

სტრატეგიული სეპარატიზმი ყოფილი საბჭოთა კავშირის ქვეყნებში

როსლიცკი ლადა
გრონინგენის უნივერსიტეტი

სტატიაში გეოგრაფიული ბრძოლა ძალაუფლებისათვის განხილულია სტრატეგიული სეპარატიზმის კუთხით. ყოფილი საბჭოთა კავშირის ქვეყნები წარმოდგენილია, როგორც იმ ქვეყნების ჯგუფი, რომლებშიც სეპარატიზმი ვლინდება წარმატებული დემოკრატიული ცვლილებების განხორციელების ხელისშემშლელ ინსტრუმენტად. ამავე მიმართულებითაა განხილული რუსეთის ფედერაციის როლი. უსაფრთხოების სახელმწიფო ძალაუფლების თეორიებისა და კოპენჰაგენის სკოლის სექტორული მიდგომის გამოყენებით, ძირითადი ყურადღება გამახვილებულია, თუ როგორ შეიძლება საქართველოს მხრიდან ძალადობის პროვოცირება 2008 წლის ომში. განსაკუთრებული ყურადღება გამახვილდა სახელმწიფო ძალაუფლების კომპონენტების იმპორტირებაზე. მკითხველი ასევე გაეცნობა საგარეო პოლიტიკასა და ტრანსნაციონალურ ორგანიზებულ დანაშაულს შორის ურთიერთობის მნიშვნელობას.

Strategic Separatism in Post Soviet States

Roslycky Lada
The University of Groningen

Separatism is deteriorating the national security of the Post Soviet States in the Black Sea Region. To the detriment of global security, it is also impeding the realization of the Black Sea Region project. For these reasons, it is important to be aware of the geopolitical causes for this, to understand the ways separatism is spurred and to search for innovative solutions to an old problem.

Ethnic disparity plays a key role here because, when used as a geopolitical instrument, it disrupts delicately peaceful human coexistences and causes war. Although taking people and territory away from sovereign states through the promotion of separatism blatantly violates state sovereignty and international law, the ancient great power strategy of divide et impera to gain geopolitical power is very much alive today.

In the Black Sea Region, separatist conflicts appear to be keeping the unprecedentedly legitimate democratic interests and presence of the “Democratic West” at bay. It is therefore pertinent to ask how -through the promotion of separatism - today’s great powers modify state power potential to gain geopolitical dominance within the

international realm. It is particularly important to recognize, to prevent and sanction the promotion of separatism in this regard.

At the end of the Twentieth Century, the collapse of the Berlin Wall and Soviet Union marked the starting point of a renewed competition for influence over the Post Soviet States in the Black Sea Region (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine). The number of armed separatist conflicts in Europe, and alongside its borders, (i.e. Kosovo, Transdniestria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and its looming threat in Crimea) rose when the Trans-Atlantic Alliance, the EU (together and separately, “the “Democratic West””) and the Russian Federation entered an albeit undeclared competition for geopolitical influence. The Russian Federation suffered a severe blow to its global power particularly through the loss of its legitimate presence and control over the Black and Caspian Sea Regions. As a result, the Post Soviet States in the Black Sea Region form the theater over which the Russian Federation and the “Democratic West” cooperate yet struggle for power and influence. Both have apparent interests and advantages within these states. For the “Democratic West” these states represent untapped markets, energy capabilities and cultural wealth. The same holds true for Russia.

Within the Post Soviet States in the Black Sea Region, the main appeal of the West is the perceived respect for human rights and freedoms, and, the material wealth realized within these democracies (albeit, at times, derived from ruthless free market operations). For the Russian Federation, the main advantages are, ironically, familiarity resulting from its hegemonic past, effective political, security and social networks, and, its open criticism of “Uncle Sam-styled” Capitalistic war-making and globalization.

Although there are public representatives within the Post-Soviet States in the Black Sea Region who seek non-alignment and national renaissance, most experts agree that lacking regional cooperation, they are too weak for non-alignment, neutrality or balancing. Their attempts to cooperate sub-regionally (i.e. GUAM) are thwarted both internally and externally. Internally, this reality goads a hungry grab for power between two main political branches; those who longed to see their nation-states align with Western democracies and; the elites and clans wishing to remain in power by aligning with Russia.

