the economy of the whole region of the Caucasus and promote a plan of financial incentives to encourage the development of local entrepreneurial capacities and the socio-economic growth of the region.
7. Encourage joint scientific research, cultural cooperation and education in order to foster dialogue and tolerance, both being necessary to overcome the difficulties and prejudices stemming from the poor knowledge of each other.
8. Promote joint educational and intercultural projects that include national and international multi-language and summer schools with shared curricula, especially created to foster the knowledge of each other, as well as to accept and protect cultural and linguistic diversity.

9. Develop university projects which include student and faculty exchange programmes between regional and international universities as well as promoting university courses on peace studies and conflict resolution.

10. Create and financially support pluralist, multilingual, multicultural and cross-border mass media.

11. Foster a sense of union through organizing joint sport events on the model of the Mediterranean games.

12. Promote cultural initiatives—such as the “Caucasian days”—which may include movie, theatre, folklore and art festivals and literary, ethnographical, archaeological events to preserve and advance both the common cultural heritage and the specific features of each ethnic group.

13. Translate the experience of the Rondine students into a network of NGOs in the Caucasus to promote a youth forum of all the peoples of the region, to create a multilingual web site and to facilitate the exchange of information on the region.

14. Contribute to the development of inter-religious dialogue as a way to promote peace in the name of universal friendship.

Appendix D

Zones of Peace in the South Caucasus Symposium, George Mason University
May 26–27, 2009.

The conference about the Peace Zones in the Caucasus took place at George Mason University was focused on experts and practitioners in the field and specialists have presented their different views about the conflict in the Caucasus as well as their views about different types of Peace Zones around the world.

Dr. Susan Allen Nan talked about forms and functions of Peace Zones. Ambassador John McDonald presented Peace Corridors in different parts of the world. Dr. Wallace Warfield talked about Urban Peace Zones. Dr. Christopher Mitchell gave participants his perspective on Local Peace Zones in Philippines and Columbia. Dr. Landon Hancock discussed Post-Conflict Peace Zones in El Salvador. Very interesting presentation was made by Ms. Adriana Salcedo: Buffers and Boundaries: Ecuadorian-Peruvian ZOP.

Experts from Georgia, Russia, North Ossetia, Armenia, Turkey have also contributed to the discussion about the making of the Peace Zones in South Caucasus. Practically implementing the vision of the Peace Zones requires some resources, but at the same time there are some very hopeful signs like the Patriarch of the Georgian Church endorsing the idea of Peace Zones in the entire Caucasus.

The meeting at George Mason University emphasized the need for a joint problem solving approach for different parties. Different examples of different countries trying to have some non-violent sanctuaries were brought up by the participants. The main conclusion was to start working together with South Caucasians on implementing Peace Zones and a Peace Constitution. The Peace Constitution idea was brought up by the Armenian Participant, Arsen Kharatyan, as part of a proposal for the re-unification of the Caucasus.

Dr. Susan Allen Nan, Mr. Valeriy Dzutsev from North Ossetia, Mr. Alex van Oss talked about concrete steps to be taken to start the peace process and obstacles facing negotiators at this stage. The process is going to be a very challenging one, but there are different ways to ensure that the Peace Zones are going to start functioning.

The conference emphasized establishing Peace Zones in Georgia first, namely in the Ergneti Market, Zugdidi Market, Sadakhlo Market and The Red Bridge area. Those places looked more equipped to implement first stages of Peace Zone construction process.

All participants at the conference have agreed that multi lateral work by the different parties to the conflicts in South Caucasus is a very important part of the work there.

Appendix E

Here is the short overview timeline of Georgian-Russian war in South Ossetia:

November 1989 - South Ossetia declares autonomy from the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, triggering three months of fighting.

December 1990 - Georgia and South Ossetia begin a new armed conflict which lasts until 1992.

June 1992 - Russian, Georgian and South Ossetian leaders meet in Sochi, sign an armistice and agree the creation of a tripartite peacekeeping force of 500 soldiers from each entity.

November 1993 - South Ossetia drafts its own constitution.

November 1996 - South Ossetia elects its first president.

December 2001 - South Ossetia elects Eduard Kokoity as president. In 2002 he asks Moscow to recognize the republic's independence and absorb it into Russia.

January 2005 - Russia gives guarded approval to Georgia's plan to grant broad autonomy to South Ossetia in exchange for dropping its bid for independence.

November 2006 - South Ossetia overwhelmingly endorses its split with Tbilisi in a referendum. Georgia's prime minister says this is part of a Russian campaign to stoke a war.

April 2007 - Georgia's parliament approves a law to create a temporary administration in South Ossetia, raising tension with Russia.

June 2007 - South Ossetian separatists say Georgia attacked Tskhinvali with mortar and sniper fire. Tbilisi denies this.

October 2007 - Talks hosted by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe between Georgia and South Ossetia break down.

March 2008 - South Ossetia asks the world to recognize its independence from Georgia following the West's support for Kosovo's secession from Serbia.

March 2008 - Georgia's bid to join NATO, though unsuccessful, prompts Russia's parliament to urge the Kremlin to recognize the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

April 2008 - South Ossetia rejects a Georgian power-sharing deal, insists on full independence.

