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**INTERNATIONAL BLACK SEA UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY of SOCIAL SCIENCES  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS PROGRAM**

**Russia's Re-emergence as a Global Player: Security Implications  
for Georgia and the South Caucasus Region**

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## INTRODUCTION

The modern world has been suffering from global fragile security system. This issue requires adequate measures to be dealt with by key regional and global powers. Taking into consideration the current picture in today's world, the ongoing events show that Kremlin has obviously become a growing threat for the West because of the nature of its unpredictable actions. The name and the role of Russia inevitably emerges whenever security issues are concerned especially in the post-Soviet space. Security and stability are key priorities for South Caucasus region too and Russia has re-emerged as a serious burden the region has to cope with. As Putin has mentioned, "Russia was never so strong as it wants to be, and never so weak as it is thought to be"(UPI,2006). Russia has very strong influence over the South Caucasian states and this issue remains very actual due to Kremlin's perception of the post-Soviet space as the most important area in its foreign policy agenda. Russia is militarily presented in the region of South Caucasus and constantly maintains its tremendous advantage which seems quite hard to neutralize. The South Caucasus is perceived by Russia as its 'back yard'. Kremlin has been using the unresolved ethno-territorial conflicts there to preserve and reinforce its influence. Russia's geopolitical interests in its "sphere of exclusive interests" are continuously and increasingly vivid and represents ongoing unsettled dilemma. The foreign policy of Russian Federation represents a complex phenomenon in the modern international relations. As a theoretical background to analyze Kremlin's foreign policy today, neo-realism with both of its sub-categories: offensive and defensive realism together with neoclassical realism and constructivism are used as analytical tools to explain the nature of Russia's foreign policy approach towards the South Caucasus region.

### **Problem Statement**

Security challenges are of vital importance in modern world where Russia claims for the reemergence as a global player. Due to the unexpected nature of its actions the world political landscape is constantly under transformation: Kremlin's neo-imperialistic rhetoric has been increasingly sever notably towards post-Soviet space, namely South Caucasus region and especially Georgia. Russia seeks to restore its glory and at the same time uses multiple leverages to manipulate the West. Russia's foreign policy has become more assertive and determined after the President Putin's well-known speech in 2007 at the Munich Security Conference. Since the famously known speech the Kremlin has moved from words to deeds, transforming Russia from regional power and to the global one.

## **Goal Statement**

The main goal of the study is first, to examine how neo-realist, neoclassical realist and constructivist approach explain Russia`s foreign policy in South Caucasus region and what are the factors that affect this approach. Second, to analyze the nature of Russia`s re-emergence as a global player and its security implications for South Caucasian states. Third, to review how can Russia further inhibit European aspirations of the Eurocentric post-Soviet states (Georgia).

## **Research Questions**

The research questions underpinning this thesis are:

1. How do neo-realist, neoclassical realist and constructivist approach explain Russia`s foreign policy in South Caucasian region and what are the factors that affect this approach?
2. What is the nature of Russia`s re-emergence as a global player and what security implications can it have for South Caucasian states?
3. How can the Russia further inhibit European aspirations of the Eurocentric post-Soviet states (Georgia)?

## **Research Objectives**

1. Analyzing the main concepts of neorealist, neoclassical realist theories and constructivist approach and checking their suitability in the context of Russia`s foreign policy approach towards South Caucasus;
2. Reviewing foreign policy strategies of Georgia;
3. Discussing Russia`s version of Security architecture of the world;
4. Analyzing Russia`s core interests in the South Caucasus;
5. Examining South Caucasus as a buffer zone;
6. Comparing foreign policy choices of Southern Caucasian states;
7. Finding out and interpreting the main aspects of Putin's New Doctrine and "hybrid warfare" tactic of Russia together with Russia`s doctrine of "liberal empire" ;
8. Examining Russia`s approach to multilateral cooperation in the Post-Soviet space: CSTO, SCO and EAEU;
9. Exploring the significance of BSEC, GUAM and Southern Gas Corridor.

## **Novelty and Actuality**

The world is changing dynamically where Russia has become a significant actor which threatens existing global security architecture. This phenomenon has arisen numerous new challenges which are not duly studied and analyzed. Russia's revival as a global player with clear anti-Western and anti-US strategies seriously affects post-Soviet states who have left Moscow's orbit. So, by analyzing this phenomenon with its nature, consequences and security implications for South Caucasian states indicate the novelty of the work and accordingly the topic is worth being explored more profoundly.

## **Significance of the Problem**

According to the Kremlin, Russia is unjustly isolated in global decision-making: the West imposed economic and financial sanctions against the country, Russia's membership at the G8 was suspended, and Moscow's involvement in the global decision making has been limited: proposals at the UN Security Council deliberations were blocked by US, UK or France. Russia has occupied Georgian territories, was accused in intimidation of Eurocentric post-Soviet states, supporting Donbass military forces in fighting against Ukraine, backing Bashar Al Assad in Syrian crises, as well as continues challenging NATO air and naval forces in Russia's neighborhood.

It means that the world has entered in a new standoff phase with rivalry, military and propaganda stand-off, arms race and mutual accusation of violation of international law. The security arrangements which have been imposed since Helsinki accords in 1975 have been ignored and trampled. The world slowly began to slide toward a new Cold War era.

Russia's reemergence as a global player has considerable implications for Georgia and South Caucasus region. Accordingly, the topic I am analyzing has a great significance because nowadays peace, security and stability are the key challenges of the modern worldwide politics and particularly for small and weak countries of South Caucasian region.

## **Theoretical and Practical Value**

Theoretically the paper has a reasonable value because it aims to explain Russia's modern foreign policy via the lens of neorealism, neoclassical realism and constructivism and therefore contributes to the understanding of Russia's foreign policy approach towards the security of Georgia and South Caucasian countries. The study serves the purpose of producing replicable

findings combined with raised questions, identified areas of controversy and disputes which may lead to continuation of the further research.

As for practical value, the work may contribute to the Georgian government (to refine National Security Concept etc.). It may be used during delivering courses at the university as well as wide range of readers in this field may find it helpful and interesting.