Importantly, the *de jure* independence acquired by these states in the early 1990s was coupled with a Kremlin-centric legacy: an inconceivable black market, systemic corruption, an institutional vacuum, and lack of national identity. It is under these circumstances that their chance for political realignment arrived. It is also under these circumstances that the Russian Federation gained an effective position through which to promote separatism there.

Since their independence, numerous internal and external threats have been confronting the national security of the Post Soviet States in the Black Sea Region. The modification of demographic and territorial dynamics, aggressive economic takeovers, the alteration of military capabilities, control over the media, socio-cultural engineering and, in some cases, the modification of history. Many of these threats relate to their transitional status. Some, however, also appear related to the external promotion of discordance and separatism.

These tactics fit well into the Perceived Power Potential formula, developed by Cline in the mid 1970s.¹ Cline identified three tangible (critical mass, economic and economic capability) and two intangible (national strategy and national will) components of state power. By identifying the components of state power and how they interrelate, he (inadvertently) also identifies the sectors of national security that must be fostered and protected by the state. The Copenhagen Constructivist approach to sectoral security analysis is pertinent here. It extends the analysis of national security from the traditional military-political sector to the political, economic, environmental and socio-cultural sectors. Importantly, this sectoral approach also facilitates a regional approach to security analysis.² Regional security (sub)complexes are created based on the sectoral security interdependencies of states geographically bound to one another. Their patterns of amity and enmity create the foundations for regional or sub-regional security analysis. This clustering of states into security complexes based on shared security interdependencies, common histories, geography, and patterns of amity/enmity facilitates the analysis and resolution of their common, transborder security threats.

By combining the sectoral approach to security analysis with Cline's formula a fine framework is made. It can be used to analyze the way foreign policies (either positively i.e. capacity building, or negatively i.e. promotion of separatism) modify the power potential of third states.

Within the Post-Soviet states in the Black Sea Region, the geopolitical struggle for influence, shared Soviet history, transitional development, geographic location and incidents of Russian-backed separatism justify the adoption of a sub-regional approach to understanding and resolving some common security threats facing them. Undeniably, each separatist conflict in the Black Sea Region has its own unique story line and nuances. However, it is remarkable that representatives of the Post Soviet States in the Black Sea Region, particularly pro-western ones, have repeatedly accused the Russian Federation of spurring and supporting separatism. When viewed from a regional perspective, this may be indicative of a foreign policy of strategic separatism.

The Russian Federation is the only, direct, state military actor in all the frozen separatist conflicts in the region (albeit under the guise of CIS peacekeeping). Officially, however, its role as peacekeeper and mediator is rarely viewed from the perspective that Russia is itself a participant or party to the frozen conflicts. This notwithstanding, it is clear that the breakaway regions in the Post-Soviet states in the Black Sea Region secure the Russian Federation with at least a fraction of the geopolitical control it held before the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Within the confines of this study it is, of course, impossible to examine the role played by all state Parties concerned, namely, the Post Soviet States in the Black Sea Region, the "Democratic West", The Russian Federation and the representatives of the breakaway territories. Although such a gigantic and multifaceted study is certainly needed and encouraged, the focus here is on some power modifying activities related to the Russian Federation in South Ossetia, Georgia.

The Russo-Georgian war of August 2008 sent shockwaves through international information channels. Today, there appears to be some international consensus (i.e. EU Parliamentary Commission report on the War in South Ossetia) that Russia and

Georgia are both responsible for the war. The fact that Georgia has been blamed for starting it should not be viewed separately from the fact that Russia has been blamed for provoking the Georgian move. Rather, the nature of this provocation and its history should be examined.

The aim here is to consider some activities of the Russian Federation that have simultaneously modified the perceived power potential and promoted separatism in Georgia. The following examples do not offer an extensive analysis, rather, they are meant to provide insight into how actions that modify a state's power potential promote separatism and, in turn, may provoke confrontations against separatists and the outside powers supporting them.

Tangible Components

Critical Mass – Ppopulation

The critical mass of a state is composed of two elements, the citizens of the state and its territory.