August 2008 - Georgian forces attack South Ossetia's capital Tskhinvali to re-take the breakaway region. Russia says its troops were responding to the assault and Georgia's Saakashvili says the two countries were at war.

-- Georgian forces pull out after three days of fighting. Russia says its troops control most of Tskhinvali

Russia bombs a military airfield outside Tbilisi.

-- Russia says that the death toll in fighting stands at 2,000. Georgia said on Friday that it had lost up to 300 people killed, mainly civilians.

April 22: Georgia claims that a Russian warplane shot down an unmanned reconnaissance aircraft that crashed over the breakaway region of Abkhazia.

April 26: Russia is ready to use “military means” to protect its residents if war breaks out in the Georgian separatist provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, a foreign ministry official says.

May 1: Additional Russian troops deployed in the breakaway Georgian region of Abkhazia. Nato says Moscow is stoking tensions in Georgia’s separatist regions.

May 7: The Georgian breakaway region of Abkhazia says it shot down two unmanned Georgian spy aeroplanes, two weeks after a similar incident.

May 18: Georgia accuses Russia of spying and political interference in Abkhazia.

May 25: Mikheil Saakashvili, Georgia’s president, wins election. Opposition threatens protests and parliamentary boycott as results emerge.

May 27: Georgia demands Russia pay compensation for an unmanned reconnaissance spy plane that a UN report says was shot down by a Russian fighter plane in April.

June 6: Dmitry Medvedev, the Russian president, tells West that Russia and Georgia “can sort out our relations by ourselves.”

June 18: Moscow condemns “acts of provocation” after Georgia detains four peacekeepers in Abkhazia.

July 2: Heightened tension between Georgia and Russia, with several explosions in Abkhazia. United States warns Russia against stoking tensions in breakaway regions.

July 5: Russia’s defence ministry warns that a “new war” could break out in Abkhazia if Tbilisi uses force to attempt to resolve the conflict.

July 6: Georgian police officer hurt in Abkhazia as Russian peacekeepers blame Tbilisi’s agents.

July 9: Three Georgian police officers and two soldiers from the separatist government of Abkhazia are shot in clashes.

July 10: Georgia recalls its ambassador to Russia amid growing tensions in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

July 15: The United States and Russia hold military exercises on either side of the Caucasus mountains.

August 1: Heavy fighting breaks out in South Ossetia, killing six people and injuring seven.

August 3: Hundreds of women and children are evacuated across the border to Russia.

August 5: Officials from Georgia and South Ossetia agree to speak for the first time in a decade.

August 6: Leader of South Ossetia rejects meeting with Georgia due to format of talks.

August 8: Georgian tanks launch an attack on Tskhinvali, the capital of South Ossetia, killing at least 15 people.

August 9: Tbilisi says Russian aircraft hit targets across Georgia, as the battle in the breakaway region continues.

August 10: Tbilisi says it wants immediate negotiations on a “termination of hostilities.”

August 11: Georgian officials say eastern city of Gori is captured by advancing Russians.

August 12: Tbilisi says Russian troops take the town of Gori, 60km from Tbilisi, as others enter from Abkhazia. Medvedev announces ceasefire.

August 13: Pockets of fighting still reported but both sides sign up to EU-backed peace plan.

August 14: Russia continues operations in Georgia.

August 15: George Bush, the U.S. president, accuses Russia of “bullying” Georgia. His comments come as Condoleezza Rice, U.S. Secretary of State, visits Tbilisi.

August 16: Georgians wait for Russian withdrawal after Moscow accepts ceasefire deal.

August 17: Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, offers support for Georgia’s bid for Nato membership.

August 18: Russia pledges to start pulling out combat troops from Georgia but there is little sign of movement.

August 19: Russia accuses NATO of trying to “whitewash a criminal regime” in Tbilisi and seeking to rearm Georgia’s leaders. Medvedev says Russian troops will pull back to South Ossetia by Friday.

Author Biography



Photo by Dede Hatch

Irakli Kakabadze is one of the leading contemporary Georgian writers and social scientists. He is the author of eight books and scores of short stories and poems. In 1990 Kakabadze was awarded an award by *Tsiskari* magazine for his novel *Allegro*. He was one of the first writers in Georgia to focus on the painful issues of drugs and violence. Since 1990 he has published more than 150 short stories in Georgian, Russian, and English publications. His play “Candidate Jokola,” which was published in 2005, became one of the controversial stories of love between a Georgian man and an Abkhaz woman. In his country he is well known as a writer and political activist, who has engaged in the struggle for social justice since the late 1980s. In 2000–2004 he was an editor in chief of *Peace Times* literary magazine, which was one of the most readable literary publications in Georgia. Kakabadze was one of the founders of the Civic Disobedience Committee and Theater for Change in 2003, both of which significantly contributed to the Rose Revolution. Kakabadze has been active in the civil rights movement in Georgia and has written numerous articles on the need for democratic reform. In 2007 Irakli Kakabadze was awarded the Hellman/Hammett prize by Human Rights Watch. In 2009 he received the PEN/Oxfam Freedom of Expression Award.