## **Hypothesis**

General nature of Russia`s foreign policy actions changes the world security landscape and puts South Caucasus security under double threat. By its re-emergence on the world stage, Russia aspires to maximize its power and ensure security. This appearance has an offensive nature being held at the expense of security of near neighborhood.

Russia`s main interest is to play a significant role globally apart from the U.S.; to undermine Western presence in South Caucasus - its "sphere of influence" and strengthen its strategic position in its neighborhood and even beyond in order to regain the old glory of the Soviet Union and come back to the international arena as a crucial global player where its name and interests are appropriately respected.

The Kremlin has been re-emerged such a serious threat that has not been obvious since the end of the Cold War. In case the West appears unsuccessful to deal with Russian threat appropriately, not only the South Caucasus but the stability and security of world order is well at an actual and inevitable risk.

## **Research Methodology and Sources**

There are two possible different approaches to theoretical utilization: inductive and deductive approach. For the deductive approach the accumulation of background information is required, as well as fact checking and theoretical knowledge which is then used in order to prove or invalidate a hypothesis. Hypothesis is developed after an appropriate amount of information is collected. In case of the inductive approach, forming of a hypothesis after the creation of an analytical portion is necessitated (Bryman, 2012, pp. 24-26).

As in this work Russia`s approach of having an ambition to be a global player and its security implications for South Caucasian states will be analyzed based on particular theory (theories), using a deductive approach relevantly serves a purpose.

As for methods, in this research I applied qualitative method of data collection and analysis from the social sciences. The study is an attempt to contribute to the gap of understanding of the issue that makes it possible to answer the research questions that will result drawing relevant conclusions. I mainly used academic articles, scholarly magazines, statements, speeches of the official individuals who are competent in this field (ambassadors, experts etc.), reports and surveys as a major source of the information. Qualitative interviews with high ranking diplomats and foreign policy makers were also used but in a restricted amount as an extra method to the discussion analysis.

In terms of primary sources what I used for the investigation, documents, treaties, speeches, statements and communiqués of significant officials like Russian, Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents and other authorities, bulletins of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs can be mentioned for better clarification of the issue aiming to compare facts and events. In addition, as a point of analysis I also studied reports of prominent think tanks.

As for the secondary sources, in the process of conducting the work I relied on scholarly books and journal articles as well in the field of social sciences and international relations theory, to increase the validity and the reliability of the study. The credibility and objectivity of the research is aimed to be achieved by comparison of the facts, estimations and justifications of the related parties which results enriching research outcomes presented with appropriate conclusions. The study serves the purpose of producing replicable findings combined with raised questions, identified areas of controversy and disputes which may lead to continuation of the further research.

The region of South Caucasus consist of three countries and each represent contrasting case with one another so that the paper gives a way of exploration about the nature of strategy, interests and reactions each country has to cope with existing threat and what kind of dependent and independent variables come about while analyzing implications of Russia`s foreign policy for South Caucasus. The research aims at going in depth of the problem and qualitative research method appears as the most appropriate technique for the study to illustrate the genuine picture to maintain objectivity and show the neutral position.

## **Towards a Theoretical Framework of the Study**

Out of the mainstream IR theories, I chose neo-realism(structural realism), neoclassical realism and constructivism to provide theoretical perspectives on Russia`s foreign policy approach in South Caucasian region. My aim is to develop the theoretical framework that will enable me to demonstrate the difference of "offensive" and "defensive" realism, neoclassical realism and constructivism that can be used as an interpreting tool of Russian foreign policy nature towards the "sphere of exclusive interests", South Caucasian region. Therefore, I spell out how this theoretical plan frames my analysis regarding Russian foreign policy approach towards South Caucasian states, how the threat and security are perceived from Russian and South Caucasian sides together with their consequent responsive feedbacks and what the Western understanding stands for this environment in the regional area. As an original contribution to the study of International Relations (IR), the thesis argues that using neo-realist, neoclassical realist theories and constructivist approach as an analytical tool correctly explains Russian foreign policy approach towards the South Caucasian states. As the analysis shows, the principles these theories are based on, neoclassical realism and constructivism seem relevant to explain Russia`s foreign policy beyond South Caucasus, namely towards Ukraine as well.

The aim of this thesis is not to present a completely new theory but instead it seeks to go through an understanding from the critical knowledge of chosen theories` paradigm with regards to security implications for South Caucasian states in post-Soviet era as a result of Russia`s re-emergence as a global player. In order to identify the links between the independent and dependent variables, the hypotheses will be tested through applying the theory as an analytical tool. The part of the theoretical chapter explains different variants of neo-realism: "offensive" and "defensive" realism. The logic of neo-realism is explored in terms of interpreting foreign policy of states in the international system by applying theoretical tools which neo-realism offers. The chosen theories will be checked out in terms of their basic assumptions and retrospect together with the concordances and relative divergences on the one hand, mainly between Waltzian "defensive realism", Mearsheimer`s "offensive realism" outlook, on the other hand Rose`s and other prominent figures` thoughts of neoclassical realist understandings together with Wendt`s constructivist outlook. Despite the fact that different schools of contemporary realism may have divergent interpretation manner of separate points of occasions taking place on the international arena, realism and constructivism as well generally seem relevant in terms of giving a proper picture and frame to see the facts completely, from its perspective as an analytical tool.



## **Case Selection**

My thesis is framed around the case study of South Caucasian states. This region can be analyzed in the context of phenomenon of "buffer" zone and hence each state of the region is presented as distinctive case of the dependent variable with some similitude and differences regarding security implications coming from Russian foreign policy attitude towards the region, so that the existing conditions and causal effects are reflected on the relations South Caucasian states maintain towards Russia, as a causal determinant. Correspondingly, the research not only serves the purpose of testing the selected theories of IR but it also defines the prior circumstances of the phenomenon and accordingly analyses its significance. As a result, due to the fact that Russia's geopolitical interests in its "sphere of exclusive interests" are continuously and increasingly vivid and represents ongoing unsettled dilemma, the examination of the selected cases includes its appropriate noteworthiness. Taking into consideration the above mentioned issues the work argues that findings can be replicable and at the same time highlights its practicability as well. It serves the purpose to set up an insight of the existing mixed phenomenon in the study and at the same time can be considered as useful in terms of theoretic contribution.