Georgian citizenry has been modified in a number of manners. Although their numbers do not surpass those of the cases below, first, mention must be made of the Georgian citizens that lost their lives in the wars. They have lost their lives as a direct result of geopolitical games. Second, Georgia has lost full authority over its citizens as a result of the alleged policy of (forced) delivery of Russian passports. This policy violates the law and is evident in other breakaway regions in the Black Sea Region. Ironically, this particular policy was also used by the Russian Federation to justify the use of military force outside of its sovereign territory by claiming its duty to protect its citizens living abroad. Third, during the 2008 war over 125 villages and an estimated 26, 000 Georgian citizens were forced to leave their domiciles. This adds to the hundreds of thousands of victims of the 1993 ethnic cleansing, increasing the number of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) from South Ossetia and from Upper Kodori Valley.. These people continue to be deprived of the possibility of returning safely to their homes. Whereas South Ossetia may now be regarded by some as “sufficiently” ethnically cleansed, the fates of these many thousands as well as of those who remain in Perevi, Upper Abkhazia, in the Akhagori and Gali districts remain uncertain. The economic and social implications are clear. Fourth, there is a great risk particularly facing Georgia's internally displaced women and children. They now run a heightened risk of being sold into prostitution, slave labor and illegal human organ market.

Critical Mass – territory

It is clear that Georgia's sovereign control over two of its territories (Abkhazia and South Ossetia), and other areas, has been severely severed. It is important to consider that this may be the result of many years of strategic planning. In this regard, the manner in which separatists have been able to afford and promote their policies, the role played by CIS peacekeeping as well as organized criminals in arming and supporting the separatist movements calls for serious attention.

Military Capabilities

Georgian military capabilities have been negatively affected by the presence and capabilities of the Russian forces. Whereas US support and training of Georgian military was designed to make the state stronger, more interoperable and closer to NATO's Membership Action Plan. The support may have backfired. The military losses, and loss of reputation suffered because of the 2008 war, appear to have had grave repercussions for Georgia's military capability.

The disputed legality of Russian peacekeepers in Georgia has been exacerbated by the non-mandated presence of Russian military troops in Abkhazia and in South Ossetia, especially in Akhgori, Perevi, Upper Abkhazia and in villages around Tskhinvali. Before the 2008 war, these territories were controlled by the central government of Georgia.

The (planned) stationing of Russian military bases (the plans of the Russian Federation to locate additional military bases in Abkhazia, Georgia and South Ossetia, Georgia, including a naval base in the town of Ochamchire and an airbase in the town of Gudauta) are examples of its depleting military capacity. The construction of a radar station in South Ossetia, recently proposed by Moscow, further shows how Georgian military power potential over its own territory Georgia's lies at risk.

Both the Russian Federation and Georgia have been connected to gunrunning (and other forms of illegal trade) in and around the break away territories. The implication of illegally arming separatists and those fighting them are clear: bloodshed and support of informal structures. However, from a strictly Westphalian perspective, recognizing Georgia's formal borders, these transgressions as they pertain to Georgian officials and Russian ones carry a very different analytical weight.

Military and economic capabilities have also been affected by disputed road blockings, the reconstruction of railroads, which were then allegedly used to bring Russian troops and military equipment into the Georgian territory as well as the deployment of railroad troops to Georgia.

Economic capabilities

Next to direct economic sanctions imposed by the Russian Federation, Georgia has clearly suffered damages resulting from the war. Be it as it may that the international community (i.e. EU and US) have pledged significant reconstruction aid to Tbilisi, the economic capabilities and trade have suffered. Whereas the EU and US continue to exclusively deal with Tbilisi, the Russian Federation has been dealing directly with Abkhazia and South Ossetia for many years. The legal character of its investments is an intriguing one. Of particular interest here is the use of Russian, quasi-state companies. Gazprom is a good example in this regard.

After the colored revolutions, the use of Gazprom as a political instrument increased dramatically. The provision of "free" energy to these territories and the construction of pipelines to feed them create lifelines for the breakaway territories. However, the legality of the agreements, how and between whom they are made is un-

clear. Interestingly, a number of governments have even connected Gazprom to transnationally organized criminals.

The “frozen conflict” areas in the Black Sea Region are often noted as being “international criminal black holes”. It is important to consider the origins of shadowy funds that are used to develop breakaway regions, including the development of housing projects and economic centers. Unfortunately, as some of these territories grow and gain strength, attention to how this relationship relates to the breakaway territories in the Black Sea Region appears lacking. It is also necessary for experts to address the reasons for this being so.