## **Limitations of the research and Methodological Challenges**

There are several limitations which are worth being named with regards to this research:

I attempted to collect as accurate data as possible, however the key difficulty that can be mentioned while conducting this research is that the data what I managed to find cannot be considered as thoroughly flawless. Luckily, I had an opportunity to visit Birmingham University in UK for one month, where I had an access to and examined a good literature and it considerably contributed to the quality improvement of my thesis. In addition, due to the existing suspended diplomatic relations between Russia and Georgia, I was unable to conduct a field work in Russia, though I managed to have interviews with relevant Russian figures. Besides, a challenge of visiting conflict regions in Georgia posited another impediment. This could somehow have had some impact on the research findings but not a vital importance to have been changed the final outcomes of the investigation, since fortunately I had an opportunity to have an access to professional academics in Georgia and UK and high level relevant figures in Georgia. Last but not least, the requirement to manage the submission of the dissertation in a very limited time was a further technical constraint for the thesis.

## **Chapter I: Literature Review**

Chapter I is dedicated to the literature review and the main findings of the authors about the existing phenomenon. This part of the literature review explains different variants of neo-realism: "offensive" and "defensive" realism. The theories are checked out in terms of their basic assumptions and retrospect together with the concordances and relative divergences on the one hand, mainly between Waltzian "defensive realism", Mearsheimer's "offensive realism" outlook, on the other hand Rose's and other prominent figures' thoughts of neoclassical realist understandings together with Wendt's constructivist outlook. The logic of neo-realism, neoclassical realism and constructivism are explored in terms of interpreting foreign policy of states in the international system and their suitability for Russia's foreign policy approach towards the region of South Caucasus.

There is a significant division between structural realists. Defensive realists like Kenneth Waltz (1979) provide the view that it not wise for states to attempt to maximize their share of world power, due to the reason that if they try to gain too much power, this will result their punishment. Therefore, from this perspective, the pursuit of hegemony contains substantial risk. As for offensive realism, namely, John Mearsheimer (2001) maintains that gaining as much power as possible has a very good strategic justification and in case of appropriate circumstances, pursuing hegemony is reasonable. The argument for this kind of approach is based on not being conquest or oppression good in itself, but instead the fact is that being extremely powerful directly guarantees one's own survival.

Waltzian understanding of structural realism is based on the core theoretical judgment regarding anarchy where states tend to 'balance' rather than 'bandwagon' (Donnelly, p. 35). For defensive realists balancing power is the principal sort of foreign policy behavior as it represents the least insecure technique to security in the system which is anarchic (Waltz, 1979, p. 121, as cited by Wivel, 2017).

The picture changes with offensive realists who maintain that world politics is mainly represented by hegemony seekers (including regional hegemony) rather than status quo powers. Being a hegemon is a principal intention of a state in the international system. (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 21) The anarchic self-help system is the most favourable condition for expansion and the survival of the state (Mearsheimer J. J., 2001, p. 18).

Waltz's imagination goes to a world of "satisficers" and Mearsheimer perceives only "maximizers." Mearsheimer's offensive realism seems to predict much more conflict and war than does Waltz's defensive realism.

The debates between two variants of structural realism: "defensive realism" and "offensive realism" share many opinions in common and what they have completely in contrast to each other is their perception whether the anarchic structure of the international system results states intention to preserve the status quo, as defensive realists maintain, or maximize relative power, as argued by offensive realists. State behavior has a more precise explanation in case of offensive realism rather than a defensive realism. In an anarchic international system states utilize opportunities to their advantage to expand their power, without considering the status quo or whether they face a certain threat.

In accordance with the principles of offensive realism, the competition in the region of the South Caucasus between the West and Russia led to the war of 2008 between Russia and Georgia. In order to achieve the security great powers tend to pursue regional hegemony for their security objectives." Russia is a great power and therefore seeks ensure its security. Hence, according to the logic of offensive realism, it has reasonably chosen the approach of expansionist policies against smaller countries like Georgia (Karagiannis, 2013, p. 89).

What Rose (1998,p.157) considers a principal tenet neoclassical realism is based on is that states apply the means at their disposal to obtain domination in their environment. This principle reflects neoclassical realism's concentration on grand strategy of a state, which includes diverse methods starting from military alternatives including "the means and ends of politics, economics, ideology, and all aspects of power and influence at a statesman's disposal to enhance a nation's long-term interests" (Becker, Cohen, Kushi, & McManus, 2016, p. 117).According to this framework, the selected tools including traditional diplomacy and interventions militarily, may become economic pressure or normative campaigns. Besides, neoclassical realism views the significance of the historical experience in an attempt to analyze international behavior of states (Rose, 1998).

Taking into consideration the interventionist approach of Kremlin, Neoclassical realists would view this as an outcome of its prior position on the world stage with a position of hegemon as well as its present standing as a power which is rising and as a revisionist player on the world stage. So, Moscow has not shown itself being in favor of those political institutions formed by

Western powers in the period it was not strong and its current aspirations go for bringing down the status-quo in favor of a new world order with the purpose to help its rising international weight(Rose, 1998). Neoclassical realism, hence gives a convincing answer of modern Russian conduct that applies the use of non-traditional tools to make foreign policy, which are not included in the understandings of traditional realist approach(Kitchen 2010).

Rose (1998) maintains that neoclassical realists are against the belief that the states' pursue for only their security; alternatively, the states try applying the use of their power in a way to manage guiding the direction of the international system that would trigger serving their own goals and priorities. Kremlin`s tactical use of norms, selective appeals to international principles and other indirect military tools, together with traditional hard power strategies represent a technique aimed for seeking state interests in the region for hegemony and on the international stage (Becker, Cohen, Kushi, & McManus, 2016).

To summarize, it can be said that Russian officials have taken advantage of diverse means for the justification of the Crimean intervention as well like it was in case of Georgia. These tools are "nationalistic appeals, geopolitical discourse, and naming of international, Western, and liberal norms"(p.126). This is the way Russia normally uses to achieve its geopolitical goals while diminishing the threat of counter-attack by other nations. It is worth noting that nowadays, neither Russia, nor states, in general do not tend to be dependent on naked, straightforward military force to get close to their goals. Besides, the rhetoric they have while giving a reasoning and excuse for their behavior in most cases have a diversionary nature.

Moscow deliberately opted for ignoring or distorting international law as a strategy to strengthen the lawfulness of its behavior with an intention to weaken the risk of severe reproach coming from the reaction of international community. In Ukraine Russia`s intervention and its incentives were based on geopolitical national goals from the insight of general realist theory. However, taking into consideration the fact that Moscow acted differently from the expectation of traditional realist approach by using normative appeals, economic policy, and indirect pressure together with military tools to achieve its goals, it is neoclassical realism theory view of Russian policy understanding. Russia`s argument always was and is principles of international law to legalize its geopolitical actions when the situation comes up, but it immediately ignores these norms and laws if there is no benefit to serve its national interests. Russia`s rhetoric has a regular nature in terms of "norms of sovereignty, self-determination and humanitarianism". This rhetoric comes from national interests and standard realist incentives of security states have and therefore

they apply use of increased capabilities." In other words, Russia's strategic use of norms and selective appeals to international standards are merely tools to pursue state interests in today's international arena" (Becker, Cohen, Kushi, & McManus, 2016, p. 118).

Some neoclassical realists, namely (Wolhforth, 1998) give more emphasis on significance of intangibles, which can include reputation together with honor and prestige in making foreign policy by a state. From this perspective, neoclassical realism can have a relevant explanation of Russia's aspirations and incentives in the region of Caucasus. Russia's intervention in Georgia in 2008 made sense from the approach of "defending Russia's honor or prestige as a great power – especially when such steps are viewed in the larger context of Georgia's aspirations to join NATO"(Tarver-Wahlquist & Tsygankov, 2009,p.10).

Part of the problem that is associated with neoclassical realism is its tendency to reckon intangibles as directed by the international system structure, instead of local historical determinants. Neoclassical realists overemphasize the role of anarchy plays in the international system as a determinant of state's foreign policy, however neoclassical realists are not able to explain completely the understanding of threat that has partly a domestic nature. It consequently fails to notice some aspect of dignity and prestige that are domestically shaped and protected standing on Kremlin's national cultural conception of perils and challenges beyond its borders (Tarver-Wahlquist & Tsygankov, 2009).

The main principle what constructivism is based on is the way national interests of states as well as their perceptions of threats to their national interests and their relationships to one another are defined by the actors. Namely, it "asks how states construct their interest through their interactions with one another" (Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2013–2014, p. 97).

Constructivism, does not understand anarchy as the one which predetermines contexts and meanings of international behavior. Those are emotions and power calculations, domestic honor and recognition, which shape state behavior but each can only be viewed in contexts of everyday interactions and socio-historical development. Scholars of Russia have declared that its determination for international recognition is mediated by domestic perceptions and debates (Tarver-Wahlquist & Tsygankov, 2009).

The domestic honor and recognition perspective can explain Russia's behavior in the Caucasus region. Namely, due to the reason that Russia sees itself "as a historically-established honest broker and a guarantor of peace in the region, and that perception is widely supported by the

public at home". Number of nationalities in the region perceive Russia favorable for them (Tarver-Wahlquist & Tsygankov, 2009, p. 10)

Georgia's behavior as well may be prompted by honor considerations in its relationships with Russia. Kremlin's frustration is generated by the lack of recognition by the United States and NATO and Georgia's anger has a root in Moscow's unwillingness to respect its independence and the right to choose a type of foreign policy course to opt for. So this is the picture of dynamic in terms of "mutually exclusive honor claims" which explains escalation in Russia-Georgia relations and less than the structure of international system per se (Tarver-Wahlquist & Tsygankov, 2009, p. 11) as claimed by other theories I have discussed in previous sections.

If we put Georgia, in this framework, its desire to have independent choices and strategies of its foreign policy option, its determination for achieving and preserving territorial integrity make the country perceive any player with an intention to impede it in the process of achieving its goals is consequently seen as an actor posing threat to the interests of Georgia.

The picture is the similar in case of Russia as well. Russia's aspiration to maintain as a great power and keep its special interest, authority and influence in the Caucasus region forms goals that directly or indirectly is perceived from Georgian understanding as against its own sovereignty. "Although Tbilisi views Russia as an overt barrier to Georgian territorial integrity with its presence and policies in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia sees itself as a stabilizer in a volatile region". The West's ambition for being a crucial decision maker on the world stage is bitterly irritating for Russia because of having strong ambitions for being a global player. The type of policy the West has towards Georgia which is longing for membership in Western institutions, importantly NATO in this case, is evaluated as an increasing existential danger for Kremlin, while Georgia's interpretations of Russia's assertive foreign policy approach goes to the apparent threat for its sovereignty being undermined by its northern neighbor (Tarver-Wahlquist & Tsygankov, 2009, p. 12).