Intangible Components

An effective way of dividing a people (or a state) is to cast doubt on the value of their shared immaterial wealth (i.e. shared values and principles, cultural commonalities, and histories). Lacking trust in their commonalities, the trust and willingness to cooperate towards a common future diminishes. Without a sense of a shared identity and purpose, the targeted group loses the intangible power it once had. According to Cline, without intangible power the group/state loses effective control over (and benefit from) their tangible power (i.e. material resources). For this reason, he allots more value to the intangible components of state power than to the tangible ones in the Perceived Power Potential Formula. The two components of intangible power are National Strategy and National Will.³ These intangible components can be seen as the two main categories containing a nation’s “soft power”. Despite their value to national security and due to their intangible or illusive quality, calculating how and the extent to which, national strategy and will are modified by strategic foreign policies of third states is a complicated matter.

Unfortunately, there is a very fine line between friendly interstate relations (i.e. economic cooperation, promotion of minority rights, educational development), and the manipulations of these relations for the accumulation of power and/or the promotion of separatist foreign policy. To put this theoretical knowledge into some context, it is useful to consider some activities that may influence the politics and societies in the Black Sea Region.

The Russian Federation has signed so-called “Friendship and Cooperation Treaties” with most of the Post-Soviet states in the Black Sea Region. To promote the development of separatist territories, it has also signed similar Friendship Agreements with all of the breakaway territories in the Black Sea Region. It is possible for some to interpret the provisions of both kinds of “Friendship Contracts” as legalizing activities that deteriorate national security/power potential to the advantage of an outside state.

One example of apparently friendly acts that may lead to the modification of intangible state power is the organization and funding of celebrations that promote separatists and the states supporting them. At times, they may be qualified as psychological operations to influence the moral of a state. A recent example of this in Georgia was the celebration of Russia’s friendliness and grandeur towards the breakaway region of South Ossetia. Putin, Luzhkov and Kokoity celebrated the construction

of a new settlement. In fact, the celebrations were marked by the renaming of one of the most important ancient Georgian villages, “Tamarasheni” to “Moscow”.⁴

Whether or not experts will agree that such a move directly humiliates the Georgian people and state is secondary to the fact that Russia’s promotion of its soft power in this regard increases its own power in the region. However exemplary this use of “smart power” by the Russian Federation may be, it nonetheless leads one to ponder if the separatists there are authentic minority rights freedom fighters, why do they not insist that elements of their own soft power (i.e. culture/language) be promoted and not the power of the neighboring state.

For many years, anti-state and anti-western newspapers connected to foreign government money flows have been printed and dispersed free of charge in the break-away territories in the Black Sea Region. Of import here is that these newspapers were often printed under an official license.⁵ Other forms of indirect third state (or quasi state) control media and broadcasting have also been linked to the promotion of separatism. Although the use of soft power in this regard requires time to influence the population and, when connected to intrusive foreign policies of third states, it may require special (securitization) attention from governments.

The line between censorship and the limitation of political and civil freedoms, on the one hand, and the abuse of such freedoms by third states in their geopolitical competition for power, on the other, is a very fine one. A government’s lack of control (or excess thereof) in this regard can lead to grave consequences for the state internally and in its international relations. This fine line ties developing states or states in transition, into a predicament mature democracies rarely have to face.

From the outset, these examples of how Georgia’s intangible power has been affected may appear soft. However, when trying to understand the provocations Georgia experienced it is necessary to ask whether the organized tactics used to modify the various elements of Georgia’s perceived power included the use of crime. It is important to note that a foreign policy designed to infiltrate and modify intangible components of state power through affecting the political and societal sectors of national security, often relies upon the political criminal nexus; self-serving government officials and media-proprietors corruption by foreign officials and other forms of law bending.

Recourse

Georgia may be responsible for starting the war in 2008. However, it is unclear what, if any, legal recourse is available to it for the provocation it experienced in this regard from Russia. When looking for legal recourse an interesting question for Georgia (and other states experiencing state sponsored separatism) is, how many of the transnational power deteriorating acts were committed using transnational organized crime.