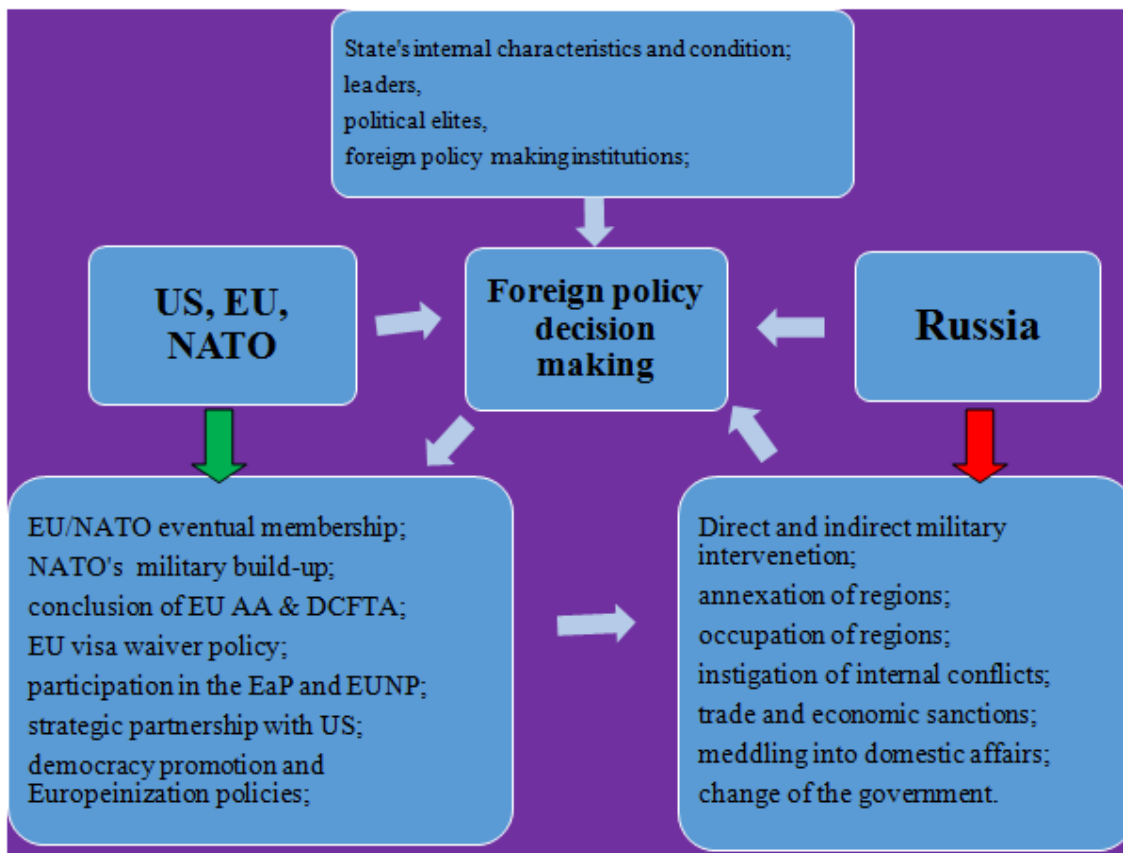
## **Chapter II: Foreign Policy Strategies of Georgia**

Chapter II analyzes foreign policy strategies of Georgia. In Georgian foreign policy the origins of Georgia's "European" identity prevails (Kakachia & Minesashvili, 2015). According to neorealist approach in the instance of weak states, balance of power theory indicates that they tend to either demonstrate balancing conduct against the strongest player or apply the strategy of bandwagoning in the context of joining with the powerful state (Jervis & Snyder, 1991) (Walt, 1990). According to Stephen Walt (1990), the realist theory indicates that states opt for balancing

not against the one with the most power, but instead against the most frightening actor. They identify the peril that come from the influence of factors like geographic closeness, offensive power and malevolent purposes. Nevertheless, if we apply this approach to the states of ex-Soviet countries, structural realism faces some deviations of both bandwagoning and balancing: This approach fails to show a relevant explanation of the reason Georgia kept its pro-Western orientation in its foreign policy course especially after the 2008 August war with its Northern neighbor when the West obviously showed its reluctance to play a balancing role (Gvalia, Siroky, Lebanidze, & Iashvili, 2013). Logically, the neorealist account to this issue would consider bandwagoning reasonable with the Northern neighbor but this did not take place in case of Georgia which opted for Western choice.

The offered schematic diagram below shows factors that influence foreign policy making of the Eurocentric post-Soviet country (Georgia).

**Figure 1.** Factors that influence foreign policy making of the Eurocentric post-Soviet country (Georgia).



Developed by the author

The construction above classifies three categories of influence in the foreign policy making process and this policy “inputs” determine strategies producing policy decisions or “outputs”. Among basic significant factors here should be considered the internal characteristics of the state (the size of the country, financial, economic and mineral resources, military capabilities relative to the state willing to influence the country, competence and efficiency of decision-making institutions and level of democratic development and a role of leadership – as a final point in decision-making process). Another two groups of factors – US, EU, NATO policies leading to integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures, on the one hand, and Russia’s fierce resistance to westernization of former “vassals”, on other, are working at cross purposes and, on its turn, the output influences the following cycle of the decision making. This two conflicting foreign policy options determine the final outcome of foreign policy making and lead to the confrontation and conflict between the West and Russia.

### **Chapter III: Russia in the South Caucasus**

Chapter III provides discussion about Russia’s version of security architecture of the world; its interests in the South Caucasus region, South Caucasus as a "buffer" zone, as well as foreign policy choices of Armenia and Azerbaijan, including volatile North Caucasus and main aspects of Putin's New Doctrine, together with Russia’s "hybrid warfare" and Russia’s doctrine of "liberal empire".

Vladimir Putin in his speech at Munich Conference in 2007 strongly criticized the issue of the United States' global supremacy and monopolistic *status quo* seeking in front of the audience, and marked the eastward expansion of NATO in terms of a provocation against the Kremlin.

In June 2008, Russian President Medvedev presented a concept of his ‘new European security architecture’-the idea of the initiative to reshape existing security landscape ‘from Vancouver to Vladivostok. The 2008 June proposal can be evaluated first, as "a gut reaction to NATO enlargement, missile defense and American unilateralism". Second, by offering an alternative scheme of security, Kremlin displayed its aspiration to have a crucial player role on regional and global level. Third, Medvedev’s revised European security architecture was not accidental. It demonstrated a confidence in its own strength and that others – great players and small states alike – must appreciate Russia and respect its interests (Lo, 2009, pp. 1,2).



South Caucasus is in Kremlin's main geopolitical crosshairs. Striving for restoring old glory, Eurasia was proclaimed by President Dmitry Medvedev as its "sphere of exclusive interests" (Roberts, Cohen, & Blaisdell, 2013, p. 1) (Cohen, 2010) (The Financial Times, 2008).

In spite of the Soviet Union fall, Russia managed to preserve troops in the area of two South Caucasian states (3-5000 military personnel in Gyumri, Armenia, and around 8000 military personnel on the occupied territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, in Georgia). The reason is very clear: "Caucasus is vital to Russia's standing as a great power" in the contest of domination with the US and the EU in this region (European Stability Initiative, 2009).

South Caucasus borders the North Caucasus, where Russia's security lies significantly in terms of internal threats. Besides, it separates Russia from southern regional powers - Turkey and Iran. The region is unstable and volatile because of serious unsettled inter-state and intra-state conflicts. Moreover, Caspian basin, rich in mineral resources also highlights the significance of the South Caucasus region. In addition, this region is continuously under the great attention of global and regional powers (Naumkin, 2002). This intense interest is caused because of being strategically important both for military, as well as economic reasons. Russia applies a divide and rule policy in the South Caucasus using the unsettled and protracted conflicts to his advantage: strengthened military presence in Armenia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia; control over seized territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia; playing a main peace broker role over Nagorno Karabakh, backing Armenia, while supplying weaponry to both conflict sides in order to guarantee a military balance. So, it means, Russia is not interested to be settled these tensions as this atmosphere places the other countries in a position of being dependent on Russia."Russia mixes diplomacy with military might in such a way to keep the region in limbo" (Boonstra, 2015, p. 17).

The fragile atmosphere in the region suffering from unsettled conflicts can be used to lead to the instability when the necessity for this comes up for Moscow.

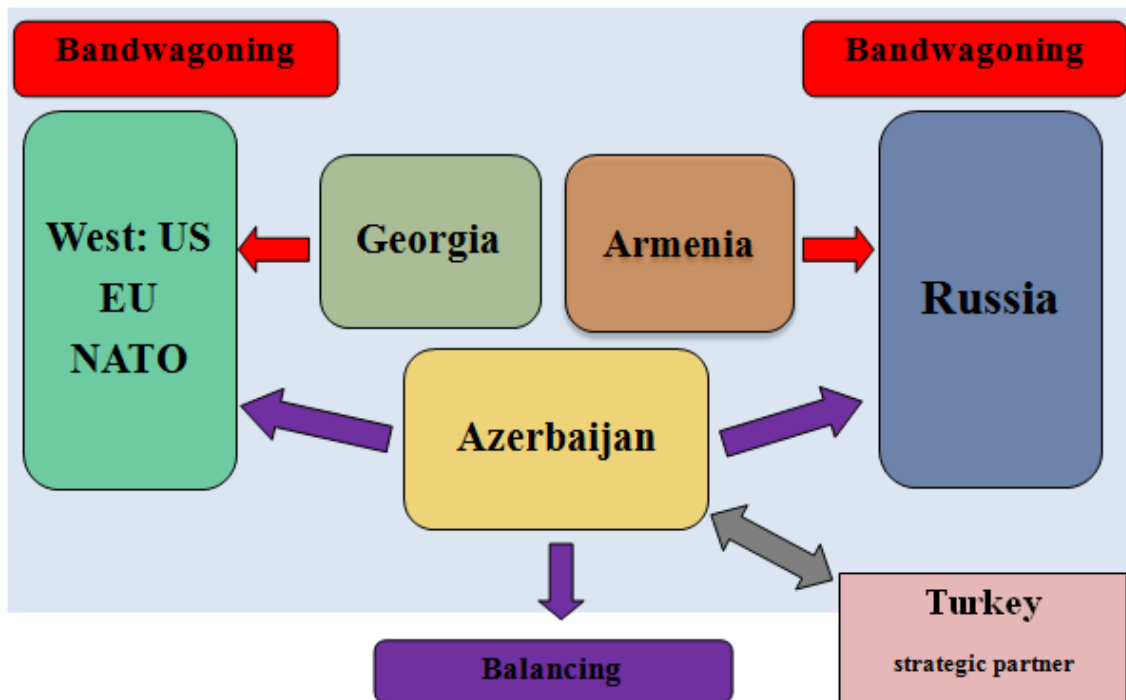
South Caucasian countries follow the following foreign policy path: Armenia has chosen bandwagoning with Russia, Georgia is bandwagoning with the West and Azerbaijan stays neutral between the West and Russia due to hoping to benefit more from a neutral status than from supporting one part at the expense of the others. It became the only Caucasian country from where Russia appeared as completely withdrawn militarily.

The key objective for Russia regarding South Caucasus region is to form a buffer zone between the Russian Federation and the Western structures—by creating frozen conflicts on a favorable soil where military means were also used in case of Georgia for example in 2008. This approach

is aimed for the “termination of the eastward expansion of NATO which may serve as a bargaining chip” (Matsaberidze, 2015, p. 86) and for keeping the South Caucasian under a constant control and continuously in limbo.

The offered schematic diagram below shows foreign policy choices of South Caucasian countries

**Figure 2:** Foreign policy choices of South Caucasian countries



Developed by the author

Putin’s new doctrine 2014 generally does not show an absolute difference from its previous versions. The key accent of the doctrine goes to the contest with the West. The doctrine is aimed for two audiences: internal and external. The message is clear for both. Namely, the internal message echoes that behind the social turmoil inside the country or any attempt to endanger Russia’s aspirations, stability and security in its neighborhood stands the West and its geopolitical ambitions against Kremlin. The second message is for the external adversaries - the West including NATO which is warned to be pierced by Russia’s conventional and nuclear missile.

Today the term 'hybrid warfare' is commonly linked to Russia. "It's part of Russia's embrace of so-called "hybrid war," or the use of politics, diplomacy, the media, and cyberspace to destabilize opponents without necessarily having to resort to tanks and artillery" (FP, 2017).

According to McDermott (2016, p. 101)"if Russia's potential adversaries possess a "hybrid" capability and these may seek to destabilize Russia through promoting a color-type revolution, then Moscow needs its own form of hybrid capability to counteract this threat". Russian leadership applies 'hybrid warfare' tactic to achieve political interests: to incite discord and weaken NATO influence, undermine pro-western governments, create preconditions for war and carry out annexation alternative.

Russia's foreign policy approach toward the post-Soviet states is grounded on the doctrine of a "liberal empire". According to the doctrine, "Russia's major government-owned and private companies should assume control of key economic entities across the territories of the former Soviet republics by acquiring their assets"(Papava, 2007, p. 2).

Out of Southern Caucasian countries, Armenia was first, who got involved in the establishment of Russia's "liberal empire". In 2003 the involvement of Georgia in the "liberal empire" started to take place when stocks and other assets from the American company AES (American Electrochemical Society) – Silk Road were purchased by RAO-UES of Russia together with electricity network of Tbilisi and achieved control over 75 percent of Georgia's electricity grid. According to IDFI(2015)the picture in Georgia today suggests that Russia's attempts fit its goals to entrap Georgia within its "liberal empire". There are numerous Georgian companies that belong to Russian citizens, represented mostly in the sector of energy. " Inter Rao" is shown as the largest player on the energy market.