The relationship between separatism and the shadow economy via organized crime is very well documented. In addition, within the confines of the criminal codex of most states, treason and the promotion of separatism and anti-state sentiment and the promotion of hate are criminal acts. Within the confines of international law, state

sponsorship of such acts is prohibited because it constitutes, among other things, interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state. The use of similar (criminal) tactics for the promotion of state interests abroad is referred to in the preparatory works of the UN Palermo Treaty against Transnational Organized Crime. Importantly, such acts, when connected to representatives and policies of third states, also fall within the confines of the treaty.

Investigation into the tactics used and the identification of actors involved, can invoke the Palermo Treaty. Whereas the effectiveness of the treaty itself has yet to be proven, its value as a diplomatic tool can rest in the power it has to explain the nature of certain provocations.

Conclusion

The ancient, great power strategy of dividing and conquering nations to gain geopolitical power is very much alive today. In the Black Sea Region, the end of the Cold War has resulted in an undeclared competition for geopolitical influence there.. As a result, separatism appears to be used as a geopolitical instrument in the Post Soviet States in the Black Sea Region. These states have come to form the theater in which the Russian Federation and the “Democratic West” paradoxically cooperate and struggle for power and influence.

It is important to understand the ways separatism is spurred. It is not enough to consider how the material components of state power are modified to promote separatism. Three tangible (critical mass, economic and economic capability) and two intangible (national strategy and national will) components of state power have been identified by Cline. The modification of intangible power components can reduce a state’s control over its tangible power to nothing. The value of all these components can be modified without the use of blatant coercion. This notwithstanding, such modifications – which may take years – can effectively spur separatism and even provoke violent reactions from states experiencing them.

It is clear that the promotion of internal strife and separatism does not fall within the parameters of friendly state relations. However, the line between friendly interstate relations (i.e. economic cooperation, promotion of minority rights, educational development) and the manipulations of these relations for the accumulation of power and/or the promotion of separatist foreign policy is very fine. By combining the Constructivist’s sectoral approach to security analysis with Cline’s Perceived Power formula a fine framework is made for analyzing how foreign policies (either positively i.e. capacity building, or negatively i.e. promotion of separatism) modify the power potential of third states. The adoption of a regional or (sub) regional analysis is facilitated by studying the patterns of amity/enmity among states geographically bound.

In the Post Soviet States of the Black Sea Region, the geopolitical struggle for influence, shared Soviet history, transitional development, geographic location and incidents of Russian-backed separatism justify the adoption of a sub-regional approach to understanding and resolving some of their local, cross border externalities and common security threats. In Georgia, numerous tactics related to the Russian Federation have resulted in

the modification of Georgian power potential to the extent of promoting separatism. These tactics may have provoked Georgia to “defend itself” by starting the war in 2008.

When looking for legal recourse, an interesting question for Georgia (and other states experiencing state sponsored separatism) is, how many of the transnational power deteriorating acts were committed using transnational organized crime. It is important to note that a foreign policy designed to infiltrate and modify components of state power often rely upon psychological operations, the political criminal nexus; self-serving government officials, corruption by foreign officials and other forms of law bending. A number of international legal instruments are available, including the Palermo Treaty against Transnational Organized Crime.

It may be naïve to believe that states and the people who run them will learn how to apply wisdom and choose wellbeing and intangible power over welfare and material wealth. However, when one considers that in the Twenty First Century state actors continue to use the ancient strategy of *divide et impera* to gain power, their leaders appear to have learned nothing good from two World Wars. Nor have they learned the value of peace.

Endnotes

* Lada L. Roslycky is a Master of International and European Law. She is an independent consultant and PhD Candidate in international security studies in the Netherlands.

¹ Cline R. S. (1977). *World Power Assessment 1977: A calculus of strategic drift*, Westview Press Boulder.

² Buzan, Wæver, de Wilde, (1998). *Security: A new framework for analysis* Boulder: Lynne Rienner., Buzan B., and Wæver O. (2003). *Regions and Powers: The structure of International Security* Cambridge.

³ Moscow Wants Radar Station in S. Ossetia, Civil Georgia. 1 July, 2008. Tbilisi.

⁴ Major General de Maira Mattos added *Authority of the Nationals* to the group of intangibles.

⁵ <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=21386>

⁶ In this context, “anti-state” must not be mistaken for “oppositional” because they are linked to funding and intrusive foreign policies of third states.