#### **Chapter IV: Russia's Approach to Multilateral Cooperation in the Post-Soviet Space: CSTO, SCO, EAEU and Regional Organizations BSEC and GUAM**

Chapter IV examines Russia's approach to CSTO, SCO and EAEU. This chapter also reviews the significance of BSEC, GUAM and Southern Gas Corridor.

Regional organizations which are characterized by limited pooling of sovereignty and interests of member countries remain principal, like the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)—are supported with an objective to handle security governance in Russia's immediate neighborhood (Averre, 2008).

Over the past decade, Kremlin has developed a more refined approach to multilateralism in the post-Soviet area. As an outcome of Kremlin's disappointment with the CIS, the leadership of Russia has given more concentration on partnership in specific areas with particular states in CSTO and EurAsEC which was replaced by EAEU later. SCO needs to be also mentioned here, in terms of having given the outlook for collaboration in tandem with China, the country in Eurasia with a leading power. "Moscow has successfully managed to keep what it considers strategic areas of cooperation within CSTO and EurAsEC, thus not involving China in these areas, while at the same time benefiting from tying itself to the resources and international standing of China in SCO". By using this assorted approach Russia allowed itself to reassert its leading role in multilateralism in parts of the post-Soviet zone.

**Figure 3.** Membership of Russian-influenced Regional Organizations in the Post-Soviet Space

<i>Membership of Russian -influenced Regional Organizations in the Post-Soviet Space</i>				
	<b>CIS</b>	<b>CSTO</b>	<b>EAEU</b>	<b>SCO</b>
<b>Armenia</b>	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	✓	Joined (1994) Withdrew (1999)		
<b>Belarus</b>	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Georgia</b>	Withdrew(2008)	Joined (1994) Withdrew (1999)		
<b>Kazakhstan</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Moldova</b>	✓			
<b>Russia</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Tajikistan</b>	✓	✓		✓
<b>Turkmenistan</b>	Associate member			
<b>Ukraine</b>	Decided to withdraw (2018)			
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	✓	Joined (1994- first time) Withdrew(1999-first time) Joined (2006- second time) Withdrew(2012-second time)		✓
<i>China</i>				✓
<i>India</i>				✓
<i>Pakistan</i>				✓

Developed by the author

The member states of the BSEC organization have gained a significant success in terms of regional cooperation and economic integration, however it should be noted that BSEC institutions have eclectic character and member states have the conflicting political and economic interests and the issue stays problematic. Namely, persistent territorial disputes "frozen conflicts" between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh; Moldova and the self-proclaimed Republic of Transnistria; Russia and Georgia over South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and the clashes between Russia and Ukraine over Crimea and eastern provinces. Opposing interests

of the members lead to drive Black Sea security policy options in different directions (Schulz & Dürkop, 2014).

In spite of the objective to be the organization serving the purpose of cooperation in various fields, Russia views BSEC as a purely economic organization: "BSEC was not created to dive into the political agenda". It does not mean they[Russian government] close their eyes to the existing challenges in the region but instead, they prefer tackling the political difficulties in other active formats (Schulz & Dürkop, 2014, p. 9).

The GUAM's main focus is strengthening democratic values, promoting the policy to be international and regional security and stability strengthened. In addition the organization's main objectives include deepening the pro-European course for the integration to form of a common security space and expand the economic and humanitarian collaboration together with improving the potential in the area of transport and energy (GUAM, 2018).The institutional body is formulated to uncover common interests and collaborate mutual action plans. If we take into consideration post-Soviet international alliances, it can be noted that there is only GUAM which prompts unhidden indignation for Kremlin, because of perceiving it as an anti-Russian project arranged by the U.S. in the post-Soviet stretch and moreover a " "branch" of NATO in the CIS"(Papava, 2008, p.50).

The Southern Gas Corridor - a planned infrastructure project has been appeared as an alternative source in terms of strengthening the security and diversity of the EU's energy supply by bringing natural gas from the Caspian region to Europe (Churchelauri, 2016).

And just recently, Azerbaijan launched the first phase of the Southern Gas Corridor pipeline project to supply gas to Turkey and southern Europe. The project is presented by \$40 billion investment and will supply around 6 billion cubic metres (bcm) of gas a year to Turkey and, by the first quarter of 2020, it will increase the volume to 10 bcm a year to Europe (Reuters, 2018).

To sum up, it can be noted that taking into consideration the capacity to carry 10 bcm to South Europe, and bypassing Russia, the SGC shows itself as a good option for Europe in the short to medium term to diversify its supply and diminish Gazprom's monopoly and pressure. Kalandadze (2014) also notes that there is an opportunity of enlarging the pipeline to engage other Central Asian and possibly Iranian alternatives which can serve Europe's long term energy security purposes.

## CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has examined the nature of Russia's re-emergence as a global player and its security implications for South Caucasian states. The main goal of the study was first, to examine how neo-realist, neoclassical realist and constructivist approach explain Russia's foreign policy in South Caucasus region and what are the factors that affect this approach. Second, to analyze the nature of Russia's re-emergence as a global player and its security implications for South Caucasian states. Third, to review how can Russia further inhibit European aspirations of the Eurocentric post-Soviet states (Georgia).

The author's own view is that offensive realism is the one, out of the proposed theories that best explains Russia's foreign policy nature and peculiarities however the rest of the theories were also quite applicable in giving relevant explanations.

As an original contribution to the study of International Relations (IR), the work revealed that using neo-realist, neoclassical realist theories and constructivist approach as analytical tools thoroughly explain Russia's behavior in the South Caucasus and particularly towards countries with different foreign political orientation – Eurocentric Georgia, Russian satellite Armenia and a fence-sitter – Azerbaijan.

The thesis has argued that general nature of Russia's foreign policy actions changes the world security landscape and puts South Caucasus security under double threat. By its re-emergence on the world stage, Russia aspires to maximize its power and ensure security. This appearance has an offensive nature being held at the expense of security of near neighborhood. Russia's main interest is to play a significant role globally apart from the U.S.; to undermine Western presence in South Caucasus - its "sphere of influence" and strengthen its strategic position in its neighborhood and even beyond in order to regain the old glory of the Soviet Union and come back to the international arena as a crucial global player where its name and interests are appropriately respected. The Kremlin has been re-emerged such a serious threat that has not been obvious since the end of the Cold War. In case the West appears unsuccessful to deal with Russian threat appropriately, not only the South Caucasus but the stability and security of world order is well at an actual and inevitable risk.

In-depth analysis and consideration of the above-mentioned issues reveals that the notion of the hypothesis was well supported and actually proved.

The thesis was framed around the cases of South Caucasian states and hence each of them was presented as distinctive phenomenon with some similitude and differences regarding security implications coming from Russian foreign policy attitude towards the region. The existing conditions and causal effects were reflected on the relations South Caucasian states maintain towards Russia, as a causal determinant.

Correspondingly, it can be argued that the research not only served the purpose of testing the selected theories of IR but it also defined the prior circumstances of the phenomenon and accordingly analyzed its significance.

As a result, due to the fact that Russia's geopolitical interests in its "sphere of exclusive interests" are continuously and increasingly vivid and represents ongoing unsettled dilemma, the examination of the selected cases includes its appropriate noteworthiness.

As the world is changing dynamically and Russia has become inseparable part of it especially in terms of peace and security matters, by analyzing all the above mentioned phenomena with its possible consequences and security implications indicate the novelty of the work and accordingly the topic can be considered worth being explored more profoundly. By taking into consideration the above mentioned issues the work argued that it is replicable and at the same time highlighted its practicability as well.

As neorealist theory maintains the behavior of states is determined by the international system and hence explains the reasons of their actions. In case of South Caucasus which is consisted of weak states, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, in order to deal with the threat for their security coming from Russia, are expected to opt for the option out of the strategies: balance or bandwagon: Armenia chooses pure bandwagoning with Kremlin, while the case of Georgia is totally different. In spite of the obvious military threats and the experience having and being already undergone from its Northern Neighbor, Georgia prefers bandwagoning with the Euro-Atlantic structures. As for Azerbaijan it stays neutral and balances between the West and Russia.

The Russian Federation craves to redefine very clearly and severely its role in the international system as a significant and very considerable global player. Its considerations of Post-Soviet space and especially South Caucasus as an inseparable part of its empire and more specifically Georgia, is more than obvious today. Vladimir Putin's speech at the Munich Conference 2007 was a clear signal from Russia towards the world. Russian words at the conference were not just an empty talk and soon they turned into a reality in terms of transforming Russia from regional power to a global actor. Criticism of unipolar world as a system far from being democratic and in addition, monopolistic status quo seeking of the US and its overstepping of

the national borders in nearly all spheres were main points of Russia's slam, reasons for feeling less secure in this kind of political landscape. Therefore, the eastward expansion of NATO was evaluated by Russia as a provocation against Kremlin, however, in the speech the capability of Moscow to appropriately deal with the anti-missile defence shield planned to be located in Eastern Europe by the US was vigorously underlined. These words were the warning hints towards each country's foreign policy approach as well, who would defy Russia's power and interests of domination in the sphere of Kremlin's influence in case they dared to have a Western-oriented path. August War 2008 proved that Putin's 2007 speech was not just a 'hot air' and any pro-Western aspirations would be badly punished by Moscow to hinder the process that puts its domination at risk. This was the way by which Russia postponed Georgia's membership of NATO further beyond.

Georgia is the only South Caucasian state that follows very clear Western course and this causes Kremlin's extreme anxiety, even in case of having 20 percent of its territories occupied, with estimated 8000 military personnel on the occupied territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Armenia, because of its landlocked location, lacking natural resources, closed borders and tensions with Azerbaijan and Turkey, have no any other option but just to bandwagon with Russia. While Baku follows a balanced foreign policy between the West, Turkey and Russia, due to gaining more from neutrality but at the same time having made Russia to completely withdraw its military forces from the territory of Azerbaijan. Overall, it can be said that Kremlin's 'divide and rule policy' is very successful in South Caucasus that suffers from unsettled conflicts and severe fragility. At this stage, freezing the *status quo* in the region is in Russia's best interest: *status quo* of the Karabakh conflict where it plays a main peace broker role, backs Armenia and at the same time supplies weaponry to both conflict sides gives Moscow an undoubted opportunity to make the counterparts be dependent solely on Russia.

This instable atmosphere is a favorable soil for Russia to maintain the region as the "buffer" zone and create more vulnerable situation whenever the necessity comes up for it. While volatility of the South Caucasus region, Russia suffers itself from instability inside as well. Namely North Caucasus is *Russia's Achilles heel* in terms of terrorism, religious radicalism, separatism together with inter-ethnic conflicts.

Despite all the above mentioned issues concerning Russia's domination and authority in the region and beyond, Georgia's case is unique among South Caucasian states. Having undergone so many problems with Northern neighbor, leading to a war in 2008 with its tragic consequences



and being stuck in NATO's waiting room (though while having one eye to the North), Georgia does not give up and apparently moves towards West even when there is no 'world government to protect states from one another' and because of the West's weakening structural and ideational power, Kremlin's feedback is 'ruthless' to threats to its core interests: 'International law and human rights concerns take a back seat when vital security issues are at stake' (Mearsheimer 2014). As for the Putin's new doctrine, it shows an apparent threats towards the entire global order, security and stability. In case of inability and even failure of curbing of rising Russia, the structure of the international system and US-led global order will be facing great challenges. And this topic deserves further consideration in future studies.

#### **List of Publications:**

1. Churchelauri, I. (2016). The significance of Southern Gas Corridor for European energy security - myth or reality? *Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(2), 17-22
2. Kavadze, A., & Churchelauri, I. (2017). Russia's role in formation of Georgia's foreign policy: Decision making and implementation. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 6 (1), 7-25.
3. Churchelauri, I. (2018). Russia's foreign policy interpretation based on principles of Putin's Doctrine. *Intellectual* (35), 62-71.